

Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin – August 2011.

- Please note the new AVM logo, as below (there will also be a colour version, that is not yet out).



Conference Announcement

The AVM is to hold international conferences
in the USA and UK in March 2012.

For details go to:

<http://www.vulnerablemission.org/vulnerable-mission-conference-2012/>

- For a list of past editions of this Bulletin please go to:
 - <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/avm-bulletins/index.html>
- Tear fund is attempting to help the poor become self-sufficient through what they are calling 'umoja': "**Umoja** helps local churches and communities build on the resources and skills they already have. It is a process that inspires and equips local people with a vision for determining their own future with their own resources" says Tearfund. Have a look and see what you think: <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Churches/Umoja/>
- See this website for information about the 2012 conferences, as posted by the Evangelical Alliance (UK). <http://www.eauk.org/idea/mission-conference-in-2012.cfm>
- Go to [vulnerablemission.org](http://www.vulnerablemission.org) for materials in German (<http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/rundbrief/index.html>) and Spanish (<http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/discussion/chaco-spanish/index.html>).
- I came across this fascinating article: Balcomb, Anthony, 2010. 'The Great Comeback of God(s): theological challenges and opportunities in a post-secular world.' *Missionalia* 38:3 (November 2010). Professor Balcomb speaks with a lot of experience of Africa. This is not really VM – but it does talk about a contemporary massive rise in interest in things of God – which implies a need for those knowledgeable on theology – something that VM encourages.
- See here for information on next year's conferences as put out by Oscar – the http://oscaractive.ning.com/events/alliance-for-vulnerable?xg_source=msg_appr_event
- I would like to announce the resignation of Glenn Schwartz from our advisory board. Glenn has resigned as he already feels himself swamped with work on other projects that he is engaged in. Glenn was very influential in the development of my own understanding of

many mission issues, especially dependency. He will continue to take an interest in what we are doing. We appreciate what Glenn has contributed to the AVM particularly as from 2007.

- We are very grateful indeed for the folks at Abilene Christian University in Texas for having made the administrative coordinator for the Halbert Institute for Missions Deborah Niccum available to assist in the planning of the 2012 vulnerable mission conference. Please contact her for more information as follows:

work phone 325-674-3711
work fax 325-674-6716
email: deborah.niccum@acu.edu
address: Halbert Institute for Mission
ACU Box 29433
Onstead-Packer Building
Abilene TX 79699-9433
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- **The executive board met on 12th July 2011, and came up with the following new resolutions:**

The Texas conference is to cost \$100 including meals (late registration after 7th February 2012 will be \$120), but not including accommodation. Full refund available before 7th Feb., no refund for cancellations subsequent to 7th February. For information on accommodation contact Deborah Niccum (DN), Administrative Co-ordinator of the Halbert Institute for Missions (HIM): deborah.niccum@acu.edu Students are encouraged to call Deborah for more information on possible student-discounts.

If you would like to submit a paper or participate in a discussion, see also:
<http://www.vulnerablemission.org/vulnerable-mission-conference-2012/> Deadline for submission of papers 7th Feb. 2012.

- The following article by Robin Brace asks whether “education and information [is] really the same thing as knowledge and understanding”? Brace emphasizes the importance of there being spiritual input to the majority world, especially Africa, and his concern is that the materialistic influences in mission not end up *replacing* the spiritual:
<http://www.ukapologetics.net/1EDUCATION.html>
- The following exert comes from p63 in this book recently published by Tim Chester: Chester, Tim, 2011. *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books:

When it comes right down to it, the disciples can't provide for the people. They have the power of Jesus, but it's his power. They share the ministry of Jesus, but it's his ministry. It's easy for us to play at being messiah. We want to help, and it's right that we do show love, as the context demands (Luke 10:25–37). But we need to be careful not to think we can solve people's problems for them. It's not good for us; if we try to save the world, we'll quickly burn out. And it's not good for the people we help; people need to be helped to cope for themselves rather than become reliant on us. Reliance on us might feed our egos, but it doesn't bring lasting change. But even more importantly, Christ is the Savior—not us. Our role is to point to him. We have a responsibility to welcome people to the messianic banquet. But we can't bring them in. What we offer people is Jesus. His death is sufficient and complete. He is the Provider. He is the host. Not us.

- The following excerpt, describing the case made by Quarry and Ramirez (Quarry, Wendy and Ramirez, Ricardo, 2009. *Communication for Another Development: listening before telling*. London: Zed Books.), is found on page 218 of White (White, Robert A., 2009. 'Research on Communication for Development in Africa: current debates.' 203-252 In: *African Communication Research*, 2/2, 2009.) This speaks strongly about vulnerable mission! For more details about the book by Quarry and Ramirez see: <http://www.amazon.com/Communication-Another-Development-Listening-Telling/dp/1848130090>

In short, the persistence of poverty and underdevelopment is due, in great part, to a power structure, often inherited from a previous colonial regime and maintained by a ruling elite in developing countries.

Quarry and Ramirez think that this power structure can be changed only by an awareness that the problem lies within this power structure itself and through the willingness to “opt out” of this structure by establishing a relationship with the poor which empowers them, not by reproducing in them the existing power structure, but by helping all to realize that a relation of mutual service and mutual esteem is for the benefit of all.

In the view of these authors, “champions” are “people who make a difference” but they can come into operation only through the fortuitous circumstances of “context”—a second central variable, and if they understand what communication is really about.

If “champions” are the answer, then how do we “produce” more of the kind? As the stories of Quarry and Ramirez unfold, it is clear that, above all, champions arrive on the scene without any modernization agenda. They can simply interact with the people and let themselves see the charming and remarkable qualities of these poor and marginalized people. They don’t have to make the people produce modern results and are therefore rarely disappointed. Their own success in life does not depend on getting the people to produce modern results. Being upwardly mobile in social status is not a primary value, and they often stay with the people for a long period of time, getting to know them well. Getting to know the people enables them to build a relationship of esteem that blossoms into ideas of how to work together with them to find solutions...and it grows. Yet champions are also writers and researchers and spread their ideas among both researchers and practitioners.

The authors stress the importance of the *context*: an urgent need of the poor people one lives with, an often desperate request from the people, an organization that gives them opportunities to work with these people, a public policy that favors people-controlled communication, the welcoming attitude of the people that makes this their home.

The champions are *communication* specialists, but their deep esteem for the people convinces them that their role is not telling but helping the people to get their message out to others facing similar problems, to those in governmental power, to specialists in development and to the people themselves to reflect more deeply on the value of their own insights.

Yours,

Jim Harries,
Chairman, Alliance for Vulnerable Mission

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