

Mission as Partnership: Promoting a More Collaborative Social Mission between Western and African Faith-Based Organizations

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The paper will attempt to show why development aid and international humanitarian activities particular Christian (Faith-Based Organizations-FBOs) mission projects from the West to Africa are failing Africans and frustrating the objectives of donors in the West. The paper will argue that such failures are because some of the projects are driven by secondary motives and also fail to tap into local initiatives and indigenous knowledge, entrepreneurship, and technology needed for sustainable development practices and partnership. I will further make a distinction between humanitarian aid and development initiatives in Africa, and the differences between the reactionary approach to crisis management in Africa, and pro-active development initiatives. I will argue that it is quite comforting and even superficially gratifying to hear of such platitudes from Western mission groups like 'helping Africa', 'going to Africa to help', 'providing this or that help for Africa.' However, these episodic interventionist acts by individual Christians, groups or denomination, and FBOs have one main drawback: they are unsustainable and are crisis response to meeting the needs of particular African groups, but they cannot guarantee human security in Africa. The paper will propose that what Africa needs today is respectful and reciprocal collaboration between Western FBOs and their African partners in social innovation which prioritizes the assets of Africa, and builds on the vast and untapped innovative potentials of emerging African youth, entrepreneurs, and locally midwifed third sector agencies. The paper shows how religious groups in Africa, who are emerging as significant stake holders in the reconstruction of the broken social context in Africa can become effective social capitals in the human and cultural development of Africa through partnership and collaboration between local African groups and international organizations interested in promoting social innovation in Africa for guaranteeing human security. The paper will particularly draw some best practices in mission and partnership from Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, and Sudan.