WHEN CHARITY DESTROYS DIGNITY

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Overcoming unhealthy dependency in the Christian Movement. Glenn J. Schwartz.

This is one of the books that I reckon should be read by everyone who has an involvement in cross-cultural mission work. The book is composed of a series of video scripts and some other articles and at times it would be improved by some judicious editing to knit it into a more cohesive whole, but this is a minor gripe.

The basic premise is that many churches in the developing world show an unhealthy dependency on funds and resources from the west and that the influx of dollars and pounds can seriously stifle, if not kill off, local initiative and ownership of projects. Well intentioned and sometimes sacrificial giving in the West can actually have the opposite effect of what was intended - destroying local projects rather than supporting them. The case is well made and illustrated with lots of telling examples. There is also an excellent section describing how church bodies in the developing world can pull out of an unhealthy dependency on outside resources. The section on how Westerners can fulfil their Christian duty of giving to the poor, while avoiding creating dependency is less helpful, but there is still much food for thought. There is also an excellent section on the short term mission trips which deserves to be widely read.

The book is not available from Amazon in the UK, but you can order it from here. Search for either the book title or the author to find it. In the US it can be ordered from here. Unusually for me, I've not kept this book, I've given it to my supervisor to make sure that he reads it - I'll just have to buy another copy (please don't tell Sue).