



www.vulnerablemission.org

Open Access

Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin July 2025 Volume 17, Number 7

(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

This month's contents:

WEBINAR 24th July 2025 !!

- **Returning after study abroad often seen as failure – Study**
- **Anthropologists Engage Theology: A Constructive Contextual Theological Critique**
- **Sharing in poverty: Reflections by Jim Harries**
- **Now available on Amazon: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners**
- **Webinar coming up soon - register now!**

WEBINAR 24th July 2025 !!

Is Religion a Western Idea? Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion') – 24 July 2025

In September of 2023, the Pew Research Center released a report entitled 'Buddhism, Islam and Religious Pluralism in South and Southeast Asia' which shows that people in Buddhist Southeast Asia have a distinctly different perspective of religion than people in Singapore which is the most Westernised country in the region. In this webinar, Claire Chong presents, from her fieldwork research, some emerging ideas on the Cambodian notion of 'religion.' It is hoped that with a better understanding of what religion is in other societies, Christians may engage with people of other faiths in more meaningful ways.

Sign-up [here](#).



24th July 2025: Claire Chong

Is Religion a Western idea?

Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion')



**Webinar on
24 July 2025**

Register now!

Returning after study abroad often seen as failure – Study

https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20250624044502623&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AFNL0501

This article looks at reasons determining whether or not students from Africa studying in other host countries return home on completion of their courses. Anxiety about being considered to fail if they return, given that earnings are all-round better in the West, often result in a choice to perform roles, such as care work, in preference to returning enabling use of learned-skills at home. Funding for overseas studies being locally sourced increases the likelihood that a student will return home. Here are some citations from the article:

“What is emerging is that, whether in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or other African countries, outbound graduate migrants’ decision to stay is regularly driven by anxiety about failing.”

“Subsequently, the fear of being seen as a failure for returning after graduating means many African graduates are picking up care jobs, according to Okunade and Awosusi. These are mostly the only readily available options allowing the graduates to remain in Europe legally, hoping that, one day, they will get good jobs relevant to their academic

qualifications and better pay, finally realising their japa dreams (dreams of fleeing their African home country).”

“In this regard, the two researchers noted that the source of educational funding, whether governmental or familial, can affect the likelihood of return, reflecting a sense of financial accountability and broader emotional or social obligations. Accordingly, the decision to return may also be driven by feelings of social responsibility or a strong commitment to contribute to national development.”



Anthropologists Engage Theology: A Constructive Contextual Theological Critique

<https://www.currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/537/565>

Convicted by the idea that anthropology is inherently and rightfully historically a discipline of the Christian church, Jim Harries challenges anthropologists to re-imagine their role.

Jim summarizes his article, published by *Currents in Theology and Mission* (a Lutheran Journal) in June 2025, as follows: Once Christianity was seen as irrelevant to anthropology, missionaries were removed from its research circles. Now anthropology, through re-examining impacts of Christianity, is challenging its own foundations, as having Christian origins itself. The article here examined exposes some deep problems in anthropology, as well as its deep roots in faith. Some of the questions raised include: Is anthropology a type of prayer? Should anthropologists be involved financially with their hosts? Why was theology “banished” from anthropology? Should religions be laid out in a panorama in front of researchers? New insights from Christianity can help anthropologists be more honest about their own foundations.



Sharing in poverty: Reflections by Jim Harries

<https://vulnerablemission.org/sharing-in-poverty>

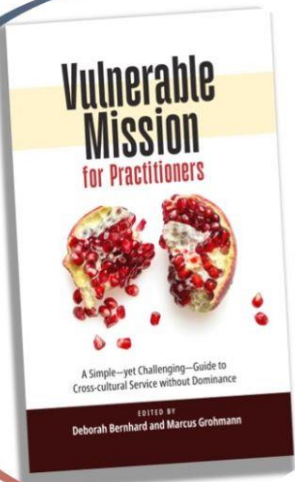
The desirability of intentional-poverty has been much debated. To some, it might sound like masochism. To others it can represent a missed opportunity to utilise the power that one might have had. Jim Harries gives us a balanced view, presenting 5 reasons why voluntary poverty on the side of a Western missionary might be advantageous in service in Africa. Faced by widespread material inequalities in today’s world, many Christians in the West seek to alleviate suffering, e.g. through development work or missionary service. Often, they use the resources – knowledge, money, access to the powers that be, etc. – at their disposal in their efforts to ‘uplift’ others. The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of an alternative approach. Instead of ‘trying to pull people out’ of their poverty (using outside resources), it encourages to consider ‘stepping into’ people’s poverty.



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

Webinar coming up soon - register now!

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](#).



9th October 2025: Dr. Mark Smith

Doing Research in 21st 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 -

