



[www.vulnerablemission.org](http://www.vulnerablemission.org)

Open Access

## Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

### August 2025

### Volume 17, Number 8

(Archived back-copies [here](#) Subscribe for free [here](#))

Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Founder, AVM



*The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.*

Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to [bulletin@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:bulletin@vulnerablemission.org)

*This month's contents:*

**Is Religion a Western Idea? Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion')**

-

**Report by AVM Director Marcus Grohmann on his recent networking in Germany**

-

**Die Katze beißt sich in den Schwanz?! (The Cat Bites its Tail.) by Gabriele Mayer**

-

**Mission as Accompaniment: A Path to a Post-Colonial, Alternative Missionary Practice**

-

**Now available on Amazon: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners**

-

**Doing research in 21st century Africa as a European: A decolonial approach – 9 October 2025**

## Is Religion a Western Idea? Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion')

On July 24 we hosted Dr. Claire Chong for a webinar about re-imagining mission beyond the western conception of religion. She shared from her PhD research in the Khmer/Cambodian context. We learned that religion, relationships, culture and nation are all bound together in the concept of sasna, and that to require people to separate them in order to follow Christ is possibly one of the biggest reasons people don't want to follow Jesus. Westerners often think of religion as a bounded set of beliefs, whereas for the Khmer, it's not based on particular beliefs, but rather actions and practices. She encouraged us to look at how this is consistent with the Bible. Please watch the video recording, due to be posted in October's bulletin!



## Report by AVM Director Marcus Grohmann on his recent networking in Germany

During my two-month stay in Germany, significant time was spent on visiting universities, Christian colleges and mission organisations and sharing about vulnerable mission. The formats varied - seminars with students, discussions with lecturers, exploring research collaboration or simple conversations about experiences in trying to live a vulnerable life as a white person in the complexities of post-apartheid Cape Town. While we as a family continue to see us placed by God in South Africa and the AVM continues to have a worldwide perspective, as an organisation we also have a natural connection to Germany which we want to grow for the benefit of others. Being registered in Germany and having a number of board members located there, it makes sense to explore the potential for growing awareness of vulnerable mission and learning about intercultural theology already being practised in Germany/by Germans. On top of that, I have started to conceptualise a new interdisciplinary multi-year research project related to vulnerable mission and located at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. My hope and plan is to collaborate with scholars

not only from South Africa but from Germany as well. Prayer for the right connections with both researchers and funders will be appreciated.

---

## Die Katze beißt sich in den Schwanz?! (The Cat Bites its Tail.) by Gabriele Mayer

<https://slub.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A96184/attachment/ATT-0/>

When Gabriele Mayer takes the bull by the horns, she discovers that the cat is biting its tail! Mayer reports on her experience of teaching at a Lutheran theological college in Tanzania over 9 years. She reveals often concealed and embarrassing truths – that Western education in Tanzania being only part-appropriated. Chunks of the theory underlying it are beyond Tanzanian comprehension, yet the system of education being deeply rooted and of colonial and missionary origins, continues. It results in half-baked students (my term, not Mayer's)! Where the cat bites its tail, Mayer tells us, is when Westerners who realise the problem endeavour to advocate a solution, that continues to be rooted in what is Western! 'Epistemicide is happening', declares Mayer; indigenous systems of thinking are being undermined. What is being advocated to replace them has little fit and is far from adequate.

---

## Mission as Accompaniment: A Path to a Post-Colonial, Alternative Missionary Practice

<https://missionexus.org/mission-as-accompaniment-a-path-to-a-post-colonial-alternative-missionary-practice/>

Having known Frank for almost 20 years, I am very pleased indeed that this article outlining a Mennonite missions' model has been published in EMQ. Frank was deeply moved by his time working with Mennonites in the Argentine Chaco. They refused to follow a dominating model of mission. Instead of focusing on their institutions and projects, they were 'jolted' into using the local Toba language, and into accompanying local believers, who interpreted the Scriptures and sought the leading of the Holy Spirit mediated using their own tongue and episteme. This is a challenging story up to today. I believe it presents a model for mission 'from the bottom' that many more should seriously consider following. (The article, currently publicly available as a preview of EMQ, will become available open access from October.)

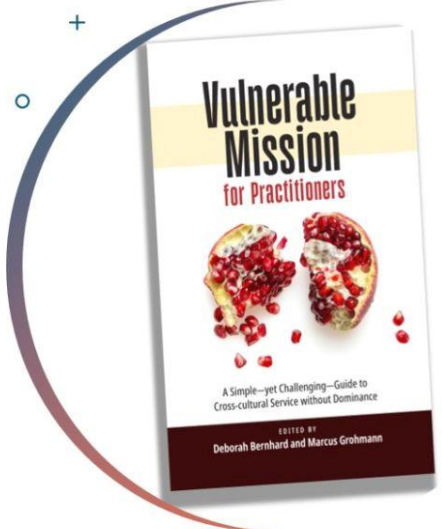


---

## Now available on Amazon: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners

The newly published book 'Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners' is available on [Amazon](#) as paperback and Kindle version as well as on the [AVM website](#) as paperback and PDF ebook. Since via our website we're giving out the book on donation basis, you may consider this a good option if you would like to get several copies, e.g. for members of your organisation, missionary colleagues, etc.

The book is an introduction to vulnerable mission that is both comprehensive and compact. The short chapters, written in accessible language, present clearly how vulnerable mission differs from other approaches to mission. They explain why (more of) vulnerable mission is important. The book closes with some simple and concrete steps towards more vulnerable weakness in cross-cultural ministry.



## A compact book for practitioners that explains ...

- what vulnerable mission is
- what it can look like in a variety of cultural contexts
- how vulnerable mission differs from other mission approaches
- why vulnerable mission is so important
- what serving according to the principles of vulnerable mission may require

## Doing research in 21st century Africa as a European: A decolonial approach – 9 October 2025

Dr. Mark Smith shares from his work in North Africa and what steps he took towards vulnerability in research.

Sign-up [here](#).

9<sup>th</sup> October 2025: Dr. Mark Smith

 **Doing Research in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa as a European**

A decolonial approach



## Webinar on 9 October 2025

Register now!

Executive Board	Governing Board	Advisory Board
Dr. Marcus Grohmann (Director)	Dr. Jim Harries (chair)	Dr. Chris Flanders
Deborah Bernhard (Deputy Director)	Dr. Daniel Albert	Frank Paul
Maria Richter (Secretary)	James Alongi	Dr. Jay Gary
	Rev. Dr. John Macdonald	Jean Johnson
	Dorothea Witte	Rev. Gernot Spies
		Tim Reeves

- *Relating to people through their languages and local resources* -



The AVM Bulletin is published by Allianz für Verletzliche Mission e. V. / Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (AVM), registered under Association Register Number 14892 by the local court in Dresden. The AVM is represented by executive board members Marcus Grohmann, Deborah Bernhard, and Maria Richter. Contact via phone (+27 81 586 1484) or email ([info@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:info@vulnerablemission.org)).