

THE SHAPE OF LOVE

Jesus, Compassion, and Sustainable
Development in Shan State



STUART CORLETT

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Sustainable Development in Shan State*

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www.circuitinternational.org

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For Rob Kilpatrick.

A man who has given of himself
to research these ideas and make them
real.

Chairman of our board and inspirer of
many.

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This book examines Christian witness through the four Gospels, the history and present circumstances of Shan State, and research on development and community agency. The author’s role with Circuit International is described in the foreword.

Biblical quotations use the public-domain World English Bible unless otherwise indicated. Contemporary evidence is assessed through 15 September 2026. Source-access limits are recorded in the notes. Authorial prose uses British English; quotations, publication titles and official names retain their original spelling.

Chairman's Foreword

The Shape of Love could easily have the subtitle “Welcome to the Wonderful, Complex and Challenging World of Christian Aid and Development”. It challenges the reader to consider a number of difficult issues that confront Christians wanting to support work that reflects the values of their faith in the best possible way.

For Christians honestly seeking answers to the question of what it means to seek the “kingdom of God” that Jesus called for, the book offers plenty of challenges to ponder and some important options to consider. After all, debates about the message of Jesus have been revisited numerous times in the post-Second World War era, when global development work really got underway. Circuit International was built on the premise that one of the best descriptions of the life of Christ is found in Acts 10:38: “and how he (Jesus) went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”

In years of involvement with people of faith, I have come to the conclusion that the only sure way to determine what a person actually believes is to look at what they do. Jesus called for the kingdom and “went around doing good”, seemingly without demanding that people sign up to a particular set of doctrinal statements, but simply asking them to “follow me”.

How can we do that in the best possible way, so that those we walk alongside can experience “life in all its fullness” — another of Jesus’ statements about the purpose of his life? This is the question Stu seeks to answer in this book. With its practical examples and cautionary tales, it offers excellent, realistic scenarios to consider and theological concerns with which to wrestle.

I strongly recommend this book to any person of faith, of any kind, who wants their donations to make a genuine difference to the lives of those who are the focus of their concerns, or their work in aid and development to be genuinely liberating and truly humanitarian.

Rob Kilpatrick

Chairman of the Board
Circuit International

Author's foreword

This book began with a question I was finding increasingly difficult to answer patiently.

As a public speaker and fundraiser for Circuit International, I speak to Christian communities about sustainable development in Shan State, Myanmar. Our aim is to help reduce poverty and the vulnerability to human trafficking that poverty can create. Often, someone listening will ask where the gospel fits into that work. I hear concern about whether we are speaking about Jesus and whether people are becoming Christians.

I care about that question. I also care about the assumptions we bring to it. If a community gains more control over its future, if a family has a safer choice, or if someone's dignity is protected, what do we believe has happened? How do those things belong within our understanding of following Jesus?

My first response has sometimes been defensive. I have wondered how anyone could hear about compassionate work and fail to recognise something of the gospel in it. But a quick response from a platform leaves little room for the history, theology, and human experience the question deserves. I wanted to make that room. The pages that follow are my attempt to think more carefully, and to invite you to think with me.

The title, *The Shape of Love*, expresses the question I now want to ask. What shape does our faith take in another person's life? It takes shape in the way we listen, the decisions we share, and the promises we make. People encounter our message through what we allow them to question and whether they remain welcome when they disagree. Those experiences matter alongside the words we use to explain our beliefs.

For this inquiry, I have placed the four Gospels at the centre. I want to take seriously Jesus' compassion and his call to follow him, including passages that challenge my own instincts. He speaks about God and responds to bodily suffering. He calls people to change and meets people whose needs cannot wait for a theological conversation. Any account of Christian witness must reckon with that breadth.

The setting also matters. Shan State is home to diverse communities with their own histories, knowledge, faiths, and institutions. Christian work there enters a world already shaped by relationships and unequal power. The history of colonialism belongs in that conversation, as do the ways local Christians have understood and practised their faith. Listening requires more than placing a familiar Christian explanation over someone else's experience.

I write as someone committed to Circuit's purpose. That commitment gives me a reason to ask difficult questions about the work I support. It does not establish its results. The standards proposed in this book must apply to organisations we value as well as those we criticise. Good intentions deserve honest examination, especially when other people live with the consequences.

One source also has a direct connection to my work. In the acknowledgements to his 2016 doctoral thesis, *The business of peace-building*, Robert Kilpatrick names my assistance, through Circuit International, with research access and technical questions. Readers should know that connection when considering my use of his study. I draw on its insights into faith, compassion, and community influence while examining its limitations. The thesis is not an evaluation of Circuit's effectiveness.

Sharon Bell's 2018 Massey University doctoral thesis, *Health justice for all*, has a more direct personal connection. It examines the Shan Healthcare Training Programme, which I established through Partners before I

started Circuit International. Bell identifies my role in initiating it and records the local recognition of need that preceded the partnership. This is part of my own experience, and readers should know my stake in how it is represented. I include her criticisms alongside her positive findings. The programme's origins do not make its achievements mine alone, and my involvement gives me no exemption from the questions I put to other organisations. The research concerns that earlier programme, not an evaluation of Circuit's present work.

You will find qualifications throughout these pages. Some evidence from Myanmar is difficult to verify. Studies may describe a particular place or group without representing everyone. Christian interpreters also disagree about important passages. I have tried to make those limits visible so that readers can consider the argument without being asked to accept more than its evidence can carry.

I hope this book makes conversations between churches and development workers more thoughtful and less defensive. I hope it also makes us more willing to hear the people whose lives we discuss when we raise money. Their freedom to speak, decide, and refuse belongs within the account we give of our faith.

If our understanding of the gospel grows through this inquiry, I hope it will be evident in the quality of our relationships and in our willingness to learn. The neighbour before us deserves that much attention.

Stuart Corlett

Chapter 1. The question after the presentation

When I speak to Christian communities about Circuit International, someone will sometimes ask, “Where does the gospel fit into all this?”

I understand the concern behind the question. We are a Christian charity working with communities in Shan State, Myanmar. Our purpose is to support sustainable development, reduce poverty, and help reduce people's vulnerability to human trafficking. Yet after hearing about that work, a listener may still wonder when I will explain the Christian part. Often the question is about evangelism and conversion: how do people hear about Jesus, and how many become Christians?

I sometimes find it difficult to retain my composure. My instinctive response is, “How are we not communicating the gospel?” I have also used the familiar saying, “Preach the gospel at all times and use words only when needed.” Those replies express something I believe deeply. They are also too brief to answer the question adequately.

The person asking deserves more than an impatient response. If a charity identifies itself as Christian, its supporters are entitled to ask what that means. A claim about Jesus should be open to examination. So should a claim about sustainable development. Good intentions do not settle either question.

This book grows from the conviction that the question deserves a fuller answer, and that answering it requires listening to more than the people who give the money. Communities receiving assistance also have questions: Who decides what we need? What happens if we disagree? Will this relationship strengthen our ability to make decisions, or leave us dependent on someone else's

approval? Can we decline a religious invitation and still be treated as neighbours?

Those questions belong inside a Christian discussion of mission. They concern the kind of relationship our actions create and the character of the message those actions communicate.

What the question might mean

“Where does the gospel fit?” can express several different concerns. One person wants to know what motivates the work. Another asks whether Christian identity is being concealed. Someone else wants an account of how compassion relates to salvation. A church deciding how to allocate a limited budget may ask whether a development organisation fulfils the same responsibilities as a congregation or an evangelistic ministry. These are reasonable distinctions.

A more troubling assumption can also enter the conversation: that assistance becomes genuinely Christian only when it produces identifiable conversions. On that account, improved health, a safer livelihood, or a family's increased freedom to refuse exploitation would remain spiritually inconclusive until somebody changed religious affiliation. The person helped can then become a means of demonstrating the provider's religious success.

This book questions that assumption. It does not begin by questioning the sincerity of everyone who asks about evangelism. A person can care deeply about material suffering and still believe that speaking about Jesus is essential. Indeed, the Gospels give that conviction substantial support. Mark presents Jesus announcing God's kingdom and calling people to repentance and belief. Matthew ends with a commission to make disciples, baptise, and teach. Luke connects the risen Jesus with the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness. John explains

that its account aims to bring readers to belief and life (Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:30–31).

An academically honest defence of compassionate development must make room for those passages. It must also examine what Jesus teaches disciples to do with hunger, illness, wealth, exclusion, and power. Neither set of passages can be discarded because it complicates our preferred approach.

Evangelical Christians already possess resources for this discussion. The Lausanne Covenant affirms both social responsibility and evangelism while giving evangelism priority. That combination invites debate about their relationship; it does not make concern for people's material lives an alien intrusion into Christian mission.¹

The later Grand Rapids consultation makes a useful further distinction. Different circumstances and callings can justify concentrating on different forms of service. Its example of the Good Samaritan explicitly permits tending an injured person without attaching a sermon. The report nevertheless defends evangelism's distinctive importance. Its value here is to make disagreement more precise: whether compassion needs words in every encounter differs from whether the church should ever speak about Jesus.²

A claim that can be examined

The argument of this book is that development which strengthens a community's ability to shape its future can be a substantial expression of Christian witness. Its compatibility with Jesus' message depends on how it treats people, distributes power, responds to suffering, and respects conscience. Its moral worth cannot be reduced to the number of religious conversions associated with it.

The qualifications matter. A project does not become empowering because its publicity uses the word. Inviting people to a meeting does not establish that they can influence the budget. Employing local staff does not establish that local people determine priorities. A committee may represent an influential faction while excluding women, people with disabilities, poorer households, displaced residents, or religious minorities. Community agency requires attention to disagreements within the community as well as inequalities between the community and its outside partners.

For this book, agency means a meaningful ability to identify priorities, act on them, influence decisions, refuse participation, and challenge those controlling resources. Sustainability means that improvements in well-being and capabilities have credible prospects of enduring, with social, economic, and ecological support. These are working definitions for contemporary analysis. They are not words we can simply insert into an ancient text and then attribute to Jesus.

The claim also has limits. Emergency relief may be the appropriate response to immediate danger. A person with a chronic illness may need continuing treatment. Someone living with a disability may need reliable assistance throughout life. Receiving such support does not make a life less dignified, and a project has not necessarily failed because assistance remains necessary.

The Good Samaritan provides an especially clear challenge to an overly narrow ideal of self-reliance. The injured traveller is treated, transported, accommodated, and provided with continuing care. The story does not require him to demonstrate his productivity or repay the cost before mercy becomes legitimate (Luke 10:25-37). The obligation to care cannot depend on the recipient becoming independent quickly enough to satisfy the giver.

Development research raises related questions about donor expectations. Swidler and Watkins' study of aid relationships in Malawi examines how an emphasis on sustainability can favour activities donors recognise while overlooking the resources local people seek. The study is context-specific, but it gives us a reason to investigate whose idea of sustainability governs a project.³

Helping a community help itself must therefore include helping its members care for one another and obtain support they cannot provide alone. Otherwise, the language of empowerment can become a respectable way to withdraw from people whose needs are costly or enduring.

Why Shan State belongs in the argument

The setting of this book is not incidental. Circuit works in Shan State, and its own account describes an approach centred on relationships, local enterprise, and community responses to practical problems. Its published method also records changes in its work as conflict affected access. Those statements establish how Circuit describes its intentions and approach. They do not, by themselves, establish what every participant experiences or what the programmes achieve.⁴

Shan State must not appear here merely as a distant place whose suffering makes a Christian argument more compelling. People living there have their own histories, religious commitments, institutions, skills, disagreements, and aspirations. They are entitled to be more than the setting for someone else's moral development.

The research assembled for this project documents severe pressures associated with military violence, displacement, disrupted services, and insecurity. It also contains work on drug-related harms and the conditions surrounding migration. The sources have different purposes and

degrees of access. A human rights investigation, a household survey, a clinic cohort, and a community organisation's incident report cannot simply be combined as though they observe the same population in the same way.⁵

This is particularly important when discussing trafficking, drug use, and HIV. Migration is not itself evidence of trafficking. A drug economy's harmful effects do not establish every alleged actor's intention. HIV research among a selected group of migrants or patients cannot supply the prevalence of infection among everyone from Myanmar living in Thailand. Research involving Shan migrants living with HIV can illuminate barriers to treatment and disclosure without making those participants representative of all Shan people.⁶

Such distinctions may seem cautious when the suffering is urgent. They are part of taking that suffering seriously. An exaggerated number can obscure the people whose experience it purports to describe. An unsupported allegation can displace a documented mechanism of harm. An account that treats every migrant as a victim can overlook purposeful decisions made under difficult conditions.

The contemporary evidence in this book is confined to the twenty years ending 15 September 2026. Earlier history remains necessary to understand colonial relationships and the development of Christian institutions. That historical work will examine specific forms of coercion and domination alongside Christian resistance, local appropriation, and dissent. It will not presume that every Christian relationship is colonial or that every resident of Shan State interprets Christianity in the same way.

The absence of a representative survey of current local attitudes is a real limitation. It cannot be repaired by confidently speaking on a community's behalf. The book must make space for testimony where it can be obtained

and published responsibly, while distinguishing personal experience from a population-wide conclusion.

Compassion, explanation, and freedom

The relationship between words and deeds needs more careful language than my short answer after a presentation allows. An act of care can express a Christian commitment without communicating every belief that gives rise to it. Someone receiving assistance may recognise generosity without knowing the giver's understanding of Jesus, forgiveness, or resurrection. If a person wants to explain those convictions, words have a task that practical assistance cannot perform alone.

The reverse is equally important. An accurate verbal account of Christian doctrine cannot make a coercive relationship loving. If assistance is made conditional on religious compliance, the act of giving communicates something about power even when the accompanying words speak about grace. The message a person hears includes what happens when they say no.

This distinction gives us a practical question: can someone receive the relevant assistance on fair terms while declining religious activity or disagreeing with the organisation's beliefs? The answer cannot always be discovered by reading a policy. Staff behaviour, selection decisions, local expectations, and fears about future support may carry pressures that no formal condition acknowledges. A meaningful assessment asks people about their experience and gives them a way to complain without jeopardising assistance.

These are standards for assessing Christian practice. They apply to Circuit as well as other organisations; they do not establish that any organisation has already met them.

Christian institutions have themselves articulated relevant limits. The joint 2011 recommendations issued by Catholic,

ecumenical, and evangelical bodies recognise service within Christian witness and reject exploiting poverty or vulnerability to secure religious adherence. They also affirm religious freedom. These are recommendations about conduct, not a complete agreement about salvation or an evaluation of what churches actually do.⁷

Respecting conscience includes respect for people who freely become Christians. It would be another exercise of power to tell someone that their conversion is necessarily inauthentic because outsiders disapprove of Christianity's history. People may accept, reinterpret, question, or reject a religious message. Their freedom requires that material need should not be used to determine the answer.

The limits of a familiar saying

The saying about preaching through deeds captures an important concern about consistency. It should not carry the weight of the book's argument. Its familiar wording is not authenticated as a saying of Francis of Assisi.

Franciscan scholarship distinguishes it from the instruction in his earlier rule that brothers should preach through their deeds.⁸

That correction does not remove the obligation to practise what we profess. It does remove an easy shortcut. We cannot settle a disagreement about the Gospels by attributing a memorable modern formulation to a medieval saint. Nor does the saying resolve when speech is needed, who should speak, or how a person might hear Christian speech in the context of dependence.

The more demanding task is to examine Jesus' words and actions together. In Mark's feeding narrative, compassion first leads Jesus to teach and then leads to provision for hunger. In another feeding scene, the possibility that people will collapse on the journey is explicitly sufficient reason for concern (Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–10). The bodily

need is not a decorative illustration attached to the real business of speaking.

At the same time, the Gospels resist turning Jesus into a convenient sponsor of modern development practice. They present claims about God, forgiveness, judgement, and Jesus' own identity. Compassion belongs within those claims. It cannot be extracted from them without changing the subject of the inquiry.

The same questions for ourselves

An argument against coercive evangelism can become self-congratulatory if it exempts development practitioners from scrutiny. Expertise can dominate. Funding can silence disagreement. Publicity can turn somebody's hardship into the organisation's achievement. A carefully managed consultation can leave every consequential decision where it was before.

The same questions about power must therefore be asked of Circuit and of the approach this book advocates. Who can alter the plan? Whose knowledge is accepted? Who bears the risk if a project fails? What evidence would lead us to acknowledge harm? What would we say about the work if participants appreciated the assistance but remained uninterested in our faith?

The book's argument would be weakened by evidence that supposedly community-directed work excluded people, increased insecurity, or produced benefits too fragile to justify its costs. It would also be weakened if its Gospel interpretation depended on ignoring passages about repentance, faith, and discipleship. Naming those possibilities gives the inquiry something to test.

The question after the presentation can therefore become the beginning of a better conversation. Christians can ask how the work relates to Jesus. Communities can ask whether the relationship serves their lives and respects

their freedom. Researchers can ask what the evidence establishes. None of these questions needs to silence the others.

My answer begins with the claim that compassionate practice belongs at the centre of Christian faithfulness. To defend that claim, we must attend to the Jesus presented in the Gospels, to the history carried by Christian institutions, and to the people whose lives development is intended to improve. Each can correct the way we tell our story.

Chapter 2. Shan State beyond the headlines

The name *Shan State* sounds more precise than it is. It names an administrative territory in eastern Myanmar, but not a single people, language, religion, political authority, or social experience. The adjective *Shan* may refer to the state, to Tai-speaking peoples who identify as Shan or Tai Yai, to a language, or to communities dispersed across borders. These meanings overlap, but they are not interchangeable. A person who lives in Shan State need not be ethnically Shan. A Shan person may live in Thailand or elsewhere. A statistic for Myanmar cannot simply be narrowed to Shan State, and a study of migrants in Chiang Mai cannot be expanded to describe everyone who stayed behind.

This is more than terminological care. Development begins badly when the people being discussed disappear inside a convenient label. The phrase “the poor in Myanmar” can conceal the histories, institutions, capabilities, disagreements, and unequal risks that shape actual lives. It can also turn a diverse population into the background of a donor’s moral drama. Before this book asks what Christians should do, it must therefore ask whom they imagine themselves to be meeting.

A state, a borderland, and many communities

Shan State borders China, Laos, and Thailand. Its contemporary boundaries are the result of political histories rather than the outline of a culturally uniform region. Mountains and distance matter, but so do roads, checkpoints, armed jurisdictions, markets, monasteries, churches, schools, kinship networks, and routes that long predate the present international borders. Authority may be encountered through state departments, the Myanmar

military, ethnic armed organisations, militias, local administrators, religious institutions, customary leaders, businesses, or some combination of them. “Remote” consequently means more than far from a capital. A place may be close to a border market and far from reliable public services, or connected commercially while remaining dangerous politically.

Shan State includes Shan, Pa-O, Ta’ang or Palaung, Danu, Intha, Lahu, Akha, Wa, Kachin, Bamar, Chinese and other communities, with identities that cannot be reduced to a fixed official list. Language, religion, locality, livelihood, class, generation, and political history intersect. The same person may identify differently depending on whether the question concerns family, language, citizenship, worship, or political belonging. Enumeration by a government—especially amid conflict and disputed citizenship—does not settle those identities.

When classification becomes power

Ethnic names are not merely descriptions added to an already finished social world. They can become instruments through which land, representation, citizenship, education, and security are allocated. Colonial censuses did not invent every difference they recorded, but they often converted flexible, overlapping, or locally specific identities into bounded administrative populations. Later governments inherited and revised those categories. Political movements also used them to defend communities whose existence or rights had been denied. Classification can therefore oppress and protect at the same time.

The Transnational Institute’s critique of preparations for the 2014 census traces how the official list of 135 “national races” drew partly on earlier military-era and colonial classifications and required people to be recorded within a single category. It warned that the technical appearance of counting concealed disputes about representation,

citizenship, and who had authority to name a people.⁹ A later Myanmar-led research project similarly found that assumptions of fixed, homogeneous, stationary ethnic communities had been institutionalised even though lived identities were more complicated. Its interviews were drawn from selected locations and did not include a Shan case study, so its themes are not a survey of Shan opinion. They are valuable as an account of how Myanmar stakeholders described the political uses of ethnicity.¹⁰

This history explains why an apparently innocent demographic question may not feel innocent. Asking “What are you?” can carry memories of registration, exclusion, armed recruitment, territorial claims, or a struggle for recognition. A development organisation needs categories to monitor fairness, but it can reproduce harm if it treats official labels as natural facts or publishes sensitive information that exposes a small community. Ethical data practice therefore includes the right to self-identify, the possibility of more than one affiliation, a clear reason for collecting the information, and restraint about what is shared.

The same caution applies to the word *community*. A village, congregation, ethnic association, armed jurisdiction, women’s network, or migrant neighbourhood may each constitute a community for different purposes. None automatically speaks for all the others. The practical question is not “Who is the community leader?” as though one authentic representative must exist. It is “Which people are affected by this decision, through which institutions do they already act, and whose voice is absent?”

The 2014 population census remains an important historical source, including its report on religion, but it is neither a neutral photograph nor a reliable description of the present. Significant populations were not enumerated directly, classifications were politically consequential, and

later conflict and migration changed the setting. Official results can be cited as official results, with their adjustment procedures and exclusions visible; they cannot function as a current survey of trust in Christianity or of attitudes in every ethnic community.¹¹

Federal promises and unfinished political belonging

Modern Shan political memory cannot be understood only through the administrative map. The Panglong Agreement of February 1947 joined negotiations over independence to promises concerning autonomy and equality among participating frontier peoples. Its meaning and the range of peoples adequately represented remain contested. What matters here is that federalism, self-determination, and the terms of union are not recent donor vocabulary. They are attached to remembered promises, later constitutional disputes, the 1962 military coup, armed resistance, and repeated failures of political settlement.

This makes “local ownership” a politically charged expression. A project may take place inside the internationally recognised state while the people involved experience several layers of authority and hold sharply different views about legitimate government. Routing resources only through central institutions can strengthen authorities a community fears. Routing them through an ethnic organisation can appear to endorse another political project. Avoiding all institutions may leave the organisation unaccountable and create a private structure centred on itself.

There is no politically empty channel. The responsible approach is conflict-sensitive rather than supposedly neutral: identify who gains recognition and resources, who bears exposure, which authorities can block participation, and what public claims the project’s presence might be taken to make. An international charity should not pretend

to resolve Myanmar's constitutional future. It should avoid making everyday development decisions as though that unresolved history did not exist.

Religion is not an ethnic shorthand

Theravada Buddhism is deeply important in much of Shan social and cultural life. Monasteries can be places of education, merit-making, memory, association, protection, and public authority. Research among Shan communities in Kengtung and in Chiang Mai illustrates the continuing work through which religious identity is maintained in changing settings. Those studies are valuable precisely because they describe particular communities; they do not establish a uniform Shan religious attitude.¹²

Christianity is also locally rooted. In Myanmar it is especially significant among a number of ethnic-minority communities, though affiliation and practice vary. Churches may be worshipping communities, social networks, educational institutions, providers of care, and bearers of ethnic memory. They may also carry the inherited ambiguities examined in Chapter 4: associations with foreign missions and empire, minority resistance, education, humanitarian service, conversion, and cultural change. To call Christianity simply foreign is historically inadequate; to ignore how it may be perceived as foreign is pastorally and politically naïve.

Other religious lives must not be erased. Shan State contains Muslim, Hindu, Chinese religious, animist, ancestral, and hybrid practices, as well as people whose affiliation is uncertain or private. Religious categories used by census takers or mission organisations may not match the ways people narrate obligation and belonging. Nor does adherence tell us whether someone welcomes, distrusts, resists, or is indifferent to a Christian organisation. There is no representative contemporary

survey that permits this book to assign one attitude towards Christianity to “the people of Shan State.”

Mobility is part of the social world

Movement between Shan State and northern Thailand is not an exceptional footnote. People move for safety, employment, education, family, health care, trade, and religious life; the same journey can contain several of these purposes. Some movements are chosen from meaningful alternatives. Others occur under armed pressure, dispossession, debt, recruitment threats, or a lack of viable livelihood. The binary between a voluntary economic migrant and a helpless refugee can therefore obscure more than it explains.

Migration also produces institutions. Shan migrants in Thailand have built temples, media, associations, mutual-aid networks, cultural events, and public spheres. Research on cross-border media and identity shows that migration does not merely dissolve community; it can create new ways of imagining and sustaining it.¹³ Health research in Chiang Mai likewise identifies Shan networks and radio as practical routes through which people navigated treatment, even while language, cost, documentation, and fear constrained access.¹⁴ These are not signs that every need has been met. They are evidence that people who face structural exclusion still organise knowledge and assistance.

Ethnographic and historical work among Lahu communities—some within Shan State and others across the borders of China and Thailand—makes the point more sharply. Frances O’Morchoe compares origin narratives collected across more than a century and shows that stories of migration, loss, conversion, and political classification are not passive folklore. They are ways of interpreting changing relations to states and neighbouring peoples.¹⁵ The research concerns Lahu narratives, not

ethnic Shan identity, but that is precisely why it belongs here: Shan State cannot be represented as one Shan experience with smaller groups added as an afterthought.

Mission history also entered these identity processes. Baptist conversion could supply literacy, translocal networks, a narrative of peoplehood, and distance from dominant Buddhist state identity. It could also alter ritual life and translate fluid local differences into denominational or ethnic boundaries legible to mission institutions. Local Christians did not simply receive those categories. They preached, translated, taught, disagreed, and reworked them. The result was neither cultural continuity untouched by mission nor a foreign identity mechanically imposed from outside.

That point changes the moral picture. If migrants are described only as vulnerable, outsiders may fail to notice the interpreters, organisers, workers, caregivers, religious leaders, and advocates already acting. If they are described only as resilient, outsiders may excuse the systems that make such extraordinary effort necessary. A responsible account holds agency and constraint together.

Evidence from a difficult place

Claims about Shan State are unusually easy to overstate. Conflict restricts access. Surveys conducted by telephone omit households without safe or reliable connectivity and may miss contested areas. Administrative records reflect the territory and institutions that can report. Humanitarian counts are frequently operational snapshots rather than censuses. Local civil-society organisations can document events inaccessible to international staff, but may also write from an advocacy position. Official sources may minimise harms or embed political categories.

International reports often synthesise some of these same inputs, so their agreement does not necessarily represent independent confirmation.

The solution is not to abandon quantitative evidence. It is to preserve what each number actually measures. A household survey estimate should retain its sampling frame. A count of internally displaced people should retain its date, geographic coverage, and definition of “currently displaced.” A report of casualties should state whether it combines deaths and injuries and whether attribution has been verified. A qualitative study should support an account of mechanisms or experience, not a statewide prevalence estimate.

This book therefore distinguishes at least six levels: Myanmar nationally; Shan State as an administrative territory; northern, southern, or eastern subregions; ethnic Shan or Tai Yai people; migrants from Myanmar in Thailand; and selected study participants. “Eastern Myanmar” is not automatically Shan State. “Myanmar migrant” is not automatically Shan. “Shan State resident” is not automatically ethnically Shan. The qualifications may make sentences longer, but they keep people from becoming evidence for claims they never made.

Communities before projects

The borderland is not waiting to be supplied with social life. Religious communities, village relationships, women’s groups, health workers, teachers, migrant networks, and local humanitarian actors already make decisions under pressure. Research on faith-based humanitarian action in northern Myanmar shows the importance of local religious networks while also warning that assistance operates amid contested identities and political relationships.¹⁶ The response to the 2021 coup offers further evidence that religious actors cannot be placed in a single political category. Christian and Buddhist institutions and leaders have differed among themselves; some resisted military rule, some accommodated it, and many faced severe constraints.¹⁷

This does not romanticise “the community.” Local authority can exclude women, young people, minority religions, people with disabilities, migrants, people who use drugs, or those who dissent. Community ownership is not demonstrated merely because an organisation has found a cooperative leader. It requires attention to who speaks, who decides, who bears risk, and who can refuse. Chapters 10 and 11 will examine those tests in detail.

People are not first encountered as a bundle of deficits. They possess knowledge, attachments, obligations, aspirations, and institutions before an organisation arrives. Crisis may damage these capacities and oppressive authority may distort them, but neither authorises outsiders to replace them. A truthful account begins with plural communities acting within unequal constraints, retaining the right to name their problems and hopes rather than becoming material for the helper’s religious success.

Chapter 3. Life under pressure

The most honest account of well-being in Myanmar begins with a warning: the evidence is incomplete, politically contested, and unevenly distributed. Since the February 2021 coup, access has contracted, health and administrative systems have fragmented, displacement has accelerated, and people who collect information have themselves faced danger. A national estimate may include modelled values, inaccessible townships, older baselines, official inputs, and partner reports of differing quality. Shan State data are scarcer still. The figures in this chapter are therefore signals with defined boundaries, not a comprehensive ledger of suffering.

The same caution must not become an excuse for false agnosticism. Multiple independent, United Nations, humanitarian, academic, and local sources document a severe and continuing crisis. The Myanmar military has been the principal perpetrator in the national pattern of documented conflict-related civilian killing and attacks described by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, although ethnic armed organisations, militias, resistance forces, and criminal actors have also caused abuses.¹⁸ The ethical task is to state attribution where evidence permits it, uncertainty where it does not, and the human consequences in either case.

Twenty years of shocks, not one continuous statistic

The last two decades cannot be compressed into a single trend line. Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady delta in May 2008, not Shan State, but its enormous death toll, mass displacement, and the authorities' obstruction and control of aid remain important to the national history of disaster response.¹⁹ Cyclone Mocha devastated western Myanmar in 2023; again, it should not be presented as a

Shan disaster, but it added to a national humanitarian system already under conflict pressure.²⁰ Severe flooding in September 2024 did affect eastern and southern Shan. A provisional humanitarian snapshot reported at least 78 deaths and 47 injuries across affected areas of Shan State, within a national estimate of more than 887,000 people affected. These were emerging reports rather than a final audited mortality census.²¹

On March 28, 2025, a major earthquake caused destruction across central Myanmar and affected parts of Shan State. The World Bank's rapid model estimated approximately US\$11 billion in direct physical damage nationally; that figure is neither a death toll nor the total economic loss.²² In a later telephone household survey, 12 per cent of reachable Shan households reported homes damaged but still liveable and 2 per cent reported homes made unliveable. Inaccessible places and households without safe telephone access could be missed. Nationally, only 21 per cent of surveyed earthquake-affected households reported receiving assistance, and 6 per cent were still receiving it at interview.²³

Natural hazards become disasters through social conditions. A flood or earthquake damages more when hospitals have already been attacked, transport is insecure, household savings have been exhausted, public authority is distrusted, and aid access is restricted. The disaster is therefore neither purely natural nor reducible to the armed conflict. It is a collision between hazard, exposure, weakened services, and political decisions.

Armed violence and displacement

The 2021 coup intensified armed conflict across the country. OHCHR's annual update for 2025 relayed a verified minimum of 7,646 civilians killed by the military between February 2021 and the end of 2025, including 1,514 during 2025. It documented 982 civilian deaths from

military airstrikes in 2025, including 232 children. These figures overlap: the airstrike deaths are not additional to all civilian deaths. They also exclude cases pending verification and indirect deaths caused by deprivation.²⁴

Shan State has experienced airstrikes, shelling, arbitrary detention, forced recruitment, landmines and explosive remnants, displacement, and abuses by more than one armed actor. Amnesty International's research on northern Shan in 2018–2019 documented violations by the Myanmar military and ethnic armed organisations, using incident and interview evidence rather than a complete victim census.²⁵ More recent Shan Human Rights Foundation reports provide locally gathered allegations about particular attacks in 2025 and 2026. They are important early documentation, especially where international access is poor, but their event details should be attributed and not treated as independently verified statewide totals.²⁶

Explosive hazards continue after a battle moves elsewhere. UNICEF reported 1,082 civilian landmine and explosive-remnant casualties nationally in 2024, including 256 in Shan State. For 2025 it reported 745 nationally, including 245 in Shan State, across 182 recorded Shan incidents. These are reported deaths and injuries combined, not all deaths, and not every incident was attributed to the junta. A lower annual reported total does not demonstrate that travel, cultivation, or play has become safe.²⁷

Displacement counts are snapshots of people known or estimated to be away from home. On August 10, 2026, the UNHCR operational overview reported about 4.031 million people internally displaced across Myanmar, of whom about 3.797 million had been displaced after February 2021. The latter is a subset of the former. The same snapshot listed approximately 21,400 people currently displaced in northern Shan and 94,600 in southern Shan. These two figures are not established as a complete statewide total: geographic categories, reporting coverage,

movements, returns, and repeated displacement matter.²⁸ Returning home also does not prove safety or restoration.

Livelihood, food, and the shrinking field of choice

Poverty estimates differ because they ask different questions and reach different populations. A 2023 UNDP survey estimated that 49.7 per cent of the represented Myanmar population was living in poverty and 76 per cent was poor or economically vulnerable. These categories overlap; they must not be added. Conflict areas and telephone access affect coverage.²⁹ The value of such estimates lies less in spurious precision than in the consistent picture of widespread economic insecurity.

The World Bank's ninth Myanmar Household Welfare Survey, conducted from July to October 2025, supplies rare Shan-specific estimates while making its access limitations explicit. Among reachable Shan households, 20.1 per cent had a low food-consumption score; 39.2 per cent of children aged six to twenty-three months were reported not to receive a minimum acceptable diet. These measures describe food consumption and feeding practice, not clinical wasting or stunting. Twelve Shan townships were unreachable in a related module, and people without phones or in the most dangerous places may be systematically different from respondents.³⁰

In that survey round, 35.7 per cent of Shan households reported a shock from higher food prices, 36.5 per cent higher fuel prices, and 25.2 per cent employment loss. Among surveyed Shan farm households, 25.7 per cent reported a climatic shock and 20.7 per cent flooding; these experiences overlap.³¹ Such findings help explain how trafficking risk can rise without poverty mechanically causing trafficking. A household facing armed movement restrictions, crop loss, high prices, debt, and recruitment threats has fewer safe choices. The apparent decision to

migrate or accept risky work may be voluntary in law while heavily constrained in practice.

Unequal exposure within the same crisis

Household averages can conceal who absorbs a shock. When food becomes scarce, adults and children may not eat equally. When a clinic is distant, the person who can travel without attracting attention has a different chance of treatment from the person who needs an escort, an interpreter, accessible transport, or regular medication. A household may report that care was obtained even though one member's care was postponed. The unit of measurement is therefore not a minor technical choice; it can determine whose deprivation is visible.

Gender shapes exposure without producing one universal story. Women and girls may face sexual violence, coerced marriage, unsafe domestic work, reproductive-health interruption, and dependence on brokers or male relatives. Men and boys may face forced recruitment, hazardous labour, detention, or pressure to migrate. People whose gender identity or sexuality is stigmatised can face additional danger in housing, work, policing, and health care. These patterns overlap with age, disability, ethnicity, documentation, and economic position. A programme that announces "women are vulnerable" without asking which women, to what, and who controls the proposed response can replace analysis with a label.

Children experience conflict both directly and through institutional loss. The 2025 explosive-hazard report included 155 children among the 745 reported civilian casualties nationally; that child figure is a subset, not an additional total.³² School interruption, displacement, family separation, poor infant feeding, recruitment, and the loss of safe play space are less easily combined. A child who leaves school for work may increase a household's immediate survival while losing future options. Calling the

family's decision irrational ignores the constraint; calling it freely chosen ignores the loss.

Disability is also both a preexisting condition and a consequence of violence, illness, and explosive injury. People with disabilities are often missing from telephone surveys, migration studies, public meetings, and livelihood programmes designed around standardised labour. Their need for continuing assistance challenges a careless use of "self-reliance." A person may gain agency through reliable interdependence—personal assistance, accessible transport, medication, family support, or a responsive institution—rather than by ceasing to need anyone. This is one reason the book treats sustainability as durable and accountable relationships, not the withdrawal of care.

These distinctions matter for Christian witness.

Compassion directed towards a statistical household can still overlook the person with least authority inside it. The Gospels' attention to people at the edge of a crowd is not a substitute for disaggregated evidence, but it supplies a reason to seek it.

Health systems under attack and strain

WHO's March 2026 Public Health Situation Analysis estimated that 9.3 million people in Myanmar needed help accessing basic health services in the 2026 planning year. It reported national modelled estimates rather than a census of individual patients: infant mortality at 34.11 per 1,000 live births, maternal mortality at 184.6 per 100,000 live births, 263,000 incident tuberculosis cases in 2024, and treatment initiation for about 44 per cent of estimated new and relapse TB cases. None of these is a Shan-specific rate, and the inputs combine models, surveillance, older surveys, and fragmented administrative information.³³

Conflict does not merely coincide with weakened care. Physicians for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch

reported that, between February 2021 and an April 2025 cutoff, military and associated forces had attacked at least 263 health facilities, killed at least 74 health workers, and arrested or prosecuted more than 872. Facility attacks, worker deaths, and arrests are different measures and cannot be summed. Monitoring under insecurity will also miss events.³⁴ The effect nevertheless extends beyond each recorded incident: staff flee, clinics close, patients delay travel, supply chains fracture, and a disaster strikes a system with less capacity to respond.

Mental health evidence requires equal care. A telephone survey of 1,038 adults conducted in July and August 2021 found that 34.9 per cent screened positive for at least one probable mental disorder, including 22.2 per cent for probable anxiety, 14.3 per cent for probable depression, and 8.1 per cent for probable post-traumatic stress disorder. The conditions overlap, the screen is not a clinical diagnosis, and no Shan subtotal was reported.³⁵ The study is evidence of substantial distress among those reached, not permission to diagnose a nation.

Narcotics and the claim of population control

Myanmar is a major site of opium and synthetic-drug production and trafficking. Cultivation estimates, production models, and seizure data answer different questions. A rise in seizures can reflect more production, stronger enforcement, changed routes, or all three; it is not a direct measure of consumption. Nor does production volume establish the prevalence of dependence in Shan communities.³⁶

The political economy is nonetheless inseparable from armed authority. Research on drugs and conflict in Myanmar describes how illicit markets can finance armed actors, become entangled with militia arrangements, and expose some communities to punishment while protecting powerful participants.³⁷ Forty extended interviews and life

histories conducted by Shan researchers in Taunggyi between 2018 and 2020 add a local account of pathways into drug harms through precarious work, coping, social relationships, unequal enforcement, and changing urban economies. The study illuminates mechanisms; it does not estimate statewide addiction prevalence.³⁸

Some community interpretations describe narcotics and addiction as a means of weakening or controlling minority populations. Those perceptions deserve to be recorded because they arise within histories of violence, dispossession, impunity, and selective enforcement. But a stronger factual claim—that the central military leadership operates a coordinated policy whose intended purpose is to addict Shan people—requires evidence of direction, intent, and implementation that the present record does not supply. Profiting from drug economies, tolerating protected actors, using punitive enforcement selectively, and allowing devastating harms are grave findings. They should not be made less credible by adding an unproved theory of centrally directed population control.

The 2025 household survey found that 24.3 per cent of reachable Shan households perceived a community drug-use problem during the prior three months. That is a measure of household perception, not individual use or clinical dependence.³⁹ Even so, it locates drug harm inside the everyday concerns reported by residents. A community response may need prevention, voluntary and evidence-based treatment, livelihood options, harm reduction, protection from violent enforcement, and accountability for powerful producers—not stigma or the assumption that every person who uses a drug lacks agency.

Trafficking, forced criminality, and constrained migration

International law defines trafficking through an act, coercive or deceptive means, and an exploitative purpose,

with a distinct rule for children. It does not require crossing a border. Prevention duties include attention to poverty, underdevelopment, unequal opportunity, and the demand that fosters exploitation.⁴⁰ Poverty is therefore relevant but insufficient as a complete explanation. Conflict, displacement, documentation status, gender, ethnicity, debt, recruitment practices, labour regulation, corruption, and demand for exploitable labour all shape risk.

Research using IOM-assisted victim records finds an association between economic shocks and observed trafficking cases. But those records contain people identified and assisted through IOM and partner systems; unseen victims and places without organisational access are absent. The result is not population prevalence and does not prove the effect of any Circuit programme.⁴¹ OHCHR's research on online scam operations further shows why stereotypes fail: trafficked people forced into criminal activity may be educated or professionally experienced, recruited by apparently legitimate work, and then confined through violence and debt.⁴² To describe them only as offenders can reproduce the traffickers' control.

HIV across the border

The HIV evidence among Myanmar and Shan migrants in northern Thailand is important and easy to misuse. It consists of different selected populations, not one representative survey. A 2016–2017 study tested 250 ethnic-minority male sex workers at eleven Chiang Mai venues; 55.6 per cent identified as Shan and nine participants tested HIV positive, a study prevalence of 3.6 per cent. This cannot be generalised to all Shan migrants, all men, or all sex workers.⁴³

A 2023 convenience survey of 424 Myanmar migrants in Chiang Mai did not test for HIV. It found study-specific

gaps in knowledge and condom attitudes: 64.2 per cent knew that condoms can prevent HIV, while 77.2 per cent of the 215 respondents who reported a regular partner said they never used condoms with that partner. A linked analysis of the same 424 people reported stigmatising beliefs, including that 74.1 per cent believed anticipated reactions deter testing. These are reported attitudes in one selected sample, not observed discrimination or infection prevalence—and the two papers are not 848 independent respondents.⁴⁴

Among 396 migrant sex workers recruited in 2019 through venues and nongovernmental networks, reported consistent condom use differed by partner type: 87.9 per cent among those reporting clients, 53.7 per cent among those reporting casual partners, and 17.0 per cent among those reporting regular partners. Partner groups overlapped and denominators differed. Of the 372 who answered the ethnicity item, 91.7 per cent identified as Shan or Tai Yai.⁴⁵ The finding suggests that intimacy, trust, negotiation, and economic context matter; a generic awareness message is unlikely to explain all behaviour.

Qualitative studies with Shan patients and women living with HIV describe fear of arrest, language barriers, cost, gendered dependence, and anticipated rejection, alongside the help provided by Shan networks, radio, interpreters, and hospital registration. Because participants were already connected to care—and in one study were insured—those wholly excluded may be underrepresented.⁴⁶

Thailand's 2024 migration synthesis estimated that 49 per cent of eligible regular workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Viet Nam were enrolled in neither of the two principal insurance schemes. This is national, not Chiang Mai-specific, and excludes irregular migrants.⁴⁷

Conflict also interrupts treatment inside Shan State. After fighting escalated around Lashio in late 2023, an operational account reported that a community group

contacted 1,089 people living with HIV and helped them obtain multi-month antiretroviral supplies, while more than 1,400 people received extended HIV services. The groups may overlap, so the numbers must not be added.⁴⁸ In 2021, Médecins Sans Frontières reported losing contact with 120 patients served by Shan outreach teams, a 50 per cent increase from the previous year. Loss of contact does not establish death, treatment cessation, or migration to Thailand.⁴⁹ What it does show is the importance of continuity, trusted local navigation, and services that can move with people.

What the data permit us to say

The evidence does not justify a single composite misery score, a precise ranking of Shan State against every other region, or the claim that every hardship has one cause. It does justify several conclusions. Armed violence—predominantly the military’s violence in the documented national pattern—has killed civilians, displaced populations, damaged care, and narrowed livelihoods. Other armed actors have also committed abuses. Earthquakes, floods, and cyclones have struck systems already weakened by conflict and economic collapse. Food insecurity, disrupted treatment, explosive hazards, trafficking, and drug harms interact, but their statistics cannot be casually combined.

The absence of a complete figure is itself politically important, but it must be interpreted carefully. Missing data can result from active obstruction, fear of surveillance, destroyed institutions, lack of funds, mobile populations, language barriers, or a survey design that excludes people without phones. It can also reflect ordinary methodological limits rather than deliberate concealment. “No data” does not mean “no problem,” but neither does it authorise the researcher to insert a preferred estimate.

For practice, this means using several forms of knowledge together: household surveys for patterns among people reached; operational data for service pressure; qualitative research for mechanisms and meaning; local documentation for incidents that outsiders cannot access; and community deliberation for priorities. Agreement among them can strengthen confidence, but apparent agreement should be checked for shared sources. Disagreement should remain visible rather than being averaged away.

Most importantly, the figures describe constraints, not identities. They do not turn people into passive victims or development organisations into rescuers. The question for sustainable development is how to expand the range of safe and meaningful choices under these conditions: choices about food, work, movement, treatment, family, faith, and political belonging. Emergency relief will sometimes be indispensable. Long-term work will sometimes be interrupted. No programme can guarantee protection from an airstrike or cure a political economy of impunity. A credible Christian organisation begins by telling the truth about those limits—and by refusing to make the people living through them carry the additional burden of proving the helper's success.

Chapter 4. Christianity, colonialism, and inherited trust

A Christian worker does not enter a community carrying only personal intentions. The name *Christian* arrives with histories the worker did not choose: care and domination, translation and cultural destruction, dissent and imperial privilege, local courage and foreign control. Those histories are not identical in every place. Nor do they determine how every person in Shan State will respond. They do, however, form part of the moral situation. Trust cannot be demanded on the ground that this particular organisation means well.

The history is easily told in two equally misleading ways. One makes Christianity the spiritual engine of European conquest, as though every Christian supported empire and colonised Christians possessed no agency. The other separates mission from empire so completely that common ships, law, education, racial hierarchy, economic power, and political protection disappear. A more truthful account asks about mechanisms: when was Christian language used to authorise coercion? When did missions depend on imperial structures? What institutions benefited? How did local people appropriate, resist, or transform the faith? And what habits survive after formal colonial rule?

Before modern colonialism: coercion was already possible

The entanglement of Christian authority and political force did not begin with Protestant missions. In 380 CE, the edict commonly known as *Cunctos populos* gave imperial authorisation to Nicene Christianity and stigmatised dissenting Christians. It did not instantly create uniform enforcement throughout the empire, but it marks a decisive use of state power to define religious orthodoxy.⁵⁰ In 408, Augustine defended imperial compulsion against

the Donatists and interpreted “compel them to come in” from Luke 14:23 as support for coercive correction. His argument arose in a specific late-Roman conflict; it should neither be made the sole cause of later persecution nor excused as having no legacy.⁵¹

European expansion supplied new forms and scale. The papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* of 1455 joined the expansion of the Christian faith to Portuguese rights of conquest, trade monopoly, and the enslavement of designated non-Christian peoples.⁵² The Spanish *Requerimiento*, developed in the early sixteenth century, announced papal and royal authority and threatened war, dispossession, and enslavement if communities did not submit. It was a juridical ritual of conquest, not a meaningful offer made between equal parties.⁵³

These documents do not prove an unbroken institutional line from Rome to every Protestant missionary. They establish something narrower and sufficient: Christian claims could be fused with sovereign power so that rejection of an imposed political order was narrated as resistance to God. Once that fusion occurs, proclamation is no longer simply speech. The threatened person hears it through weapons, law, and unequal control of land.

Protestant mission and expanding empire

The Reformation fractured Western Christian authority but did not end the possibility of imperial Christianity. Richard Hakluyt’s 1584 case for English expansion combined Protestant mission, commerce, settlement, and rivalry with Catholic powers. It was advocacy rather than a record of what every colony implemented, yet it shows that religious and economic purposes could be imagined together from the beginning of English overseas expansion.⁵⁴

Later Protestant histories contain direct contradictions. George Whitefield preached new birth and criticised some

mistreatment of enslaved people while owning enslaved people and advocating the legalisation of slavery in Georgia.⁵⁵ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel accepted plantations in Barbados that were worked by enslaved people.⁵⁶ John Wesley's final letter to William Wilberforce, by contrast, encouraged resistance to slavery.⁵⁷ These examples prevent easy denominational innocence. They also prevent the claim that Christianity produced only one political response. Christian scripture and institutions were used to rationalise slavery and to contest it; the power, interests, and social location of interpreters mattered.

The same conflict appears in later colonial education. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the residential-school system pursued cultural genocide through the removal of Indigenous children, suppression of language and spirituality, family separation, and institutional abuse. Churches administered many schools within a state-created system. Indigenous families and children resisted, survived, preserved culture, and later forced public reckoning; their agency does not reduce the churches' responsibility.⁵⁸

Nor is "missionary" a synonym for "colonialist" in every encounter. Missionaries sometimes criticised officials, defended communities, recorded languages, offered education or medicine, and opposed slavery or racial domination. Colonised Christians developed theologies of liberation and public resistance. The 1985 *Kairos Document* in South Africa denounced a "state theology" that legitimated apartheid, while the Belhar Confession rejected racial separation and affirmed reconciliation inseparable from justice.⁵⁹ These are not alibis for Christian institutions that benefited from racial order. They demonstrate that Christianity is a contested tradition in which oppressed believers have judged both church and state.

Burma: mission beside conquest, not a simple conspiracy

Christian presence in Burma predates full British colonial rule, including Catholic communities associated with earlier European contact. American Baptist and other Protestant missions expanded in the nineteenth century as British power advanced through three Anglo-Burmese wars. The chronological proximity matters, but mission and colonial government were not one organisation. American missionaries were not simply British officials; their relationships with colonial power, Burmese courts, and ethnic communities varied.

Jörg Schendel's study of missionaries in Upper Burma before the 1885 annexation helps resist a retrospective story in which British occupation first created all missionary access.⁶⁰ At the same time, colonial conquest altered the field in which missions operated. It supplied security, transport, law, schools, print networks, and political classifications that could advantage missionary institutions. Christian affiliation among some minority peoples could then be interpreted by Bamar Buddhist nationalists as alliance with alien rule, whether or not an individual convert had sought such an alliance.

Pum Za Mang's work is especially useful because it rejects both denial and monocausal blame. His argument is not that colonialism and Christianity invented ethnic difference from nothing. Rather, colonial rule and mission intensified existing resentments and divisions, while postcolonial Burmanisation and failures to accommodate minority peoples deepened them further.⁶¹ This distinction is essential. If missionaries are blamed for creating every conflict, precolonial histories and postcolonial state responsibility disappear. If colonial intensification is denied, the institutional advantages, ethnic classifications, and religious symbolism of empire disappear.

Mission education and translation were similarly double-edged. Literacy, printed texts, schools, and vernacular translation could expand access to knowledge and support minority identity. They could also make Western Christian categories normative, judge local religions as darkness, displace indigenous knowledge, and channel advancement through conversion-linked institutions. A grammar, dictionary, or Bible translation is not merely domination; local collaborators make language work possible and readers appropriate texts in unplanned ways. Yet preserving a language in print does not by itself prove respect for the people who speak it.

Pum Za Mang's study of mission education from the sixteenth century to independence emphasises contributions that a purely accusatory narrative can miss. Mission schools introduced forms of Western education, educated influential Burmese figures, and became part of the country's social and political formation. His argument is intentionally corrective and is written from within a Christian historical concern. It establishes that mission education cannot be described only as cultural destruction; it does not make schooling politically neutral or erase unequal access, disciplinary power, and the prestige attached to colonial knowledge.⁶²

Schooling reveals why a ledger of benefits and harms is inadequate. A student can gain literacy and opportunity through an institution that also teaches contempt for ancestral practice. A minority community can use mission education to resist assimilation while adopting categories formed by another foreign institution. A school can serve children whom the colonial state neglected and simultaneously train them for an economy and bureaucracy ordered by colonial rule. These are not logical contradictions to be solved by deciding whether missionaries were "good" or "bad." They are relationships of power in which real goods and real injuries can coexist.

Translation presents the same complexity. Missionaries are often credited with producing grammars, dictionaries, and Scripture in local languages, but the work depended on unnamed or under-credited local teachers, translators, printers, storytellers, and early converts. Translation also makes choices about what counts as religion, spirit, sin, salvation, community, and God. Those choices can stabilise one dialect, marginalise another, or give new authority to a written form. Once a text circulates, however, it is not controlled completely by its foreign sponsor. Local readers preach from it, contest its meanings, compose hymns, form institutions, and sometimes use Christian language against colonial or military power.

Research on Lahu origin narratives illustrates this interaction without making the Lahu experience representative of everyone in Shan State. Narratives collected across Burma, China, and Thailand changed within histories of state encroachment, migration, conflict, and Baptist conversion.⁶³ Christianity became part of how some people narrated loss and collective identity. That is more complex than the claim that mission erased culture, and more complex than the claim that conversion simply recovered an identity that had always existed in Christian form.

Retrospective Shan mission histories describe extraordinary commitment, language learning, travel, schools, medical work, preaching, and local conversion. They are valuable records of institutional memory and sometimes reproduce nineteenth-century correspondence. They are also written from within mission traditions and cannot establish how the wider population experienced those activities.⁶⁴ Their theological confidence should be read alongside political histories and, where possible, local-language and non-Christian accounts.

Conversion, identity, and the postcolonial state

In independent Myanmar, Buddhism, Bamar identity, and national belonging have often been drawn together in public discourse. This does not mean all Buddhists support Buddhist nationalism, any more than all Christians support foreign mission. It does mean that conversion may be read politically. Mang's research on Burmese nationalism and Christianity describes the suspicion faced by Christians and the association of Christianity with minority identity and colonial history.⁶⁵

The administrative language of ethnicity reinforced this problem. Colonial and postcolonial classifications presented peoples as singular, bounded, and territorially rooted even where identity was multiple and mobile. The 2014 census controversy showed that categories associated with "national races" still affected claims to belonging and representation.⁶⁶ Religion can become attached to these categories: Buddhism treated as evidence of authentic Bamar belonging, Christianity treated as evidence of minority or foreign alignment. Neither inference is reliable at the level of a person, but both can shape how institutions are perceived.

Modern Buddhist nationalism should also be distinguished from Buddhism itself. Monks, lay movements, political parties, military authorities, and ordinary practitioners have not spoken with one voice. Buddhist moral language has been used to support exclusion and to oppose violence; Buddhist institutions have both accommodated and resisted military power. The same analytical fairness demanded for Christianity must be extended to Buddhism. Otherwise a Christian critique of religious nationalism can reproduce the very civilisational hierarchy it condemns.

The state's Burmanisation policies complicate the familiar coloniser-versus-missionary binary. Minority Christians can be targets of majoritarian religious nationalism, military

violence, and cultural assimilation. Churches may preserve languages, organise education and relief, and give institutional form to resistance. Grassroots public theology from Myanmar emphasises Christian engagement with ethnic conflict, democracy, and the common good rather than withdrawal into private salvation.⁶⁷ The church in this history is both capable of domination and vulnerable to it.

The 2021 coup made that plurality visible. Research on religious responses documents Christian and Buddhist participation in resistance, civil disobedience, relief, and moral protest, alongside hesitation, division, and institutional constraint.⁶⁸ The military has attacked Christian-majority areas and religious sites, but religious persecution cannot be isolated neatly from the military's broader campaigns against ethnic communities and political opposition. Nor should Christian suffering be used to eclipse Buddhist, Muslim, traditional-religion, or nonreligious victims.

For an overseas Christian charity, this history has an immediate implication. Local Christians are not junior representatives of Western Christianity. They are interpreters and actors with their own histories, disagreements, theological traditions, and political risks. Partnership that treats them merely as a culturally convenient route to other people repeats the hierarchy it claims to overcome.

What can be said about present attitudes

There is no sound representative survey from which to declare what the people of Myanmar, the residents of Shan State, or ethnic Shan people now think of Christianity. Available evidence is indirect and situated: religious census affiliation; scholarship on nationalism; studies of particular Buddhist and migrant communities; church histories; episodes of restriction or violence; interreligious action after the coup; and organisational accounts of local service.

These sources support a range of plausible attitudes, not a population percentage.

Some people may associate churches with education, clinics, emergency assistance, trusted minority networks, or resistance to military rule. Some may encounter Christianity as the faith of neighbours and relatives rather than foreigners. Others may associate it with colonial intrusion, ethnic division, cultural disrespect, aggressive proselytism, or Western money. The same person may admire Christian service and reject Christian doctrine, trust a local church and distrust an international mission, or convert without accepting foreign cultural authority. Indifference is also possible.

Religious identity is not the only variable. A person's response may depend on which denomination or ethnic church is involved, the conduct of a particular worker, whether assistance is scarce, whether participation threatens family belonging, and whether the organisation appears allied with an armed or political actor. In a setting where refusing a powerful outsider may carry costs, apparent openness is not reliable evidence of unconstrained consent.

Colonial Christianity as a pattern of power

Formal empire is not required for colonial habits to persist. They recur whenever outsiders assume that their money gives them superior knowledge, treat local culture as an obstacle, control the account of success, or make access to goods morally conditional on receptivity to the donor's faith. They recur when local staff provide legitimacy but do not share decision rights; when photographs turn suffering into fundraising property; when English-language reports outweigh community testimony; or when short-term visitors are cast as protagonists in work sustained by local people.

They also recur through time. Donor schedules can become a form of authority when a community must produce rapid agreement, measurable change, and a tidy exit within a grant cycle. Translation can be rushed so that English concepts govern the meeting even when everyone appears to have been consulted. The organisation may own the vehicles, passwords, bank relationship, monitoring forms, and contact with foreign audiences. A village committee can nominally “own” the project while remaining unable to alter its budget or public description.

Decolonising practice is therefore not achieved by transferring every decision to a person labelled local. Local elites can reproduce gender, class, ethnic, religious, and generational exclusions. Nor does it require abandoning outside knowledge or international solidarity. It requires making authority contestable: clarifying which decisions are genuinely open, compensating local expertise, allowing time for disagreement, protecting confidential criticism, sharing data and authorship, and establishing what recourse exists when partnership fails.

The deepest change concerns the imagined direction of knowledge. A recurring colonial mission image placed a Christian source of light opposite a supposedly dark society. That image could obscure the knowledge and moral judgement of the people being addressed. A noncolonial Christian partnership expects correction to travel in every direction. The outside organisation may bring resources or technical skill; it must also become capable of repentance because of what local people know.

Robert Kilpatrick raises a related concern in his doctoral research on peacebuilding in Myanmar and Armenia. Reflecting on his own position as a researcher, he questions a hierarchy in which Western knowledge judges other ways of understanding. His discussion is useful precisely because the researcher also has to examine his authority. It does not amount to a history of colonial

Christianity: Kilpatrick explicitly leaves the colonial roots of these relationships largely unexplored. The narrower lesson for this book is that good intentions do not exempt the person collecting evidence from unequal power. Asking local people for information becomes a different relationship when their interpretation can change the questions, challenge the conclusion, or limit what is published.⁶⁹

Evangelism becomes colonial not because religious persuasion is inherently illegitimate, but because persuasion can be joined to material and institutional asymmetry. Food, schooling, medical care, or livelihood access can make a religious invitation difficult to refuse. Counting conversions as a development output rewards staff for crossing the line between witness and leverage. Even a sincere testimony can become coercive when delivered by the person who controls a household's opportunity.

Sustainable development is not automatically decolonial. A livelihood project can impose imported market assumptions, transfer unpaid labour to women, romanticise local institutions, or withdraw support before excluded people benefit. Participatory meetings can ratify decisions already made by the donor. The moral test is not whether the project uses fashionable vocabulary but whether people possess meaningful influence, information, recourse, and freedom—including freedom concerning Christianity.

Remembering without paralysis

Historical responsibility does not require Christian silence, self-hatred, or the belief that every relationship is irredeemably contaminated. It requires truth, repentance, and changed practice. An organisation can disclose its Christian identity without presenting itself as culturally neutral. It can ask local partners what that identity signifies in their setting. It can separate eligibility from

worship and conversion; protect privacy; invite criticism; translate budgets and decisions; recognise local intellectual and spiritual authority; and report refusal without treating it as failure.

It can also remember Christian resistance. Augustine's coercive logic is part of Christian history, but so are Wesley's antislavery encouragement, Belhar's refusal of racial separation, Indigenous Christian survival, and Myanmar Christians who oppose dictatorship. Remembering only domination can erase those who used their faith against domination. Remembering only service can erase those harmed in Christ's name.

The result is not a clean institutional identity. It is a disciplined one. The speaker who asks, "Where does the gospel fit?" may intend a faithful question. But the listener may hear echoes of a history in which Christianity arrived attached to power and help carried expectations. A charity cannot control every inherited association. It can control whether its conduct confirms or contradicts them.

Christian identity carries inherited meanings. The answer is witness in which help can be refused, leadership remains local, and no one must become Christian to be treated as a neighbour.

Chapter 5. The good news Jesus announces

The case for compassionate development has to begin with a question more fundamental than whether churches should support a particular kind of charity. What good news does Jesus announce in the Gospels, and how do the people around him encounter it?

The answer cannot be reduced to a list of helpful actions. Neither can the helpful actions be treated as incidental to the answer. The Gospel narratives connect announcement, encounter, healing, conflict, instruction, and costly following. They portray a message that addresses people through what Jesus says and through what happens in his presence.

This chapter argues that concern for people's embodied lives belongs within the message the Gospels present. It also establishes the limits of that argument. Sustainable development is a contemporary category. The Gospels do not offer a project design manual, and Jesus' kingdom cannot be equated with the success of an institution. The connection between Gospel compassion and development must be reasoned through, not assumed.

Four accounts and a defined question

The governing texts in this study are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Pauline epistles do not determine what the Gospels are allowed to mean. That boundary serves the question being asked: how does the message of Jesus, as these narratives present it, bear on compassionate action and the use of power?

The boundary does not yield access to a Jesus untouched by interpretation. Each Gospel is itself a shaped account. The three Synoptic Gospels share material and have literary relationships that scholars debate. Their parallels

cannot simply be counted as independent confirmations of a conclusion. Goodacre's treatment of the Synoptic problem illustrates why similarities and differences require explanation rather than arithmetic.⁷⁰

Accordingly, this chapter usually describes what a Gospel presents, emphasises, or connects. It does not claim to reconstruct the exact spoken words behind every scene. Historical questions remain important, but a literary and theological reading of the four narratives is already a substantial inquiry with its own limits.

The reading text used here is the public-domain World English Bible. It is a practical translation, not a critical edition of the Greek text. Where a conclusion depends on a disputed passage or variant, that problem must be identified. The central argument does not depend on the longer ending of Mark or on the disputed placement and textual history of John 7:53-8:11.⁷¹

A further discipline is to distinguish textual observation from contemporary application. "Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants" describes Mark's narrative. "Development partners should give people meaningful influence over decisions" proposes an ethical application. "A particular participatory programme improves well-being" states an empirical claim requiring other evidence. Confusing these steps would allow a biblical citation to do work it cannot do.

Compassion within a Jewish scriptural world

Jesus' compassion must be read within his Jewish setting. It does not make sense to present him as introducing love into a religion otherwise governed by indifference. As Amy-Jill Levine emphasises, Jesus belongs within Jewish religious life, and that life was diverse.⁷²

The Gospels themselves supply a safeguard against this distortion. In Mark 12:28-34, Jesus answers a scribe by

joining love of God and love of neighbour. The scribe understands the significance of this answer, and Jesus commends him. In Luke 10:25–28, the legal expert supplies the paired commands, and Jesus approves the response. The demands come from Deuteronomy and Leviticus; the stories do not present compassion as an escape from Israel's scriptures.

Matthew reinforces the point. Jesus invokes Hosea's appeal for mercy in disputes concerning meals and hunger (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). He names justice, mercy, and faith among the weightier matters of the law (23:23). In the Sermon on the Mount, he resists the suggestion that his task is simply to abolish the law and the prophets (5:17–20).

These observations matter to the moral argument of this book. A critique of Christian domination would undermine itself if it relied on a caricature of Judaism. The disciples' failures, the variety of responses to Jesus, and the internal character of scriptural disputes must remain visible. A conflict scene does not authorise a judgement against every member of another religious community.

The same care is needed in reading the Samaritan parable. Luke does not explain why the priest and Levite pass the injured traveller. Inventing a purity motive and then contrasting Jewish ritual with Christian love adds an argument the narrative does not supply. Ryan's reexamination of the parable is useful precisely because it challenges familiar interpretive assumptions.⁷³

The result is a stronger account of compassion. Mercy appears within a continuing argument about faithful life before God, with implications for how people treat those whom they encounter. It is not the private possession of one religious group, awarded to that group by a hostile portrayal of another.

God's kingdom and the call to respond

Mark introduces Jesus' public proclamation with the fulfilment of time, the nearness of God's kingdom, and a call to repent and believe (Mark 1:14-15). The announcement concerns God's action and the response it demands. An interpretation that retains material assistance while removing repentance and belief would omit part of Mark's opening statement.

The following scenes prevent the reverse omission. Mark tells of calling followers, teaching, exorcism, and healing. In 1:29-39, Jesus' movement between care, prayer, and further preaching resists a single-activity definition of his work. The narrative gives preaching its own importance, including the decision to move on to other towns. The people seeking relief also remain real participants in the account.

God's kingdom names the horizon within which these activities belong. It cannot be translated without remainder into economic growth, a particular political arrangement, or the survival of a Christian organisation. The prayer for God's kingdom in Matthew asks for God's will to be done on earth (Matthew 6:9-10). It does not authorise an institution to identify its own preferences with that will.

The Gospels also preserve expectation, warning, and judgement. Jesus teaches watchfulness, speaks about the coming of the Son of Man, and describes a future reckoning (Mark 13; Matthew 24-25). Whatever position a reader takes in the scholarly debates about these passages, they prevent an account in which the kingdom simply means gradual improvements brought about by human planning.

That limit is relevant to development. Christians may work patiently for durable improvements without claiming that their plans complete God's purposes. A project can be good, incomplete, vulnerable, and in need of correction.

The language of the kingdom should deepen accountability rather than shield the project from it.

Repentance likewise reaches beyond the person whom a missionary hopes to persuade. If Jesus' announcement calls for a changed orientation before God, the person controlling money or expertise is also addressed. The Gospels' criticism of status-seeking, wealth, and self-display supplies reasons to examine the giver's conduct (Matthew 6:1-4; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 12:13-21). The demand for change does not travel in only one direction.

Luke's announcement to the poor

Luke gives the announcement a distinctive scriptural form. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus reads language concerning good news to the poor, release for captives, sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed, and announces its fulfilment (Luke 4:16-21). The scene makes bodily and social conditions part of the account of God's promised action.

It is possible to debate how each term functions and how the passage relates to wider prophetic traditions. It is much harder to explain why the passage names these conditions if material suffering is supposed to be irrelevant to the message. Luke's narrative directs attention towards people experiencing deprivation and restriction.

Yet the passage does not specify a modern economic programme. A complete claim that Jesus here institutes a particular Jubilee system would require more historical and linguistic argument than an appeal to the acceptable year alone supplies. The text can ground attention to release and restoration without determining the design of a loan fund, a market project, or a public health service.

The rest of the Nazareth scene also belongs in the interpretation. Jesus recalls prophetic encounters involving a widow at Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, and the

audience responds with anger (Luke 4:22–30). The story interrupts any easy claim that divine favour can be possessed by the familiar group. It is a narrated conflict, not a licence to condemn Jewish people collectively or to imagine that Christian communities are immune to similar expectations of privilege.

Luke's later blessings and woes continue to make economic conditions difficult to ignore. Jesus addresses the poor and hungry and warns the rich and satisfied (Luke 6:20–26). Matthew's phrase about poverty of spirit should not be imported into Luke to dissolve that emphasis. Each Gospel deserves to be heard in its own wording and setting.

Neither does Luke's emphasis support a romantic account of poverty. Hunger is not praised as a development strategy. The promise concerns its reversal. If those who are hungry are to be filled, the deprivation itself is not being declared desirable. The corresponding warning confronts forms of security that can become indifferent to others.

Gosnell's account of valuing others offers a useful way to trace these relationships across Luke's narrative. Its contribution is interpretive: attention to people's worth helps connect episodes that might otherwise remain isolated. It does not convert Luke into a modern theory of individual autonomy or establish the results of contemporary interventions.⁷⁴

What the signs communicate

When messengers ask whether Jesus is the expected one, his answer in Luke directs them to what they have seen and heard: healing, restored capacities, the raising of the dead, and good news addressed to the poor (Luke 7:18–23; compare Matthew 11:2–6). Actions and announcement together bear on the question of his identity.

The structure of the answer matters. Bodily restoration is not an unrelated kindness that happens to accompany the message. It helps disclose what kind of promised action the narrative understands to be taking place. At the same time, the actions are interpreted in relation to Jesus and God's purposes. They do not become self-explanatory proof that every beneficial activity has the same theological meaning.

Mark's feeding narratives make the relation concrete. In Mark 6, Jesus' compassion for the crowd leads first to teaching. As the day advances, the need for food becomes explicit, and the disciples are involved in providing it (6:30–44). In Mark 8, Jesus voices concern that the people have nothing to eat and may collapse on their way home (8:1–10).

The second scene is especially relevant to a discussion of whether material care is merely an instrument. The stated concern is the danger facing hungry people. Their vulnerability is a reason to act. Mark does not explain the provision as a bargain in which religious adherence must first be purchased with the right answer.

The narratives nevertheless contain authority, direction, and elements unlike ordinary development practice. Jesus instructs the disciples; miraculous provision is central. Reading the crowd's organisation as proof of a contemporary participation model would stretch the text beyond its task. The ethical connection lies in attention to need and the responsibilities it generates. Which modern arrangements meet those responsibilities remains an empirical question.

The commissioning scenes similarly hold activities together. Luke describes the disciples being sent to proclaim God's kingdom and heal, and later joins healing with an announcement of the kingdom's nearness (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–12). These missions include dependence on hospitality, responses to refusal, and warnings. They support neither an account of mission consisting entirely of

services nor one in which services are dispensable decoration.

Dependence is a particularly useful complication. The messengers can arrive needing accommodation and food. They do not always occupy the role of self-sufficient providers. Applying that observation to international development requires caution, but it challenges a habitual picture of Christian witness flowing exclusively from those with resources to those without them.

John and the identity of the giver

John makes the theological limits of a purely developmental interpretation especially clear. The Gospel states its purpose in relation to belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and life in his name (John 20:30-31). Its signs direct attention to who Jesus is.

John 6 moves from feeding to an extended discourse concerning bread, life, and belief. Jesus challenges an interest focused on the food, and some disciples subsequently leave (6:26-35, 60-66). The chapter will not permit bodily provision to become an exhaustive account of the gift Jesus offers.

That does not make the feeding unreal or worthless within the narrative. The interpretive task is to hold together the given bread and the claim about Jesus. To describe the whole chapter as a technique for buying assent would also miss its refusal to secure agreement at any cost. The difficulty of the teaching is allowed to remain, and departure is narrated rather than concealed.

The footwashing provides another carefully structured relationship between action and identity. Jesus identifies himself as Teacher and Lord and uses what he has done as an example for the disciples (John 13:12-17). His service challenges their conduct without erasing his authority. The

modern claim that every hierarchy disappears in this scene would therefore be inaccurate.

Hartog's discussion of Johannine ethics helps identify the pattern of imitation: the disciples' conduct is shaped by Jesus' relationship with the Father and by Jesus' action towards them. For the present study, the relevant evidence is the Gospel material, not the accompanying discussion of Johannine epistles.⁷⁵

John's account of love also culminates in costly self-giving. The command to love one another is related to Jesus' own love (John 13:34–35; 15:12–13). Christian service is therefore more than the display of benevolent emotion. It makes demands on the person serving, including the willingness to bear costs rather than merely direct other people's sacrifices.

The cross and resurrection belong within the four Gospels themselves. They are not themes that can be removed by excluding Paul. Mark's account of service includes the Son of Man giving his life as a ransom; Luke's risen Jesus connects suffering and resurrection with repentance and forgiveness; John's narrative relates the risen Jesus to the sending of his followers (Mark 10:45; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:19–23).

A compassion-centred reading must therefore remain a reading of Jesus' life, identity, death, and resurrection. Otherwise, the compassionate conduct might be admirable, but the book would not yet have answered its own question about the gospel.

Mercy and the temptation to control

The Gospel evidence supports a substantial criticism of domination. When disciples compete for privileged positions, Mark's Jesus contrasts their desired greatness with service (Mark 10:35–45). Luke sharpens the issue by naming rulers who are called benefactors and then

directing the disciples towards a different pattern (Luke 22:24-27).

The word benefactor is especially uncomfortable in a book about charitable work. A favourable description of the giver does not establish that the relationship is good. The person who possesses resources can be praised while others remain unable to challenge the terms on which those resources are distributed. Service has to be examined through what it does to relationships, not merely through the title attached to its provider.

At the same time, these Gospel scenes do not abolish all forms of authority. Luke's surrounding account includes promises of a kingdom and thrones (22:28-30). A responsible application identifies the challenge to domination without pretending that the passage supplies a complete democratic constitution.

Other encounters offer analogies for attention to agency. Bartimaeus persists when others try to silence him, and Jesus asks what he wants (Mark 10:46-52). The Samaritan woman questions Jesus and speaks to her community (John 4:7-42). Their contributions matter to the narratives. They are not represented simply as containers into which an authoritative outsider pours benefits.

There are also limits and complications. In Mark 5, the restored man's request to accompany Jesus is not granted; he is directed to return home and tell what has happened (5:18-20). The Canaanite woman's encounter includes silence and a difficult exchange before praise and healing (Matthew 15:21-28). These scenes deserve sustained analysis in the next chapter. They prevent us from claiming that every preference expressed to Jesus is immediately accepted.

The modern principle of community decision-making thus requires an argued ethical bridge. Gospel criticism of domination and attention to disregarded people give

reasons to distrust arrangements that silence recipients. Development research and community testimony must then help determine what arrangements make influence meaningful. The text provides orientation and judgement; it does not complete the institutional design.

Care without a productivity test

The same material also limits a crude contrast between empowering development and supposedly inferior handouts. Luke's Samaritan pays for continuing care while the injured man is unable to look after himself. In Luke 14, Jesus tells a host to invite people who cannot repay through equivalent hospitality (14:12–14). Their lack of reciprocal capacity is a reason to include them.

Van Staden's study of compassion in Luke helps bring status and reciprocity into view. It also leaves an important question for development ethics: welcoming someone to a table does not necessarily transfer control of the table. Generosity and decision-making power must be considered together, without denying the worth of welcome itself.⁷⁶

Some needs can be reduced through livelihoods, institutions, or increased access to resources. Others require continuing assistance, particularly amid illness, disability, displacement, or age-related vulnerability. The Gospels do not authorise sorting these lives into worthy and unworthy categories according to the speed at which assistance can end.

For this reason, the book's thesis uses agency rather than self-sufficiency as its central criterion. A person can exercise meaningful choice while receiving continuing support. A household can be financially independent yet subject to coercion. The practical question is what people are able to do and decide within their actual relationships, including the relationships that sustain them.

The injured traveller also corrects a possible misuse of participation language. It would be perverse to delay essential care until he could participate in its design. Respect for agency includes responding appropriately when a person temporarily cannot articulate a preference, and restoring opportunities for choice as circumstances permit. Development, emergency response, and continuing care must be related without being collapsed into one intervention type.

What this reading establishes

The four Gospels give substantial grounds for treating practical compassion as part of faithfulness to Jesus. Hunger, illness, exclusion, wealth, and the exercise of authority repeatedly enter their accounts. Care is not made morally irrelevant when no measurable conversion follows. Generosity towards people unable to repay, in particular, challenges a transactional understanding of Christian service.

The same texts give substantial grounds for retaining proclamation, repentance, belief, and discipleship. They present Jesus as more than an example of kindness. His identity, cross, resurrection, and relationship to God's purposes belong to the message under examination. A development ethic can express aspects of that message without exhausting its content.

The resulting argument is conditional and practical. Work that reduces avoidable suffering while expanding people's genuine room to act can coherently embody Gospel commitments. Work that manipulates need, silences disagreement, or protects the giver's status deserves criticism even when it bears a Christian name. Whether a particular organisation falls closer to one description or the other requires evidence about its conduct and effects.

There is therefore no need to make a successful project equivalent to God's kingdom, or to make conversion counts the final measure of compassionate action. The theological task is to ask whether our conduct corresponds to the Jesus we proclaim. The empirical task is to find out what that conduct actually means in the lives of the people concerned.

The next chapter examines that correspondence through encounters in which people speak, persist, receive, challenge, and serve. Compassion takes a recognizable form in relationships. It is there that the question about development becomes most demanding.

Chapter 6. Compassion that changes relationships

Compassion can begin with noticing that someone is suffering. Its character becomes clearer when that person speaks. Can they interrupt? Can they explain what matters to them? Can they disagree with the person who has the resources to help? A relationship organised around generosity may still leave all the important decisions with the giver.

The Gospels do not provide a manual for community participation. Their encounters concern healing, faith, belonging, and the identity of Jesus within ancient social and religious settings. Nevertheless, they repeatedly place human needs inside relationships. People approach Jesus, are brought to him, answer questions, argue, receive help, offer hospitality, and sometimes go away. Attending to those actions gives us a more demanding account of compassion than a picture of a powerful benefactor surrounded by grateful recipients.

The readings that follow distinguish what a narrative depicts from the contemporary judgements we draw from it. The distinction allows the text to challenge development practice without pretending that Jesus designed a modern development organisation. It also leaves room for encounters that unsettle the argument. A petitioner does not always receive everything requested, and the Gospels continue to give Jesus an authority that they do not give other participants.⁷⁷

A person who will not be quiet

In Mark 10:46–52, Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is passing and calls for mercy. The crowd tries to silence him. He calls more loudly. Jesus stops and instructs others to call him; the people around him then become the means of his

approach rather than the barrier to it. Before healing him, Jesus asks what he wants.

The question matters even though the narrator has identified Bartimaeus as a blind beggar. A description of someone's condition is not the same thing as hearing their request. Bartimaeus supplies his own answer. He wants to see again. At the end of the encounter he follows Jesus, and Mark gives that following a place in the continuing journey.

The crowd's reversal also deserves attention. People who had treated a voice as a disturbance are instructed to make room for it. Compassion here involves more than a private feeling between Jesus and Bartimaeus. It alters the conduct of those who control access. A contemporary organisation should therefore ask about the people and processes through which requests reach decision makers. Someone may be formally eligible for help while repeatedly failing to get past the person who interprets their request.

This is an application of the narrative, not a claim that Mark investigated administrative exclusion. Its value lies in the question it generates: whose account reaches us, and whose has already been filtered out? Speaking to an approved committee is different from hearing those whom the committee finds inconvenient. A successful public meeting may reveal very little about the people who believed they could not safely attend.

Mark places a useful complication immediately before this encounter. James and John also approach Jesus with a request, and Jesus asks what they want (10:35-45). They seek positions beside him in glory. Their request is not granted on its own terms. The ensuing teaching challenges domination and identifies service with greatness.

Listening, therefore, is not a promise to approve every demand. The content of a request still matters. A community's influential members may ask for something that harms less powerful neighbours. Respecting agency requires a process in which such disagreements can be

heard and assessed. It does not require treating the loudest request as the community's undivided will. Read together, these Markan encounters hold attention and moral judgement in the same frame.

Initiative and the danger of taking over a story

The woman with a continuing discharge of blood in Mark 5:25–34 acts before anyone invites her forward. The narrator describes prolonged suffering, expenditure on treatment, and deterioration. She hears about Jesus, approaches in the crowd, and touches his clothing. Her initiative is central to the sequence. She is not introduced as an empty space into which someone else's compassion enters.

When Jesus asks who touched him, the woman comes forward in fear and tells him the truth. He addresses her as daughter, acknowledges her faith, and sends her in peace. An interpretation concerned only with the transfer of healing power would miss the recognition that follows. Her presence and action become part of the narrated encounter.

We should also notice what the text does not establish. It does not give a complete account of her household, specify how every neighbour treated her, or explain every consequence of her condition. Historical knowledge of purity practices may inform interpretation, but it should not become an invented biography. Nor should her story be used to suggest that Jewish tradition lacked resources for compassion. Jesus and the people around him belong within that tradition.

A further difficulty arises when we move from the story to practice. Public recognition in the narrative does not authorise an organisation to make another person's medical history public. A charity is not Jesus, and a donor presentation is not this healing encounter. The woman's

fear should make us slower to assume that being invited to tell a story is an uncomplicated benefit.

The contemporary implication I draw is that assistance should not purchase control over someone's account of their life. A person may welcome help and decline publicity. They may approve a general description and refuse a photograph or details about illness. They may want their achievement reported while disagreeing with the giver's explanation of what made it possible.

Compassion should make room for these distinctions.

This is particularly relevant to a book written by a fundraiser. The desire to make distant circumstances understandable is legitimate. It does not establish a right to every detail that might move an audience. The person whose experience is being narrated remains a participant in deciding how it is represented.

Belonging before usefulness

Luke 13:10–17 presents a different encounter. A woman who has been bent over for eighteen years is present while Jesus teaches in a synagogue. Luke does not record her asking for healing. Jesus sees her, calls her, and heals her; she stands upright and praises God. The ensuing dispute concerns healing on the Sabbath.

This difference prevents us from turning initiative into another qualification people must satisfy before help is deserved. Bartimaeus calls out and the woman in Mark reaches forward. The woman in Luke is noticed without a narrated request. Compassion cannot be reserved for people who already possess the confidence, access, or capacity to demand attention.

Jesus describes her as a daughter of Abraham. Within the argument, her belonging helps make the case for her release. She is not assigned dignity because she is likely to repay assistance or become useful to an institution. The

encounter gives no basis for calculating the worth of healing through future productivity.

The dispute is an argument within Jewish religious life. Jesus reasons from the care already given to animals on the Sabbath towards the fittingness of releasing this woman. It is a mistake to present the scene as compassionate Christianity defeating an inherently uncaring Judaism. Such a reading would make the book's concern about demeaning representations fail at the point where it interprets its own central sources.

For development practice, the passage raises a question about eligibility. Programmes often need criteria, and no organisation can meet every need. Yet criteria that reward only rapid independence may quietly exclude people requiring continued care. A child, a person with a severe impairment, or someone with a long-term illness should not have to demonstrate economic potential before their well-being counts.

The miracle itself also requires careful handling. A narrative about healing does not mean that people whose conditions persist possess less faith or live less valuable lives. The book's argument concerns how neighbours should be treated; it does not make bodily restoration a measure of moral standing. Agency may be supported through assistance, accommodation, and relationships of interdependence as well as through activities commonly called development.

A woman who becomes a witness

John 4 begins the encounter at the well with Jesus asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. He arrives as someone with a physical need. The conversation develops through her questions about water, ancestral authority, worship, and the Messiah. She notices the social difficulty of his request and continues to engage him. Later she returns to her town

and invites others to encounter him for themselves (4:7-30, 39-42).

The sequence complicates the assumption that the Christian participant must always occupy the position of giver. Jesus' request does not erase the Gospel's claims about his identity. It does allow the encounter to begin with something the woman is able to provide. For those accustomed to arriving with resources, there is a serious question here about the capacity to receive.

The woman's history is frequently made to carry more than John tells us. The passage mentions five husbands and a present relationship that is not a marriage. It does not explain how the earlier marriages ended. We should not confidently supply abandonment, repeated widowhood, promiscuity, or a settled community judgement where the narrative does not. Even an interpretation intended to defend her can become another unauthorised account of her life.

What the text does give us is an extended theological conversation and subsequent testimony. Karoline Lewis draws attention to the woman's active participation and her movement into witness. Her reading usefully challenges interpretations that leave the woman only as an example of someone Jesus welcomes. Lewis's essay is a scholarly pastoral commentary rather than a full historical reconstruction; its particular contribution here is attention to the woman's role in the narrative.⁷⁸

John does not present the conversation as an agreement that all religious claims are interchangeable. Jesus makes claims about worship, salvation, and his own identity. Recognising the woman's voice does not require removing the conversation's theological disagreement. Equally, disagreement does not reduce her to an obstacle that a more powerful speaker must overcome.

The townspeople eventually speak of hearing for themselves. Their response is connected with her

testimony but does not remain dependent on it. The story thus involves several centres of action: Jesus, the woman, and those who come to hear. Its contemporary relevance lies partly in that movement beyond a single authorised voice. A Christian organisation should be able to value the contributions, questions, and judgements of people whose relationship with it develops in ways it did not script.

The encounter that resists an easy answer

Matthew 15:21–28 is harder to fit into a reassuring picture. A Canaanite woman asks Jesus to help her daughter. He initially says nothing. The disciples want her sent away. He speaks of his mission to Israel, and the subsequent exchange compares the children's bread and the dogs. The woman persists, answering within the imagery of the exchange. Jesus then praises her faith and grants her request.

An account of compassion that simply passes over the earlier words has not dealt with this text. Nor should we confidently supply a smile, a hidden lesson for the disciples, or an unspoken intention to test the woman. Such readings may be proposed within a wider theology, but those details are not narrated. The difficulty belongs in the discussion.

At the same time, the woman is not silent within it. Her answer gives a reason why provision for the children need not exclude what she seeks. Matthew ends the encounter with a strong commendation of her faith. The progress of the exchange depends on her speech as well as on Jesus' response. Mark's parallel account identifies the woman differently and places the children's priority within a somewhat different formulation (Mark 7:24–30). The accounts should be read individually before their differences are harmonised away.

YongHan Chung's postcolonial feminist reading emphasises the woman's resistance to exclusion and brings the passage

into conversation with the experiences of North Korean women in South Korea. That contextual comparison makes agency and the right to speak especially visible. It remains an interpretation: its reconstruction of imperial circumstances and its modern analogy are not identical with what Matthew directly reports. We can learn from its attention to the woman without adopting every historical or theological inference it proposes.⁷⁹

For this book, the passage sets a limit on a sweeping claim that every Gospel encounter straightforwardly models modern equality. It also exposes the inadequacy of treating persistence as troublesome behaviour whenever it comes from someone seeking help. The woman is remembered as a speaker whose insistence matters, not as someone whose first refusal should have ended the encounter.

A contemporary organisation should not reproduce the scene's asymmetry as a technique. Humiliating applicants to test sincerity would be a misuse of the narrative. The application lies in examining our responses to challenge: do we reconsider an exclusion, or make the excluded person prove gratitude before we listen? The text gives us a difficult conversation to consider, not a licence to imitate every stage of it administratively.

Giving without securing repayment

Luke 14:12-14 directs attention to invitations and the expectation of return. Jesus tells a host to include people unable to repay a meal. The passage questions a social arrangement in which generosity circulates primarily among those who can reinforce one another's position. Its horizon includes God's future reward, so it should not be reduced to a modern claim that all motives for giving must be purely disinterested. The immediate recipient, however, is released from the requirement to reciprocate on the host's terms.

This has implications for the kinds of repayment charities may expect. Repayment need not be financial. It may take the form of public gratitude, loyalty to a leader, willingness to appear in publicity, or compliance with a religious expectation. The fact that no invoice is issued does not establish that a relationship is free of demands.

Luke's warning about rulers who exercise authority while being called benefactors sharpens the question (22:24-27). The honour of being a giver does not settle whether one dominates others. Jesus describes himself as one who serves and challenges his followers' contest over greatness. The passage supports scrutiny of power even when power is accompanied by generosity.

John 13 makes service physically concrete in the washing of feet. Jesus' action is presented alongside his knowledge of his origin, authority, and approaching departure. His title as Lord and teacher is not abolished; it supplies part of the force of the example. The disciples are to act towards one another in accordance with what he has done (13:1-17).

The scene therefore offers neither a simple defence of hierarchy nor a statement that every difference of role disappears. It changes the conduct expected of one who holds authority. Peter's objection and Jesus' response also remind us that this is a specifically theological encounter about participation with Jesus. Treating it merely as a diagram of equal decision rights would strip away much of John's concern.

In a development organisation, a leader can perform humble tasks while retaining every important power. Footwashing imagery, shared meals, or informal friendliness cannot establish who can revise a budget or challenge a decision. The ethical direction of these passages has to be translated into questions whose answers can be examined. What authority do local participants actually hold? What happens when their

judgement differs from the donor's? Who can require a leader to change course?

Kilpatrick describes a willingness to surrender rights or power for the sake of others through the theological language of *kenosis*, or self-emptying. His explicit biblical framework draws on Philippians 2. That is his framework, rather than an additional foundation for this book's reading of Jesus. Here the relevant questions arise directly from Mark's account of authority as service and John's account of footwashing. Both direct attention to what a person does with a position of advantage.⁸⁰

The distinction matters in practice. An influential donor may need to surrender control over a preferred outcome. A worker with little institutional power may need protection, fair pay, and a stronger voice. Calling both people to the same unspecified sacrifice conceals the difference between their positions. The demand for service should first make those with greater power answerable for how they use it. Compassion cannot require a person already carrying an unfair burden to carry it more quietly.

Who are the least of these

Matthew 25:31–46 is frequently treated as the decisive Christian warrant for responding to poverty. In the judgement scene, the king identifies treatment of certain vulnerable people with treatment of himself. Food, drink, welcome, clothing, care during illness, and visiting prisoners matter profoundly. Yet the identity of those described as his brothers is disputed.

A broad reading understands the scene to concern people in need generally. A more restricted reading connects them with Jesus' disciples, sometimes specifically with vulnerable messengers. The latter draws support from Matthew's language of kinship and from the close connection between receiving Jesus' representatives and

receiving him in Matthew 10:40–42. It cannot responsibly be dismissed as an attempt to evade concern for the poor.

Jerry Ireland develops the missionary interpretation and argues that Matthew 25 should direct attention to the support of cross-cultural evangelists. He also acknowledges that other biblical passages establish a wider obligation of care. His article supplies a serious challenge to the use of this one passage as a self-evident account of aid to everyone. Its wider canonical arguments do not settle the question for a study centred on the four Gospels.⁸¹

Christopher McMahon's contrasting account connects the judgement scene with the anointing narrative in Matthew 26 and stresses the relationship between Christology and the poor. The portions available for this project establish a competing argument, but they are insufficient to claim that the controversy has been resolved. The full comparison remains part of the book's research work.⁸²

Our central argument need not depend on deciding this dispute prematurely. Matthew elsewhere commands love of enemies, describes giving to those who ask, and makes mercy and justice weighty concerns (5:42–48; 23:23). Luke's teaching about hospitality supplies another substantial basis. A narrower interpretation of Matthew 25 would change how that passage should be used without making the rest disappear.

Both readings also resist a description of material suffering as spiritually irrelevant. On the restricted reading, the messengers themselves are hungry, exposed, sick, or imprisoned and need practical help. Proclamation does not make their bodily needs insignificant. On the broader reading, the reach of the identification is wider still. We should preserve that shared observation while stating honestly where interpretation divides.

The judgement setting also prevents us from making compassion merely agreeable. Matthew treats omissions as

matters of grave consequence. A Christian discussion may debate the scene's scope and relation to salvation, but it cannot fairly retain its comforting identification with Christ while concealing its warning. This book uses the passage as part of a demanding moral account, not as a guarantee that one charitable activity settles a person's standing before God.

From recognition to responsibility

These encounters do not produce a single programme model. They do show why a Christian account of help should be concerned with the relationships through which help is offered. People speak, give, receive, object, act, and belong. Their value cannot be reduced to the function they perform in someone else's mission.

The transition to contemporary practice requires additional reasoning. Recognition asks whether people are regarded as persons with their own account of what matters. Participation asks whether they can influence what happens. Accountability asks whether those holding resources must respond when their conduct is challenged. These questions overlap, but an affirmative answer to one does not settle the others.

An organisation may listen sympathetically and still reserve all decisions to outsiders. It may delegate decisions to a local leader who excludes particular households. It may invite criticism while leaving critics convinced that next year's assistance is at risk. Evaluating these possibilities requires organisational and participant evidence; a Gospel interpretation alone cannot tell us how a project actually operates.

The theological contribution is to make such questions central to the meaning of compassion. The giver's intention matters, but so does what the relationship asks of the person receiving. This brings us back to the question after the presentation. Before asking whether a development

programme has an additional Christian component, we can ask whether its ordinary conduct is answerable to the Jesus it names. The next chapter takes up the equally necessary question of what it means to speak about him.

Chapter 7. Proclamation and the making of disciples

The strongest objection to this book deserves to be stated plainly. Christianity makes claims about Jesus that practical kindness does not, by itself, explain. A person can receive clean water, a useful skill, or reliable companionship without learning why Christians speak of Jesus as Messiah and Lord. If the Gospels summon people to faith and discipleship, an argument that replaces all speech with service would leave something essential unaddressed.

That objection is correct about the limitations of action as explanation. It does not follow that an act of care becomes Christian only after it is accompanied by a religious address. Nor does it follow that the moral worth of assistance depends on the recipient's response to that address. Those are further claims, and they require their own arguments.

The distinction is important for Circuit. A church may reasonably ask how a charity's work relates to Christian faith. The charity should give a clear answer about its convictions, purposes, and conduct. Yet asking it to account for Christian identity is different from assuming that its only adequate evidence must be a count of conversions. We need an account of proclamation that allows us to recognise what words do, what care does, and how both can be faithful or unfaithful.

What we mean by the gospel

The word gospel operates at several levels in Christian discussion. It can refer to the good news associated with Jesus' identity, ministry, death, and resurrection. It can refer to one of the written narratives through which that news is told. In less exact usage, it can refer to the

proclamation of the message or even to the whole pattern of life Christians believe the message requires.

These uses are related, but moving between them without explanation creates avoidable disagreement. Someone who says that a compassionate action is gospel may mean that it embodies a response to Jesus. A listener may hear a claim that the action has communicated the account of Jesus' death and resurrection. The first claim can be defensible while the second remains unestablished.

For this book, proclamation means intentionally making the Christian message intelligible through communication. It can involve conversation, teaching, storytelling, translation, or other forms of expression. Discipleship concerns learning to follow Jesus, including belief, practice, and relationships. Christian witness is the broader category through which Christians identify and express their relation to him, by speech and conduct. These are working distinctions for the argument, not a claim that every Christian tradition uses the words identically.

The distinctions also keep us from confusing motivation with reception. A person may serve because of Jesus while the recipient understands the action in another way. We can describe the giver's Christian motivation when there is evidence for it. We cannot infer what the recipient believes from the giver's intention alone. The experience of those receiving assistance belongs in any account of what the work communicates.

Matthew ends with teaching and obedience

Matthew 28:16–20 gives substantial support to the emphasis on explicit Christian teaching. The risen Jesus meets the eleven in Galilee. Worship and doubt appear in the account before he speaks of his authority and commissions them to make disciples among all nations. Baptism and teaching are named. The teaching concerns observance of everything he has commanded, and the

commission is accompanied by the promise of his presence.⁸³

This is not an instruction merely to be pleasant or to provide useful services. It concerns an identifiable relation to Jesus and the formation of people who learn his commands. A version of the book's thesis that required suppressing this passage would not be an adequate account of the Gospel according to Matthew.

The word everything is equally consequential. The concluding commission sends us back into the Gospel to ask what Jesus has taught. There we find love of enemies, generosity, mercy, forgiveness, truthfulness, and warnings about status, wealth, and the performance of piety. Teaching obedience cannot consist only in securing agreement with a short set of propositions while treating the rest as optional enrichment.

Matthew's ending therefore gives no simple basis for separating discipleship from moral formation. The commission includes teaching, and the content of the teaching includes how people treat others. What this establishes is the ethical scope of following Jesus. It does not, by itself, determine which institution must run a particular development programme or how its budget should be allocated. Those questions need further practical and theological reasoning.

The Gospel also distinguishes outward religious claims from doing what Jesus teaches. Matthew 7:21–27 warns against assuming that calling him Lord or hearing his words is sufficient. Its closing image concerns the difference between hearing and acting. Applied to a Christian organisation, the passage asks whether an explicit statement of faith is accompanied by conduct that can bear examination.

Matthew 5:14–16 gives visible good works a communicative place. They may lead others to glorify the Father. Yet Matthew 6:1–4 warns against performing

righteousness for public admiration. Read together, the passages discourage both the claim that actions communicate nothing and the assumption that maximising publicity is always the faithful objective. Their shared concern is how conduct relates to God, people, and the desire for recognition.

Neither passage guarantees that observers will interpret a contemporary charity correctly. The charitable act may be misunderstood; the publicity may become self-congratulation. The Gospel supplies the moral and theological questions. Evidence about a particular audience's understanding still has to come from that audience.

The messengers also receive

The earlier mission discourse in Matthew 10 joins announcement of the kingdom with healing and other actions of restoration. The disciples are instructed to give freely and to travel without the ordinary accumulation of resources described in the passage. They rely on hospitality, and their reception is treated as significant (10:5-16, 40-42).

The immediate commission is directed towards Israel, whereas the final commission has a wider horizon. That difference matters. We cannot turn every instruction in chapter 10 into a timeless operational rule without considering the Gospel's movement. Nevertheless, one feature deserves attention in a discussion of international development: Jesus' representatives are not pictured simply as wealthy providers who control access to everything others need.

They enter relationships in which they also require food, lodging, and welcome. The people to whom they are sent possess something to give. Matthew's concern here is theological and missionary, but the resulting picture

unsettles the assumption that a Christian messenger must always be the powerful partner.

This does not make sending people without appropriate support a responsible policy for contemporary work. Deliberately exposing staff or communities to avoidable danger would require a very different justification. The interpretive point is narrower: the direction of giving in the Gospel is not permanently fixed. A theology of mission should have room for receiving local knowledge, correction, hospitality, and leadership.

Nor should we mistake dependency in the mission discourse for an idealisation of poverty. The disciples' needs matter enough for their hosts' response to receive explicit attention. An organisation cannot invoke missionary sacrifice to justify insecure conditions for local colleagues while protecting the comfort of those who finance the work.

Luke and John require more than general benevolence

Luke 24:44-49 connects the risen Jesus with the fulfilment of Scripture, his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness in his name. Witness is attached to events and their meaning. It is therefore difficult to defend permanent silence about Jesus as an adequate account of everything this Gospel asks of his followers.⁸⁴

The content matters. Repentance is a demand for change, forgiveness concerns a damaged relationship with God, and resurrection is not merely a metaphor for improved circumstances. A development programme may have considerable value without explaining these convictions. We should acknowledge that limitation without treating the programme's value as an illusion.

Luke's ending must also be read with the rest of Luke. The Gospel has already connected response to God with the use of possessions, the treatment of people excluded from ordinary circles of honour, and care that crosses familiar boundaries. A proclamation detached from those concerns could repeat Christian words while giving a restricted account of the life those words announce.

John is similarly explicit about belief. Its stated purpose connects the written signs with believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and with life in his name (20:30–31). Earlier in the same chapter, the risen Jesus sends his disciples, gives the Spirit, and speaks of forgiveness (20:19–23). We do not need to import the Pauline epistles to recognise that the Gospels contain claims about salvation and the distinctive identity of Jesus.⁸⁵

John's statement that the disciples are sent as Jesus was sent invites attention to his manner of relating to people. It does not establish that the disciples reproduce everything unique to him. His identity and work remain central to the narrative. Christian service should not quietly turn the organisation into the redeemer of the community or imply that everything God intends can be delivered through its programmes.

At the same time, John's command to love and its presentation of service cannot be detached from belief as though they belonged to another project. John 13:34–35 makes the disciples' love recognizable to others. Their relation to Jesus has a social form. The argument for compassion and the argument for explicit Christian confession meet inside this Gospel rather than belonging to mutually exclusive camps.

A serious evangelical disagreement

Later Christian statements help locate the disagreement, although they cannot decide what the Gospels mean on their own. The Lausanne Covenant affirms social

responsibility and evangelism, distinguishes them, and gives evangelism priority within the church's mission. It should therefore be neither recruited as a declaration that development makes proclamation unnecessary nor dismissed as uninterested in social obligations.⁸⁶

The 1982 Grand Rapids consultation recognises different callings and circumstances, relates evangelism to social responsibility in several ways, and retains a claim about evangelism's primacy. Its allowance for attending to an injured neighbour without a sermon is especially relevant to particular encounters. Its argument about eternal destiny means that this allowance should not be represented as a withdrawal of concern for proclamation.⁸⁷

The Cape Town Commitment brings proclamation and demonstration together within an account of integral mission. Its focus includes the cross and resurrection, repentance, faith, and discipleship, as well as compassionate engagement. It provides support for an integrated approach, but no warrant for using the language of integration to conceal an indefinite abandonment of Christian speech.⁸⁸

These statements also show why the question is not usefully reduced to whether evangelicals care about suffering. They do. The disputed issues include the scope of the church's commission, the relation between the gospel and its ethical consequences, the significance of eternal destiny, and responsibility for particular forms of action. Agreement on compassion can coexist with disagreement about institutional priorities.

The statements draw on a wider biblical corpus than this book's central study. Their Pauline references remain part of the positions being described; they do not become the controlling interpretation of Jesus here. The distinction allows us to understand an interlocutor's theology without silently changing our own research question.

The case for a more restricted institutional mission

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert offer a useful primary account of a more restricted view in their 2011 publisher interview. They distinguish the church's particular task of making disciples from the range of good vocations Christians may pursue. They also stress limited resources and the need to distinguish what a church may do from what it must do. Their position includes strong reasons for good works and encouragement of mercy ministries; it is not a denial of neighbour love.⁸⁹

That distinction should be taken seriously. A congregation cannot undertake every valuable activity, and a mission committee has to choose among competing uses of money. The fact that an activity improves people's lives does not alone establish that every congregation is obliged to administer it. A budget is a decision under constraint, not simply a list of everything Christians approve.

The same practical point, however, creates space for the particular calling of a development charity. If different forms of Christian work have distinct responsibilities, there is no immediate reason to expect every organisation to carry out the entire range. A congregation may teach, worship, provide pastoral care, and support a specialised organisation with expertise in development. The relationship needs explanation, but specialisation itself is not evidence of theological deficiency.

This is the book's argument, not a claim that DeYoung and Gilbert endorse Circuit or would agree with every proposed funding decision. Their wider book requires fuller appraisal before a complete response to their theology can be offered. The interview is sufficient to establish the distinction being considered here, and its limits should remain visible.

The strongest unresolved challenge is about opportunity cost. A donor who believes proclamation is uniquely urgent may still prefer to fund it directly. We should not answer by implying that the donor is necessarily indifferent to bodies or incapable of understanding context. We can instead explain the charitable work's particular purpose, its relation to Christian obedience, and the evidence for its benefit. The donor can then consider a real choice rather than a misleading claim that one contribution purchases every possible form of mission.

Equally, the charity should not promise evangelistic activity it does not undertake simply to gain access to a church's funding category. Honesty about purpose belongs to Christian witness too. A donation obtained through an impression the organisation knows is inaccurate creates a problem before any programme begins.

Padilla and the life that proclamation addresses

René Padilla's 1974 Lausanne address challenges evangelism shaped by cultural power, numerical efficiency, and a narrow account of conversion. He insists that response to the gospel concerns people in their actual social circumstances. He also affirms the importance of evangelisation and rejects reducing the church to an agency of material improvement. His criticism is directed towards faithfulness in the content and conduct of mission, not towards the disappearance of Christian proclamation.⁹⁰

That position brings a further question to the discussion. What kind of life is a person being invited to enter? If the invitation speaks of reconciliation while the surrounding relationships reproduce exclusion or domination, a problem exists within the witness itself. Better methods of attracting a response cannot resolve an inconsistency between the announced message and the community formed around it.

For the present argument, the implication concerns organisations as well as individuals. We should assess the conduct through which a Christian institution makes itself known. An organisation can state correct doctrines while creating relationships that depend on concealment, humiliation, or obedience to the giver. Its Christian vocabulary does not prevent its ordinary procedures from communicating those other lessons.

This reasoning should be applied to the author and donor community as readily as to distant programme participants. It would be strange to describe repentance as a demand only for people receiving assistance. Those who raise, allocate, and administer funds also need to be willing to change. Listening to a community may disclose a failure in the organisation rather than a problem that more instruction will solve in the community.

Padilla supplies one important voice in this discussion; he does not stand for every Latin American Christian or settle every question about integral mission. The point of including him is to make the debate less captive to one set of institutional assumptions. The interpretation of Christian mission has to remain open to serious theological argument from people who have experienced its unequal relationships from different positions.

When words are needed and when a task is enough

If someone asks why Circuit does this work, a clear answer about Christian motivation is appropriate. If a person freely asks about Jesus, there is no principle in this book that requires evasion. Respect for conscience includes the freedom to inquire, listen, learn, disagree, and become a Christian. A noncoercive approach need not conceal religious identity.

The difficult question is how an invitation relates to control of assistance. An explanation offered within an ordinary

conversation and a presentation inserted into an unavoidable distribution process create different circumstances. In the latter, remaining present may be the only practical way to obtain what has been promised. The words may be identical while the relationship gives them a different force.

The answer cannot be reduced to a rule that words are always necessary or never necessary. Some encounters have an immediate task whose completion is sufficient: listening carefully, giving the promised information, helping someone reach appropriate care, or honouring an agreed decision. Requiring a complete statement of Christian belief in each encounter would disregard what the other person is seeking and whether they are free to refuse further conversation.

On the other hand, it would be misleading to claim that such acts have necessarily taught the recipient the Christian account of Jesus. The organisation can affirm the actions' place within its own discipleship while acknowledging that explanation remains a distinct activity. We lose nothing essential by describing the communication accurately.

A useful formulation is that practical service can express Christian faith and fulfil obligations that faith recognises, while explicit communication makes particular convictions intelligible. Their relationship is close without being interchangeable. A failure of speech cannot always be repaired by more activity, and a failure of conduct cannot be repaired merely by adding religious words.

None of this requires making every encounter an opportunity for recruitment. Friendship that is sustained only while conversion remains likely is a conditional relationship, even if no material benefit is formally withheld. The significance of continuing care is clearest when the person has understood the Christian invitation and declines it. What remains of our concern then?

What can reasonably be expected of Circuit

Circuit should be able to explain how its Christian commitments shape its purposes and the way it works. That explanation should be accompanied by evidence about decisions, relationships, and outcomes. The book can propose criteria for examining that evidence; it cannot manufacture an organisational record where one has not yet been provided.

The criteria should fit the stated purpose. If a programme aims to improve livelihoods, its evaluation should examine relevant livelihood outcomes and how they are distributed. If it aims to reduce vulnerability to trafficking, that connection requires additional evidence. Neither claim is established by a religious affiliation count. Equally, a livelihood result does not establish that Christian beliefs have been understood or accepted.

Different questions may require different forms of evidence without becoming unrelated. People can be asked about their experience of treatment, influence, and freedom where doing so is appropriate and safe. Organisational records may show what staff are required to do and what happens when a complaint is made. Donor communications can be examined for accuracy. Together, such material would make the claim about Christian conduct more concrete.

The charity's role should also leave room for local Christians to understand and exercise their own callings. Outsiders should not assume that control of funds gives them sole authority to define what faithfulness looks like in every setting. Nor should local leadership be treated as a guarantee of freedom from coercion. The relevant question remains how power is exercised and challenged.

The answer to the original question can now be more exact. Compassionate development can be part of following Jesus and bearing witness to him. It does not convey every

Christian claim automatically. Proclamation and discipleship remain meaningful responsibilities, and Christians may disagree about their institutional arrangement and funding. What does not follow is that help acquires moral worth only through a conversion, or that the power to give authorises control over belief. That final issue requires closer examination.

Chapter 8. Conversion and freedom of conscience

A religious invitation is not made free simply by calling it optional. Its meaning depends partly on what the listener believes will happen if they decline. When the person speaking also influences access to assistance, employment, training, or introductions, that relationship needs attention. Good intentions do not remove the question.

The problem is equally important in the other direction. A concern about colonial history or material dependence can become a reason to dismiss every conversion as manipulated. That response also denies people a voice. Someone may consider Christian claims, find them convincing, and choose a new religious commitment. Respect for agency includes that possibility as well as the freedom to remain within another faith or to profess none.

The ethical task is to distinguish persuasion from the use of control over necessities to secure assent. This chapter develops that distinction through Gospel encounters, Christian guidance on witness, and humanitarian standards. The practical proposals that follow are recommendations for scrutiny and discussion. They are not descriptions of verified Circuit policies, findings about particular workers, or jurisdiction-specific legal advice.

Invitation persuasion and coercion

An invitation offers a possibility: a conversation, a gathering, a reading, or a relationship of learning. Persuasion gives reasons for accepting a claim or changing one's mind. Both can be respectful. Neither requires treating all beliefs as identical, and neither is necessarily coercive because the speaker hopes for a response.

Coercion, in the narrower sense used here, involves a threat or penalty that constrains a person's choice. Making

assistance contingent on a religious profession provides a clear example. Other forms of undue influence may operate without an explicit threat. A worker may repeatedly connect enthusiastic participation with being a good programme member, or a participant may reasonably infer that visible religious agreement will improve future prospects. Those possibilities require investigation rather than assumptions about either party's motives.

An inducement offers an advantage intended to secure a response. Not every benefit associated with an activity is improper. Providing transport so people can attend a meeting they have freely chosen may remove a barrier to participation. Offering a scarce livelihood opportunity in exchange for a profession of faith creates a different ethical problem. The relevant questions concern the benefit's purpose, its significance in the person's circumstances, and the conditions attached to it.

These distinctions prevent an imprecise argument in which every expression of conviction becomes coercion. A person can hear a challenging religious claim and freely reject it. Discomfort is not itself evidence that consent has been overridden. Equally, a polite atmosphere does not establish freedom where refusal is understood to jeopardise something essential.

The practical question is therefore broader than whether a staff member used force or said the wrong sentence. What options did the person actually have? What information was available? Which decisions could the speaker influence? What happened after disagreement? A meaningful assessment needs to understand the relationship over time.

Responses and refusals in the Gospels

Mark 10:17–22 brings love and a difficult invitation together. A man asks about eternal life. Jesus directs

attention to commandments and then, looking at him with love, tells him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow. The man leaves in sorrow. The narrative does not make Jesus' love equivalent to approving the man's existing priorities. Neither does it describe Jesus securing compliance by preventing his departure.⁹¹

The encounter differs markedly from the situation of a person dependent on aid. The man possesses considerable resources. We should therefore be cautious about turning his departure into a complete model of consent under poverty. The point is that a serious invitation and an unaccepted demand both remain within the narrative. Refusal does not make the encounter unintelligible.

John 6:60–71 similarly records disciples withdrawing after difficult teaching. Jesus addresses the twelve about whether they too wish to leave, and Peter answers by affirming the significance of Jesus' words. John's theological explanation includes the Father's role in bringing people to Jesus. The passage cannot be reduced to an account of autonomous consumer choice. Yet the withdrawal is recorded without an attempt to secure continued attendance through material sanctions.⁹²

Luke 9:51–56 provides a sharper example concerning the response to rejection. A Samaritan village does not receive Jesus. James and John propose destruction; Jesus rebukes them, and the journey continues elsewhere. The rebuke and departure are the features on which the present argument rests. The disciples' hostility is not treated as the proper way to defend Jesus' mission.⁹³

These readings should not conceal the Gospels' warnings about judgement. Matthew 10:14–15 combines leaving an unreceptive place with a severe statement about its judgement. Respecting a person's earthly freedom to decline is not identical with saying that the Gospels regard every response as having the same theological significance.

Their claims are demanding, and an honest account must acknowledge that.

The distinction needed for development practice concerns who may impose what consequences. A Christian belief about divine judgement does not establish an organisation's authority to withhold assistance from those who do not accept its message. A charity's power over a programme is not a power to administer salvation. Confusing the two changes a theological conviction into a material instrument.

Luke's account of Jesus healing the injured servant during his arrest adds another relevant observation (22:49–51). The recipient's association with the arresting party does not prevent the healing. This episode does not, on its own, settle every Christian debate about force or public authority. It does challenge the thought that care should be reserved for those aligned with the caregiver's cause.

The cumulative case is an ethical interpretation of several passages, not the discovery of a modern consent policy embedded in one verse. The Gospels contain strong claims, commands, warnings, and asymmetries of authority. The argument is that Christian organisations must justify their own use of power in relation to the Jesus they confess. They cannot assume that their ability to compel is a faithful extension of his authority.

Christian guidance on witness

The 2011 recommendations on Christian witness issued jointly by Catholic, ecumenical, and evangelical bodies bring service, religious freedom, and the rejection of manipulation into the same discussion. They oppose exploiting poverty and vulnerability, affirm the freedom to profess and change belief, and call for adequate time and freedom in religious discernment. They are guidance for

conduct, rather than an agreement that resolves all Christian differences about salvation.⁹⁴

Their importance here is the absence of a necessary conflict between openly Christian identity and limits on coercive practice. Christians can consider witness central to their faith while accepting that methods may betray what they intend to communicate. The question is not whether belief must disappear from public life. It is whether a person can encounter it without being required to satisfy the material gatekeeper.

The joint guidance also makes disagreement with other religions compatible with respectful listening. A charitable organisation does not need to affirm every claim held by every participant. It should still take care to understand those claims and avoid using a caricature of another tradition to make itself appear superior. Criticism is more accountable when the people being described would recognise their own position in it.

For the Shan State context, this means that the book cannot simply announce how local Buddhists, Christians, practitioners of other traditions, or people without a religious affiliation feel about Christian assistance. Attitudes have to be established through appropriate evidence and situated accounts. The existence of a colonial history gives reasons for questions; it does not supply the answers of every person alive today.

Nor does identifying colonial misuse require dismissing local Christian life as an extension of foreign will. That would repeat the mistake of treating local people as unable to interpret, choose, adapt, and act. The history must be examined critically, while the agency of people living with its consequences remains visible.

What humanitarian standards contribute

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGO Code of Conduct makes need the basis for disaster assistance and separates eligibility from adherence to political or religious positions. It also recognises local capacities, participation, accountability, and dignity in publicity. The code concerns disaster relief; extending its implications to a long-term development partnership requires attention to the different purpose and circumstances.⁹⁵

The Core Humanitarian Standard adds a framework for meaningful participation, accessible information, prevention of harm, and safe complaints. These commitments help turn a broad wish to respect people into questions about an organisation's arrangements. A standard states what should be done. It does not establish that a signatory, partner, or organisation using similar language actually does it.⁹⁶

The standards do not determine the content of the gospel. They contribute to evaluating relationships in which one party has resources another needs. Christian reasons for care and humanitarian commitments can converge without being identical. A Christian organisation should be able to explain its reasons while working with others who arrive at comparable responsibilities through another moral or religious tradition.

It is also necessary to distinguish impartiality from identical treatment. A programme responding to need will make decisions about urgency, purpose, capacity, and limited resources. Fair treatment does not mean that every person receives the same benefit or that every request must be approved. It does mean that religious compliance should not become a hidden eligibility criterion for assistance presented as responding to poverty or vulnerability.

No finite charity can guarantee everyone's material security. Its relevant obligation is to make the conditions and limits of its own offer clear and defensible, and not to manufacture a religious cost of refusal. A person who is ineligible on fair programme criteria should receive an honest explanation. A person who declines a religious activity should not have that refusal disguised as a failure of cooperation.

Questions that expose hidden pressure

One useful starting point is the counterfactual question: if this person did not attend the religious activity, would the relevant programme decision be the same? The answer may need to be examined at several stages. Entry into a programme, access to a particular opportunity, treatment by staff, renewal of support, and permission to raise a concern can each carry different pressures.

A written statement that attendance is optional is helpful but incomplete. Its practical meaning depends on whether people hear it in a language and form they understand, whether staff repeat it consistently, and whether experience confirms it. If people have seen a dissenter lose an opportunity without explanation, a reassuring sentence may carry little weight.

Consider an expressly hypothetical example. A development meeting includes an optional devotional period, but the only practical transport home leaves after the entire event. Remaining in the room would tell us little about religious interest. Alternatively, people might be free to leave yet believe that leaving will be noticed by those who select future participants. The first problem concerns logistics; the second concerns the authority attached to observation. Neither can be assessed simply by counting attendance.

Another hypothetical example concerns an unsolicited request for prayer. Respecting the person may include responding to the request, provided that the response is appropriate to the setting and does not alter access to the service. Respect also includes recognising that another person may not want prayer. A reliable arrangement should not make either response a test of gratitude or loyalty.

These examples are proposed tests of reasoning, not reports about Circuit. Their purpose is to show why a universal rule about the presence or absence of religious language may miss the important relationship. The same words can be heard differently when spoken by a friend, a teacher, an employer, or the person who decides whether a household receives assistance.

The organisation should therefore examine practical arrangements alongside its intentions. Where feasible, it can separate eligibility decisions from voluntary faith activities, explain decisions in accessible terms, and avoid collecting attendance information that staff might later use as evidence of commitment to a programme. The appropriate arrangements will depend on context, but their adequacy should be judged partly by whether people understand and experience their freedom.

The community cannot consent for everyone

Respect for a community does not mean treating it as a single person with one belief. Leaders may legitimately coordinate activities and represent collective concerns. Their approval does not establish the willingness of every household, worker, child, or marginalised member to participate in a religious activity.

This distinction is especially important for a thesis centred on community agency. Transferring authority from an outside organisation to a local body may reduce one

inequality while leaving another untouched. The appropriate question is not only whether decisions are local. It is also which local people can influence them and which can refuse without retaliation.

The same care applies to claims of cultural protection. A community member who wishes to investigate Christianity should not be treated as incapable of choosing merely because others regard conversion as betrayal. Conversely, Christian leaders should not treat a person's continuing attachment to another tradition as evidence of ignorance that assistance entitles them to correct. The freedom being defended has to extend in both directions.

This does not imply that beliefs are formed without relationships. Family, language, history, friendships, education, and economic circumstances help shape everyone's possibilities. Complete independence from influence is not a realistic condition of authentic belief. The relevant aim is a setting in which people can consider and respond without someone using control of important resources to dictate the answer.

For children and for people facing particular constraints on decision making, additional care is needed. A group's enthusiasm cannot substitute for attention to the individuals involved. The precise arrangements require appropriate safeguarding expertise and local knowledge. The book's ethical point is that vulnerability should increase the provider's responsibility, not increase its opportunity to secure compliance.

Who defines the desired change

The language of transformation can obscure what an organisation hopes to change. It may mean safer living conditions, confidence to speak, a change in social attitudes, or conversion to a religion. These changes are not interchangeable. A person may welcome a livelihood

opportunity while rejecting the provider's beliefs. Another may become a Christian without experiencing an improvement in income or safety.

Kilpatrick's thesis brings this ambiguity into view. His theological discussion links conversion and *metanoia*, understood as a change of mind, with development. In the Armenian survey component, a hypothesis concerns whether participants' values move in directions World Vision regards as positive and desirable. Those formulations make the organisation's judgement part of the definition of success. They do not, by themselves, establish coercion, and the survey is not evidence about a Myanmar programme. They do require us to ask who may define the change and whether participants can contest that definition.⁹⁷

Development cannot avoid moral judgements. An organisation opposing trafficking has already judged exploitation to be wrong. A commitment to equal access may challenge a locally powerful group. Such commitments should be explained and debated openly. The difficulty arises when a provider's preferred religious response becomes an undisclosed measure of improvement, or when agreement is treated as proof that a person has become empowered.

A credible partnership distinguishes its public purpose from the beliefs participants are free to retain, reconsider, or reject. It also distinguishes an organisation's intention from the participant's experience of pressure. Neither the donor nor a community leader can settle that experience on everyone else's behalf. The person receiving help must retain a voice in describing what changed and whether the change was welcome.

Conversion and the demand for proof

A person who chooses Christianity may experience that change as deeply valuable. This book should not require them to deny it in order to fit an argument about the dangers of mission. The question is whether the conditions permit a considered response, and whether we describe it accurately, rather than whether it supports a preferred theory.

Counting religious responses is a different activity from understanding them. Attendance, interest, a public profession, baptism, and sustained belonging are not interchangeable observations. A record of one should not be presented as proof of another. Nor does a number reveal how freely the response was made or how its meaning develops over time.

For a development programme, the desire to produce an evangelistic total may also shape what staff pay attention to. This is a possible incentive mechanism that should be examined, not an allegation that it occurs in Circuit. If continued funding is perceived to depend on religious responses, the organisation needs to consider whether workers or participants face pressure to produce an acceptable account.

It does not follow that all religious information must be prohibited. A congregation may have appropriate reasons to keep records relevant to its own religious life. A development organisation may sometimes need sensitive information for a clearly defined and legitimate purpose. The question is whether the particular collection is necessary, understood, appropriately protected, and kept from becoming a condition of unrelated assistance.

For this book, donor reassurance alone would be an inadequate reason to compile identifiable accounts of conversion. A person's religious story is not simply a promotional asset. An aggregate number may also mislead

when the definitions, period, or circumstances are unclear. The aim should be accurate reporting with the least unnecessary exposure, rather than the largest possible quantity of personal material.

The same discipline applies to those who do not convert. Their continuing relationship with an organisation can provide important evidence about whether care is conditional. It should not turn them into a new category of monitored subjects. An ethical question can be investigated through appropriate programme feedback and decision records without creating a register of people's religious refusals.

Accountability after something goes wrong

A commitment to freedom must include what happens when someone reports pressure. The organisation should have a way to receive the concern that does not require the complainant to confront the very person whose control they fear. Accessibility includes language, practical availability, and an explanation of what can and cannot be kept confidential.

These are proposed organisational responsibilities. Their implementation needs to be designed with the people who may use them and with attention to the setting. A complaint channel that is suitable in one place may be inaccessible or unsafe in another. The existence of a telephone number or form cannot settle whether people trust the process.

The organisation's response should also distinguish intent from effect. A worker may have acted from sincere concern and still created an improper condition. Recognising the pressure need not require inventing malicious motives. It may require explaining the offer again, correcting a selection decision, changing supervision, or preventing a

repetition. The appropriate response depends on what happened.

The complainant's ability to remain involved matters. An organisation that welcomes feedback publicly but treats a critic as disloyal has not solved the problem. The test is partly what becomes possible after disagreement: can the person continue on fair terms, obtain an explanation, and see an error corrected where correction is warranted?

This is also where Christian language can help or hinder. Repentance can support acknowledgement and change. Used carelessly, calls for forgiveness or unity can press the injured person to restore the organisation's reputation before the problem is addressed. A Christian account of reconciliation should leave room for truth, responsibility, and appropriate remedy.

An answer that can survive a refusal

The freedom to decline is a demanding test because it removes a convenient measure of success. A person may understand the Christian motivation for assistance and remain Buddhist, belong to another tradition, or choose no religious affiliation. If the help addressed a legitimate need on fair terms, that response does not make the benefit worthless.

The opposite possibility is equally protected. A person may ask further questions and choose Christian discipleship. Respecting freedom does not require disappointment at that decision or denial of its meaning. It requires that the assistance was not used to purchase it and that the person's account is not taken over afterward.

The answer to a church audience can therefore affirm Christian identity without promising control over another person's belief. We can explain why Jesus matters to the work, how his teaching challenges the giver, and why care continues when a religious invitation is declined. We can

acknowledge that words have a necessary role in explaining faith while refusing to make need an instrument of persuasion.

The next stage of the argument concerns what happens in development itself. Religious freedom is essential, but a project can avoid coercive evangelism and still make poor decisions, exclude people, or leave benefits that do not last. The theological case must now meet the empirical question: under what conditions does helping strengthen a community's ability to shape its future?

Chapter 9. What faith contributes to development

A Christian reason for helping does not, by itself, tell us how well the help works. It explains a commitment. To establish effectiveness, we also need to know what an organisation did, whose circumstances changed, and what would probably have happened otherwise. Keeping those questions distinct allows us to take both faith and evidence seriously.

For this book, the distinction is essential. The argument that compassionate development can express the message of Jesus is a theological and ethical argument. The claim that a particular programme improves livelihoods is an empirical one. The further claim that its religious character produced the improvement requires another comparison. None of these claims becomes stronger by borrowing the authority of the others without explaining the connection.

This chapter examines faith through the relationships, practices, and institutions in which it operates. It asks what the available research can establish, what remains uncertain, and which questions are relevant to Shan State. The purpose is to make a Christian commitment answerable to the experience of the people it intends to serve.

What exactly are we comparing

The expression faith-based organisation covers very different arrangements. A religious community may own a hospital whose treatment decisions are made by professional clinicians. A congregation may provide volunteers and meeting space for a public health campaign. A charity may recruit donors through churches while delivering services through local partners of several faiths. Another organisation may make religious instruction

a central programme component. Grouping all four under one label does not identify a common intervention.

We should therefore specify where religion enters the activity. It may shape the organisation's purpose, its funding, the authority of its leaders, the language used with participants, the rules governing services, or the networks through which people gain access. Several of these can operate together. An account that notices only the stated motivation may miss a consequential eligibility rule; one that notices only a religious name may overlook considerable professional independence.

Deneulin and Rakodi challenge development scholarship to take religion seriously within people's social lives rather than treating it as a residual category. Olivier, writing critically from within religion-and-development research, questions advocacy that assigns religious organisations a comparative advantage more confidently than the evidence permits. These are useful starting points for inquiry, rather than estimates of a uniform religious effect.⁹⁸

Suppose a church-supported clinic serves a remote community with few alternatives. Comparing its patients with people attending a well-equipped urban public hospital would tell us little unless we account for distance, illness severity, staffing, prices, and the population each serves. Equally, comparing it only with the absence of any clinic may establish the value of provision without establishing an advantage over a feasible secular provider. The appropriate comparison depends on the claim being made.

These are different questions for a donor. Does this service benefit people? Could the resources produce greater benefit through another arrangement? Does a particular religious practice improve or constrain the service? Is the organisation reaching people others miss? A favourable answer to one question should not be silently extended to all the others.

Provision is a contribution worth recognising

Religious organisations need not outperform every alternative to make a substantial contribution. A useful service can matter because it exists, is accessible, and is dependable. Its value is not diminished because a public agency or a Buddhist, Muslim, or secular organisation might also provide competent care. The question of contribution is broader than a competition for moral ownership of the result.

Olivier and colleagues' review of faith-based health providers in Africa examines their scale, reach, cost, and patient satisfaction. The abstract available in this research collection supports recognition of their role while emphasising weaknesses in the comparative evidence. It does not justify assigning a single market share to religious providers across Africa, still less transferring such a figure to Myanmar.⁹⁹

Even where an organisation is well established, its presence can have different meanings for different people. Existing members may know whom to approach. Someone outside the religious network may not know whether they are welcome. A person who has previously experienced judgement may avoid a service that staff sincerely consider open to everyone. These possibilities need investigation through users and nonusers, including people who left, were refused, or never felt able to inquire.

The same applies to trust. A leader can be trusted for spiritual counsel without being the appropriate authority on every health or financial question. Trust can help people navigate unfamiliar services; it can also make poor advice unusually influential. An evaluation should ask what the trusted person actually does, the competence required, and whether participants have access to another opinion.

What peacebuilders say about faith

Interview evidence can help explain what religious commitment means to people doing difficult work. In *The business of peace-building*, Kilpatrick examines how practitioners understand their contribution to peace. His research included 31 semi-structured interviews conducted between July and November 2014: 16 in the Myanmar group and 15 in the Armenia group, the latter including two interviews in Georgia. Participants included local and expatriate practitioners. Across the combined sample, they described Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and agnostic positions. This was a selected group of practitioners, not a representative survey of either country or of Shan State.¹⁰⁰

Faith appears in these accounts as a reason to persevere, understand other people, and accept obligations beyond personal advantage. Compassion also appears as a practical response to needs involving education, livelihoods, and rights. These accounts help us understand why people may remain committed to work whose rewards are uncertain. They also resist the assumption that Christian identity has a monopoly on compassionate motivation. The participants' differences matter to Kilpatrick's inquiry into relationships across conflict.¹⁰¹

The value of this evidence depends on keeping its question clear. An interview can show how a practitioner explains a commitment. It cannot, on its own, show that the commitment produced better outcomes than another motivation would have produced. A sincere account of listening is not yet the community's account of being heard. Kilpatrick notes that the views of other stakeholders are considered largely through the peacebuilders' frame of reference. That leaves an important question for subsequent inquiry: would the people receiving or declining help describe it similarly?¹⁰²

The thesis also contains a separate quantitative component. A survey of 500 people in four World Vision area development programmes in Armenia in 2013-2014 is compared with Armenian European Values Study data from 2008. Kilpatrick acknowledges World Vision funding for this component and describes an independent organisation carrying out the sampling. Differences in time, sampling, and location, together with the absence of a suitable programme baseline, restrict what the comparison can establish. He explicitly says it cannot prove causation. These findings therefore cannot establish that faith caused an improvement in well-being, and they should not be transferred to Myanmar.¹⁰³

Read within those limits, the thesis offers useful questions for evaluation. Does a worker's faith help them remain answerable to people with whom they disagree? Does compassion lead to a change in practice when a community challenges the plan? Do organisational expectations support that responsiveness or make it costly? Religious motivation becomes relevant to development through such conduct. Its effects still need to be examined with the people who experience them.

Research that reaches into my own experience

Bell's *Health justice for all* examines the Shan Healthcare Training Programme associated with Partners Relief and Development. I established this programme before starting Circuit International. Her account identifies my initiating role and the local recognition of need that preceded it. Her qualitative research involved four fieldwork visits in 2014-2016. This is a historical study of one programme, not a comparison of Christian and secular provision.¹⁰⁴

This connection makes the study particularly demanding for me. A founder can explain why an initiative mattered and still misunderstand how others experienced it. The account I give from a church platform must leave room for

knowledge I did not possess, contributions I did not make, and criticism that changes the meaning of an apparent success. My personal involvement makes these obligations more immediate.

Bell reports increased medic confidence and preparedness, but could not directly assess rural community health outcomes. She also discusses her prior relationships with programme staff and the implications for access and interpretation.¹⁰⁵ These disclosures help readers assess what the study can establish. The people teaching, administering and receiving care may understand the same programme differently. Academic analysis should make those differences available for examination.

The theological question remains distinct from the empirical one. I can regard healthcare as an expression of Christian compassion without claiming that this study proves Christianity caused better health. Nor does a study of an earlier programme demonstrate Circuit's effectiveness. What it contributes to this book is an opportunity to hold a personally important undertaking to the same standards of truthfulness, attention and accountability proposed for everyone else.

A partnership that improved access

A Tanzanian cluster randomised trial offers a concrete example. Downs and colleagues studied education for Christian leaders alongside an existing public circumcision outreach campaign. Sixteen villages were paired and allocated to the additional education or standard outreach. Uptake was higher in intervention villages. The reported proportions used the total male population from census records as their denominator; they were not the proportion of previously uncircumcised eligible adults who chose the procedure. The study supports the additional intervention in that setting. It did not compare trained religious leaders

with equally trained secular leaders, or measure community control.¹⁰⁶

The finding is useful precisely because the intervention was specific. Religious objections to the service were addressed through people able to discuss them within the relevant communities. The result cannot establish that any religious authority, discussing any subject, will improve health. It also does not turn uptake into a complete measure of the encounter: understanding, freedom of choice, and quality of care remain distinct questions.

For a development organisation, the transferable lesson is a question rather than a ready-made programme. Is there an obstacle that participants themselves understand partly through religious beliefs or relationships? If so, who can engage it competently and respectfully? The answer may involve clergy, clinicians, traditional leaders, family members, or several of these. Their involvement should follow the problem being addressed and the people affected.

In Shan State, it would be a mistake to presume that a Christian intermediary is automatically the most trusted person in a predominantly non-Christian setting. It would be equally mistaken to presume that a local Christian has no standing beyond a congregation. Both propositions require local evidence. Ethnicity, language, experience, personal reputation, and organisational conduct may all matter alongside religious affiliation.

What an experiment in evangelism can tell us

The Philippine experiment by Bryan, Choi, and Karlan deserves careful attention because it tests a proposition close to this book's subject. Invitations across 320 communities varied access to Christian values teaching and health-and-livelihood teaching. In the appraised author manuscript, the pooled comparison associated with values

teaching showed approximately 9.2 per cent higher household income six months after the course, alongside several statistically nonsignificant material outcomes. At thirty months, the pooled comparison did not show significant effects on the primary economic outcomes; some separate comparisons were favourable. This is evidence about invitations to a particular curriculum, with outcomes changing over time. It is not a finding that conversion generally ends poverty.¹⁰⁷

We should not dismiss that result because it involves evangelism. Doing so would select evidence according to the conclusion the book hopes to reach. Nor should we present the favourable income estimate alone. Its meaning depends on the intervention, the comparison groups, the other measured outcomes, and the later follow-up. Readers deserve the entire relevant pattern.

The experiment also exposes a limit in the question “Does faith work?” An income measure cannot establish the truth of a theological claim. A profession of faith cannot establish a sustained improvement in living conditions. An average improvement cannot show whether every participant felt free to refuse. Each question requires an appropriate kind of evidence.

A Christian organisation can therefore welcome research on its work without using economic results to certify belief. If a programme improves livelihoods, that benefit should be reported with its limits. If someone chooses Christianity, that person's account should be respected without treating it as proof that the programme caused every subsequent change. If economic gains fade, the organisation should investigate the programme without treating participants' faith as deficient.

The moral implication for this book is symmetrical. We should not make conversion a condition for recognising practical benefit. We should not make practical benefit a condition for respecting a person's chosen religious

commitment. Evidence about either may inform our understanding, but the person should not have to supply the outcome that best serves an organisation's preferred argument.

When moral authority constrains care

The capacity to influence behaviour can also obstruct access. Qualitative research with religious leaders in Eswatini describes tensions between pastoral expectations and speaking openly about HIV prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis. Leaders' concerns about morality, institutional approval, and credibility shaped what they felt able to discuss. The study helps explain a possible mechanism of exclusion or silence. It does not estimate how many HIV infections religious leadership caused, or establish the behaviour of every congregation.¹⁰⁸

This matters because a provider can discourage access without formally prohibiting it. People may anticipate disapproval. Staff may avoid a subject they expect leaders to find uncomfortable. A referral may never be offered because the person responsible believes offering it would imply approval of someone's life. To understand access, we need to examine these ordinary interactions as well as written policy.

The appropriate response is not to assume that all convictions must disappear. It is to clarify roles, competence, and obligations to the person seeking help. A religious worker may explain a belief while recognising the limits of their clinical knowledge. A service should be assessed by whether people receive accurate information and appropriate care, and whether disagreement exposes them to stigma or exclusion. Christian identity does not settle these practical questions in advance.

There is a further methodological issue. People who trust an organisation are more likely to participate in its surveys,

attend its meetings, or remain in its programmes. A uniformly favourable set of interviews may partly describe who was reachable. Researchers should explain how they sought disagreement and what kinds of experience their recruitment may have missed. Local knowledge strengthens an inquiry when its access advantages and blind spots are both acknowledged.

Faith beyond the Christian organisation

An objective account must include religious life that does not share the author's commitments. The research collection includes scholarship on Buddhist and Hindu development traditions, Islamic charity, and African-initiated Christianity. These bodies of work raise questions about ethical obligation, belonging, collective action, and the meaning of a good life. Their different methods and access levels do not permit a single ranking of religions by developmental value.¹⁰⁹

Their relevance here is also corrective. A community is not an empty setting into which an outside Christian organisation introduces compassion. It already contains practices of care, obligations, disagreements, and ways of interpreting suffering. Those arrangements may be generous, restrictive, unequal, or contested. We need to understand them through people who live within them, including those who criticise them.

This changes the language of partnership. Asking what people already do, whom they rely on, and what they would change produces a different conversation from asking how to secure acceptance of a prepared project. It does not require romanticising every existing practice. It requires enough attention to recognise both useful institutions and people whom those institutions do not serve well.

For Christian readers, cooperation across faiths need not imply that theological differences are trivial. People can

disagree about ultimate truth and still negotiate a water system, a fair wage, or access to a clinic. The earlier Gospel chapters make the ethical case for care across boundaries. The empirical question is how an actual partnership distributes responsibilities and benefits, and whether anyone's participation requires pretending to share a belief.

Historical arguments need their own evidence

Claims about Christianity's historical effects also enter contemporary fundraising discussions. Woodberry's argument about conversionary Protestant missions and liberal democracy has attracted substantial attention, as well as a published challenge by Nikolova and Polansky and a response from Woodberry. The present collection contains selected readings and limited access to parts of that debate, not a completed replication appraisal. It cannot responsibly announce that the dispute has been settled.¹¹⁰

The issue belongs partly in the historical chapters. Here its methodological lesson is enough: a cross-country relationship about historical missions and later national institutions cannot establish how a present charity treats participants. Equally, the existence of colonial abuse does not establish that every contemporary Christian service is harmful. History can identify structures and questions that deserve scrutiny; an assessment of current practice still needs current evidence.

It is particularly important to distinguish the organisational categories being discussed. Missionaries, colonial administrations, local converts, churches, international charities, and ethnic political movements are not interchangeable actors. Their relationships may change over time. Any claim that moves between them must explain the connection rather than rely on the shared word Christian.

An evaluation that can change our minds

For Circuit, I would begin with the programme's stated purpose and the decisions through which faith might affect it. This is a proposal for inquiry, not a description of an evaluation already completed. If the aim is poverty reduction, identify the relevant dimensions of poverty. If the aim includes reducing vulnerability to trafficking, specify the proposed pathway and examine it separately. If the programme claims community ownership, investigate actual influence over consequential decisions.

A useful inquiry would also ask about the costs of participation. Time, travel, foregone earnings, unpaid labour, exposure to conflict, and the burden of telling a personal story can matter alongside a material benefit. These costs may be concentrated among people least able to absorb them. A favourable average result should prompt questions about distribution, rather than end them.

Comparisons should fit both the ethical setting and the practical question. Sometimes a carefully designed experiment is possible. Sometimes implementation records, repeated observations, qualitative accounts, and an appropriately chosen comparison provide the best available evidence. A method should be described accurately, including what it cannot rule out. The absence of random assignment does not make all observations worthless; it does require restraint in claims about causation.

The findings must also be allowed to inconvenience the institution. Evidence that a trusted partner excludes a minority, that a popular activity has little effect, or that a religious practice creates pressure should be able to change the programme. Otherwise, evaluation risks becoming a search for material that reassures supporters. This is as true for a secular organisation committed to a fashionable development model as for a Christian charity committed to a theology of mission.

What, then, can faith contribute? The research offers examples of useful provision and effective partnerships, as well as mechanisms through which religious authority can constrain people. It supports investigation of particular arrangements. For the Christian argument developed here, faith also supplies reasons to undertake that investigation honestly: the people assisted are neighbours whose experience matters, including when their account challenges the giver's understanding of the work.

The next chapter follows that challenge into assistance itself. A programme may be religiously open and sincerely compassionate while still creating burdens, distorting priorities, or failing to deliver what people need. The quality of the intention begins the inquiry. What happens to people's lives must continue it.

Chapter 10. When helping diminishes people

An offer of assistance creates a relationship. Someone has resources another person needs, and somebody decides how those resources will be used. Compassion can shape that relationship, but it does not remove its differences in power. A development project should therefore be judged partly by what happens when a participant disagrees with the person offering help.

Can the participant refuse an activity and still obtain an essential service? Can people question the project's priorities? Can a worker report that an admired programme is causing difficulties? Can someone explain that the assistance is insufficient without being accused of ingratitude? These questions bring an often abstract concern about dependency into ordinary decisions. They also connect the development argument to the earlier theological discussion of freedom, dignity, and the character of Christian witness.

The title of this chapter names a possibility, not an inevitable consequence of assistance. Help can preserve life, make choices possible, and enable people to recover from losses they could not absorb alone. Criticism becomes useful when it identifies how a particular arrangement diminishes people and how another arrangement could serve them better. Criticism that leaves vulnerable people with fewer resources and no viable alternative has not yet done that work.

Begin with what the situation requires

The relief, rehabilitation, and development distinction in Corbett and Fikkert's *When Helping Hurts* provides a useful question: does the response fit people's present

circumstances? The selected passages appraised for this book distinguish urgent assistance from work intended to restore capacities or change longer-term conditions. Those passages are a practical framework from Christian development writing; they do not establish the effectiveness of every project that adopts the terminology.¹¹¹

These categories need flexible boundaries. A household can be rebuilding a livelihood while still needing food assistance. A village can have functioning local organisations while lacking protection from armed attack. A disabled person may exercise considerable authority over their life while requiring continuing practical support. People do not necessarily progress through a sequence that ends with complete independence from others.

In a conflict setting, repeated loss can make a carefully planned activity impossible. The destruction of an asset does not establish that its owner lacked initiative. A displaced household's continued need for assistance does not establish that assistance caused the need. Before diagnosing dependency, we must ask what alternatives existed, what changed around the household, and whether the promised support actually arrived.

Harvey and Lind's study of dependency and humanitarian relief challenges casual assumptions that receiving assistance necessarily reduces initiative. Its selected discussion treats aid within the wider strategies through which people survive and emphasises the unequal relationship between agencies and recipients. The report dates from 2005: it is used here as methodological background, outside the book's twenty-year window for contemporary Myanmar observations.¹¹²

The ethical issue is the difference between needing other people and being placed under their arbitrary control. All communities rely on relationships, institutions,

infrastructure, and transfers of resources. A person may become more secure through reliable support and less secure through an abrupt demand for self-reliance. The relevant questions concern the reliability, terms, and consequences of the relationship.

Examine the claim about dependency

Dependency is often used without identifying what changed. It can refer to reliance on an external budget, a reduction in paid work, the erosion of a local institution, or a participant's reduced confidence in making decisions. Those are different propositions. An organisation should specify which it means and seek evidence suited to that claim.

For one narrow proposition, the evidence is instructive. Banerjee and colleagues reanalysed seven randomised evaluations of government cash transfers in six developing countries and found no systematic evidence of reduced adult labour supply. The programmes and eligibility arrangements have limits as a basis for generalisation. Nevertheless, this finding challenges an easy inference from receiving money to withdrawing from work. It does not prove that every transfer programme preserves every form of initiative or community authority.¹¹³

Work itself also needs interpretation. Less paid work might indicate a harmful loss of opportunity, but it could also allow a person to leave an abusive job, attend school, or provide necessary care. More work might reflect new opportunity or a worsening struggle to survive. Hours worked cannot carry the whole moral judgement. We need to understand conditions, alternatives, remuneration, and the person's own assessment.

An organisation can also be financially dependent while its participants gain useful choices. A clinic requiring continuing subsidy may improve people's ability to work

and make decisions. Conversely, a project can cover its financial costs while transferring burdens to unpaid workers. Financial independence is one consideration in sustainability; it cannot serve as a complete account of human well-being.

This changes the question a fundraiser asks. Instead of promising that people will soon need no help, we can explain which capacities the work intends to strengthen, which continuing relationships it requires, and who will carry the costs. An honest account can include long-term obligations. The Christian case for assistance does not depend on making every person inexpensive to support.

Who carries the cost of a sustainable project

A project budget records some costs and leaves others elsewhere. Participants may travel, miss paid work, contribute materials, or care for children while another household member attends meetings. Local staff may translate beyond their paid hours. Volunteers may keep an activity functioning because abandoning it would harm people they know. These contributions need to be understood before describing the project as efficient.

Swidler and Watkins question development practices in which sustainability becomes an emphasis on workshops, training, and ostensibly self-supporting local activity. The selected sections read for this book show why that ideal requires scrutiny in the contexts they examine. Training can be valuable, but an expectation of unpaid commitment can overlook the material conditions under which people are being asked to work. Their argument is contextual and qualitative, not evidence that all training or volunteering fails.¹¹⁴

Kilpatrick's account of peacebuilders' service and self-sacrifice adds a theological question to this examination of costs. His concluding discussion values practitioners who

place others' well-being ahead of personal advantage. Such dedication may sustain demanding work. The ethical application nevertheless depends on who is being asked to sacrifice and what alternatives they have. His discussion is not evidence that unpaid work is harmless, or that a worker's willingness removes the organisation's obligations.¹¹⁵

A Christian employer should not turn an employee's sense of calling into an expectation of unlimited availability. A donor should not assume that local commitment will make up for an inadequate budget. Those are proposed standards for practice, not allegations about the organisations in Kilpatrick's study. They follow from taking service seriously as a responsibility of institutions as well as individuals. Fair pay, realistic workloads, and the freedom to raise a concern belong within that responsibility. The willingness to give should remain a choice, rather than become a test of faith imposed by someone who controls the resources.

The practical question is whether the proposed contribution is affordable, freely negotiated, and fairly distributed. A community contribution may be an expression of commitment. It may also exclude people who cannot provide money or labour. A meeting may look participatory while its timing gives influence chiefly to people with flexible schedules. Counting attendance will not reveal all these differences.

Mansuri and Rao's review draws attention to the institutions surrounding participatory projects, including financing, oversight, and the capacity to maintain services. Local participation alone cannot supply every resource a functioning service requires. The selected pages also warn that community contributions can burden poorer participants and that facilitators influence whose preferences become visible.¹¹⁶

Consider a hypothetical water project. Residents help choose a location and agree to a contribution, but replacement parts later prove unaffordable and the trained repair worker must seek paid employment elsewhere. The problem cannot be diagnosed solely as a failure of local ownership. The original financing and maintenance assumptions need examination. This example describes a planning question, not an observed Circuit project.

Sustainability should therefore be stated in concrete terms. What must continue? Who is responsible? What resources are needed? How will maintenance be paid for? What happens when a key worker leaves or a household cannot contribute? A plan that answers these questions may require continuing outside partnership. Such a partnership can be more credible than a promise of withdrawal with no viable replacement.

When expertise must learn the setting

Bell identifies problems with volunteer preparation, English-language instruction and an overly technical curriculum in the Shan Healthcare Training Programme. She also finds weaknesses in monitoring, learning and accountability to local partners.¹¹⁷ These findings do not negate the value of training. They ask whether its content and organisation enable people to use what they learn.

Professional competence is necessary, but it does not answer every teaching question. Can trainees discuss a difficult judgement in a language they understand well? Can they use the proposed approach with the equipment and support available to them? Can a local colleague challenge a visiting specialist without being treated as ungrateful? These are practical questions arising from the study, rather than additional findings it has established.

For me, the difficult response is to resist using the programme's purpose as an answer to criticism of its

methods. Compassion may explain why I helped begin the work; it cannot decide whether a particular lesson was useful or a particular arrangement fair. That judgement requires the experience of the people doing and receiving the work. An organisation should make it possible for them to change its assumptions.

Preparation, translation and continuity consequently belong in the cost of assistance. Donors need to understand why time spent listening or revising a curriculum can be as necessary as time spent delivering it. A short visit should fit a locally agreed plan, with responsibilities before and after the visitor's departure. This is a proposed standard for partnership, not a claim that the thesis tested every element of such a plan.

The organisation can become the centre

Assistance becomes especially vulnerable to distortion when the institution's need to continue an activity displaces the participant's reason for wanting it. A donor may prefer a visible building, a fixed number of trainees, or a dramatic story. Staff may then find it easier to demonstrate delivery than to ask whether the activity remains useful. The concern is an incentive to investigate; it should not be presented as an established motive without evidence.

Christian organisations face a related question when a practical programme is expected to produce a religious result. If continuing support depends on conversions, local workers may experience pressure to select receptive participants or interpret ambiguous statements as professions of faith. These are foreseeable risks of the arrangement. Whether they occur in a particular organisation must be established through its actual rules and practices.

The Code of Conduct for disaster relief developed by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and nongovernmental organisations places need, participation, accountability, and dignity within its principles. It rejects using aid to advance a particular religious standpoint. The joint Christian recommendations on witness likewise reject exploiting vulnerability and affirm freedom of religious choice. These are normative commitments, not evidence that a signatory or Christian charity has fulfilled them.¹¹⁸

An organisation can apply those commitments by separating a person's access to practical help from agreement with its religious message. It can explain its identity honestly, make participation conditions clear, and provide ways to raise concerns without approaching the person who controls the benefit. The details will vary, especially where communications are insecure. The underlying question remains whether a participant can exercise the freedom the institution claims to respect.

Accountability also reaches the fundraising stage. A person's story is not simply raw material belonging to the organisation that helped them. Consent should identify the intended audience and use, while taking account of foreseeable exposure. In a small community, changing a name may leave someone recognizable. A donor's wish for a compelling story cannot decide what another person must reveal.

One kind of benefit can coexist with another kind of harm

Programme evaluation becomes misleading when a favourable outcome is treated as evidence that nothing important went wrong. A reconciliation intervention studied by Cilliers, Dube, and Siddiqi in Sierra Leone illustrates this problem. The randomised study reported improvements in several social outcomes alongside worse

psychological outcomes following a programme of public truth-telling and reconciliation. Follow-up in a subset extended the observation period. The findings concern that particular bundled intervention; they do not establish that forgiveness itself is harmful or that every participant experienced the same effects.¹¹⁹

The relevance extends beyond reconciliation work. A programme can strengthen a committee while increasing pressure on individuals to discuss painful experiences. A livelihood activity can improve average earnings while adding an unmanageable workload for a subgroup. An organisation should therefore decide in advance which possible harms it will look for, and leave room for participants to identify harms it did not anticipate.

The most visible success measure may also miss who disappeared from the programme. A strong result among graduates does not explain what happened to people who withdrew. A satisfied group of service users cannot represent people who felt unwelcome. Attrition and exclusion are substantive questions about the intervention, as well as technical concerns in interpreting an evaluation.

This does not mean that any adverse experience automatically invalidates an entire programme. Decisions require judgement about seriousness, distribution, alternatives, and possibilities for remedy. It does mean that participants' difficulties deserve a response beyond the claim that most people benefited. An organisation should know who can authorise a change when evidence of harm appears.

Assistance enters relationships of power

Resources arrive in settings where people already have unequal authority. Selecting a local partner, paying a transport provider, or choosing a meeting location can affect those relationships. Community approval may reflect

genuine agreement; it may also reflect who was permitted to speak. Conflict-sensitive practice requires attention to these possibilities without assuming that every local institution is corrupt or every outside institution impartial.

Large claims about aid and armed conflict also require methodological care. The source collection includes a prominent empirical argument linking food aid and conflict and a published re-examination of that relationship. The limited appraisals retained here do not resolve their identification dispute. It would be irresponsible to turn that contested literature into a universal claim that relief prolongs war, or into advice to abandon people facing hunger.¹²⁰

The narrower operational questions remain unavoidable. Could access to a benefit expose someone to threats or demands? Does a public list reveal information that should remain private? Can a delivery arrangement be changed if people report danger? How will the organisation distinguish an unavoidable constraint from a practice it can improve? These questions should be answered with people who understand the setting, while protecting them from the consequences of candid disclosure.

In Shan State, local knowledge may be essential and unevenly distributed. A partner's access to one community does not establish their knowledge of another. An individual may understand a language, locality, and social network very well while missing the experience of a minority within it. Partnership requires learning about the boundaries of that knowledge as well as its strengths.

Compare realistic alternatives

To say that help can hurt is to begin a comparison. What happens with the present programme, and what is a feasible alternative? The comparison might involve a different form of support, a different delivery arrangement,

better safeguards, or a more reliable funding commitment. Sometimes the evidence supports ending an activity. Sometimes it supports strengthening it.

Withdrawal is also an intervention. If an organisation has helped establish a service or encouraged people to make commitments, departure can have consequences that deserve attention. This does not create an unlimited obligation to continue every programme. It does require honesty about what withdrawal will mean, especially when participants reasonably relied on earlier assurances.

Evaluators should also avoid assuming that a successful project can be transplanted unchanged. The same activity can operate differently where markets, security, public services, land access, or household obligations differ. Adaptation requires identifying the mechanism being tested and checking whether its necessary conditions exist. A familiar programme name is not sufficient evidence of fit.

These questions apply to Circuit as well as other development organisations. They concern actual decisions, costs, benefits, and complaints within a defined programme. The standards in this chapter do not establish an organisation's performance; that judgement requires evidence and must remain capable of identifying weaknesses in work we value.

Compassion that accepts correction

The Gospel argument developed earlier supplies a reason to take these questions seriously. If the person seeking help is a neighbour rather than a means to an institutional result, their experience has authority to disturb our account of what we are doing. Compassion must be willing to hear that a generous offer carried an unexpected cost.

Correction can be practical and ordinary: changing a meeting time, paying work that had been assumed to be voluntary, restoring access after a mistaken exclusion,

revising an unrealistic maintenance plan, or ending a condition that creates pressure. Larger changes may be needed where an organisation controls decisions that participants should be able to influence. The scale of the remedy should follow the problem established by the evidence.

This chapter has questioned arrangements that can diminish people without treating need as a moral failure. The next chapter asks what a constructive alternative requires. Community agency must become visible in consequential decisions, including decisions an outside organisation would have made differently.

Chapter 11. Communities shaping their own future

It is possible to invite people into a project without giving them much influence over it. They can attend a meeting, contribute labour, and appear in a report while the consequential choices remain elsewhere. The language of participation tells us little until we know which decisions were open, whose views carried weight, and what happened when people disagreed.

This matters to the thesis of the book. A development programme can express compassion through useful provision. A stronger claim—that it enables a community to shape its own future—requires evidence about power as well as benefits. Improved living conditions and increased influence can support each other, but one does not automatically demonstrate the other.

Community agency is therefore both a practical objective and a question for investigation. It concerns the possibilities people have, their influence over choices, and their ability to revise arrangements that affect their lives. The term community cannot be allowed to hide the unequal positions of the people within it.

What a meaningful choice requires

Naila Kabeer's discussion paper on empowerment starts with people whose ability to make strategic life choices has been denied. It distinguishes resources, agency, and achievements, while emphasising their relationships. A favourable outcome alone cannot show that someone had meaningful alternatives or exercised authority over the decision. The selected sections read for this book are particularly helpful in questioning the use of income or work as sufficient evidence of empowerment.¹²¹

The distinction is straightforward in a hypothetical livelihood project. A participant might earn more because they chose an attractive opportunity, because a household member compelled them to participate, or because deteriorating conditions left no tolerable alternative. The same income change can accompany different experiences of freedom. An evaluation that records only earnings cannot distinguish them.

Agency also extends beyond an individual making an isolated choice. People often act through households, associations, religious communities, and negotiated obligations. Dependable relationships can make choices possible. Relationships can also constrain them. The task is to examine how a particular arrangement works and whose priorities it permits people to pursue.

For this book, a meaningful choice needs some feasible alternative, sufficient information, and freedom from penalties that make refusal unreasonable. These are proposed criteria for assessing practice, not a claim that every constrained decision is devoid of agency. In situations of scarcity or conflict, all available options may be difficult. An organisation should be candid about those limits while asking which constraints it can reduce.

A community contains differences

A village leader can speak with substantial local knowledge and still fail to represent some residents. A public meeting can reach a legitimate decision while leaving a minority dissatisfied. Neither possibility justifies dismissing local institutions. Both require more precise language than saying that the community agreed.

Who was involved? Were renters, displaced people, younger residents, people with disabilities, and households outside dominant networks able to participate? Did language or travel costs restrict access? Could women speak freely in the chosen setting? These are questions to

adapt locally; they are not a claim that every group named here has the same position in every Shan State community.

Mansuri and Rao's review warns that participatory arrangements can reproduce local inequalities and that outside facilitation helps shape which preferences are expressed. Participation operates within wider institutions of accountability and support. Their selected discussion does not authorise the assumption that the nearest authority is always representative or that a project becomes accountable simply by being labelled local.¹²²

An organisation should therefore learn how authority is recognised and contested in the particular setting. Formal office, family relationships, wealth, religious standing, armed influence, and practical competence may matter in different ways. Public endorsement and private confidence may also diverge. Research methods should allow people to describe those differences without exposing them to retaliation.

The response cannot be an automatic transfer of all decisions to an outside charity. That would replace one problem of representation with another. The task is to develop arrangements through which affected people can influence decisions, challenge exclusion, and obtain a response. The appropriate form must fit the setting and the risks people themselves identify.

Separate material gains from institutional change

The GoBifo experiment in Sierra Leone is valuable because it investigated both. The original study by Casey, Glennerster, and Miguel examined grants and facilitation in randomly assigned communities. It found improvements in local public goods and economic outcomes but did not initially establish the broad changes in institutions and decision-making that the programme sought beyond its immediate activities. The intervention combined several

components, so the study could not identify each component's separate effect.¹²³

The result challenges a common shortcut in development reporting. A completed facility demonstrates that something was built. Evidence that it is accessible and useful strengthens the material case. Neither observation establishes that people previously excluded from important decisions now possess lasting influence. That requires its own evidence.

The later follow-up complicates the story in a useful way. Casey and colleagues reported persistent material gains and smaller institutional effects eleven years after the original baseline. The intervention history included additional facilitation and some nonrandomly allocated follow-on grants. It is therefore inaccurate to describe the follow-up as a pure test of what happened after all outside support ended. It is also inaccurate to repeat the earlier institutional null result as if no later evidence existed.¹²⁴

This pattern should encourage patience and precision. Institutions can change slowly; an immediate evaluation may miss developments that emerge later. Conversely, a long follow-up does not establish that every promised mechanism operated or that an effect will transfer to another setting. The strongest account describes what changed, how it was measured, and what happened to the programme between observations.

For a Christian charity, the implication is demanding but constructive. Material benefits deserve recognition in their own terms. Claims about transformed power relationships should be supported separately. A programme does not need to claim every possible good to be worth supporting.

A community can change its partners

Participation is often described as something an organisation encourages in a community. Kilpatrick's interviews also show practitioners describing influence in

the other direction. They speak of recognising capacities already present and of allowing local priorities to change their own approach. One participant describes a willingness to reconsider the entire approach if the community identifies a more important issue. Another emphasises listening to local voices rather than relying only on government. The participants are presented under pseudonyms; these accounts should not be used to identify particular people or attributed to Circuit.¹²⁵

These are practitioners' descriptions of how they hope to work, not independent confirmation that communities hold the authority described. Their value is to make a demanding possibility visible. A partner may learn that its chosen problem is secondary, that its timetable excludes important participants, or that its preferred activity is unwanted. Listening then has consequences for the organisation's plan, resources, and account to supporters. It also requires honesty about constraints: a partner may be unable to support a different priority, but should explain that limit without depicting disagreement as a failure of local understanding.

The community's influence must itself be open to examination. A confident local spokesperson may overlook people with less status. Disagreement within a village does not make participation futile; it makes attention to whose voice carries weight more important. Evidence of shared authority would include a decision changed after previously excluded people raised a concern, together with an account of who could object and what happened next. It would also include the organisation's response when change proved difficult. The practical questions that follow turn this possibility of mutual learning into responsibilities that can be examined.

Local leadership means responsibilities change

Bell describes the transfer of basic Community Health Worker training to Tai leadership as a positive development. She distinguishes this from the more advanced training, which had not become fully Tai-led.¹²⁶ That distinction matters: a transfer of responsibility within one part of an institution is meaningful without being presented as a completed transformation of the whole.

For someone who helped establish the programme, this changes the way its story should be told. The arrival of outside assistance is one event within a much longer local history of recognising need, caring for others and developing competence. A truthful account gives local leadership its own purposes and decisions. It does not turn every subsequent achievement into evidence of the founder's vision.

The practical test is what people can now decide and sustain. Teaching responsibilities should be accompanied by time, remuneration, appropriate materials and continuing opportunities to learn. Authority over a curriculum should include the ability to revise it. Partners should be able to request specialist assistance without surrendering control of the whole programme. These are implications I draw for practice; Bell's study does not establish that every such condition had been met.

Nor should localisation become a reason to withdraw resources prematurely. The task is to negotiate a distribution of responsibility that makes services more dependable and local decisions more consequential. Shared work may continue for years. Sustainability concerns the quality and durability of those arrangements, including the resources on which they depend.

Make decision rights visible

The following questions form a proposed framework for examining Circuit's practice. They do not describe powers already verified within its programmes. Their purpose is to connect the language of community agency to decisions that can be discussed and, where safe, documented.

First, who defines the problem and chooses priorities? Participants may reasonably bring different concerns. An organisation should explain which priorities it can support, which it cannot, and why. An open conversation includes the possibility that the community's most urgent concern falls outside the donor's preferred programme. The disagreement itself is useful evidence about the limits of the partnership.

Second, who controls the resources? Understanding a budget includes more than being told its total. People may need to know what can be changed, what costs are fixed, who approves expenditure, and how a dispute is resolved. Sensitive information may require restricted access, but secrecy should have a specific justification rather than function as a general substitute for accountability.

Third, who chooses how the work is done? Decisions about timing, staffing, suppliers, location, contribution requirements, and eligibility often determine who can benefit. Consultation after these decisions are settled offers limited influence. A credible process identifies which decisions participants can make, which are shared, and which remain with another party under stated obligations.

Fourth, who can change or stop the activity? Agency matters after a project begins. New risks, disappointing results, or a change in local priorities may require revision. The organisation should know whose evidence can trigger a review and who can authorise a change. A participant should also be able to leave without an unnecessary penalty or a misleading public account of their departure.

Finally, who can challenge an unfair decision? A complaint channel is useful only if people can reach it, expect a response, and use it without avoidable danger. Some concerns require an option outside the immediate delivery team. The form may be modest, but the responsibility to investigate and respond must be clear.

These questions should not become a ceremonial checklist. The evidence lies in how decisions were actually made, including cases in which a participant's view altered the original plan. A project may have considerable scope for local decisions in one area and serious constraints in another. Reporting that unevenness is more informative than assigning an unsupported label of complete ownership.

Donors also have obligations

An outside organisation cannot responsibly promise unlimited freedom over resources for which it remains accountable. Financial stewardship, safeguarding, technical competence, and legitimate restrictions on expenditure can impose real boundaries. The ethical task is to explain those boundaries early, keep them proportionate, and distinguish them from institutional preferences that could be negotiated.

A donor may, for example, require expenditure records. That does not settle whether reporting must use a difficult language, an expensive technology, or a format that consumes disproportionate staff time. The underlying purpose can often be met through more than one arrangement. Discussing the cost of compliance allows both parties to exercise responsibility.

Technical disagreement also needs a process. A community preference does not automatically establish that a proposed structure is safe or a health claim accurate. Equally, a technical credential does not give an outsider authority over every question of value, access, or

acceptable burden. Different kinds of knowledge should meet in an accountable decision, with the reasons made understandable to those affected.

The relationship is strongest when commitments run in both directions. Local partners can be accountable for using resources as agreed, while outside organisations are accountable for timely payment, honest communication, and the consequences of changing plans. Partnership loses substance when only the less powerful party must explain failure.

Sustainability under difficult conditions

To sustain a benefit is to keep the conditions that make it possible sufficiently reliable over time. Those conditions may include paid work, functioning markets, replacement materials, ecological limits, public services, and security. They also include people willing and able to maintain the activity. No single financial ratio can summarise all of them.

An economic improvement can be fragile if it depends on unsustainable extraction or transfers environmental costs to another community. A locally managed service can be fragile if the people responsible cannot afford to continue. A project can also face a shock beyond the control of everyone involved. Sustainability should therefore include contingency arrangements and explicit assumptions, rather than a promise that the original design will always survive.

In Myanmar, a call for institutional support must be handled with particular care. A general development finding about accountable public institutions is not a reason to assume that assistance should be routed through the military authorities. The form of support has to be assessed through the actual protection, access, and accountability conditions. No institution's formal title settles those questions.

People may decide that continuing external support is useful. They may also want control over the terms of that support. These positions are compatible. A community can exercise agency by negotiating a durable relationship, just as an individual can exercise agency by obtaining a dependable service.

An exit plan should consequently explain both what is expected to continue and what would justify changing the timetable. Withdrawal is appropriate when the arrangement no longer serves a useful purpose or when a viable alternative is in place. A predetermined departure date does not itself demonstrate sustainability.

Measure influence as well as activity

An attendance list establishes presence. It does not establish understanding, freedom to disagree, or influence. An evaluation of community agency should therefore combine records of decisions with accounts from people in different positions. Where possible, it should include people who did not participate, withdrew, or held a minority view.

One useful question is whether participants can describe a consequential decision they changed. Another is whether they understand the limits on their authority and regard the explanation as credible. Researchers can compare formal rules with actual cases: who proposed a change, who considered it, what happened, and how the outcome was communicated. Such evidence requires careful interpretation; a single favourable example is not a complete institutional assessment.

Resource decisions provide another line of inquiry. Who has access to relevant financial information? Who can authorise an expense? Who takes responsibility when a plan becomes unaffordable? The objective is to understand power, not to require public disclosure of information that

could put someone at risk. Appropriate access may differ from unrestricted publication.

Results should also be examined over time. A new committee might initially depend on a facilitator and later gain competence, or it might become increasingly dependent on one influential person. A completed consultation can have lasting effects or little relevance to subsequent decisions. Repeated inquiry helps distinguish these possibilities.

The framework should not yield a score unless the scoring rules and their meaning are justified. Combining different dimensions into a single number can conceal a serious weakness. Clear qualitative findings, supported by concrete evidence and explicit limits, may be more useful than an apparently precise index.

Freedom includes disagreement about faith

For a Christian organisation, community agency has an unavoidable religious dimension. Participants should be able to remain within their existing faith, adopt another, explore a belief, or decline religious discussion without losing access to assistance for which they otherwise qualify. Respect for agency includes respecting a freely chosen conversion; it also includes protecting the freedom to refuse one.

The organisation can state its Christian identity and explain why that identity motivates its work. Honest self-description helps people understand the relationship. The issue is whether institutional power turns an invitation into a practical condition. What the organisation intends and what participants reasonably perceive both need attention. The earlier Gospel chapters argue that people encountered by Jesus are active interlocutors, neighbours, and potential disciples. They speak, question, respond, and sometimes refuse. That theological interpretation cannot substitute for contemporary evidence about a programme, but it gives

the author a reason to take the participant's voice seriously.

The connection between development and Gospel witness becomes credible through such conduct. A charity may speak convincingly about dignity and still organise a project in ways that suppress disagreement. It may also demonstrate respect by accepting a locally chosen course it would not have preferred. Agency becomes visible when the relationship can accommodate that difference.

The next chapter tests these ideas against Circuit's stated concern with trafficking. Greater influence and improved livelihoods may strengthen people's options. Whether they reduce particular forms of exploitation requires a more specific argument, attentive to migration, recruitment, violence, legal insecurity, and the ways trafficking is measured.

Chapter 12. Poverty reduction and trafficking prevention

Circuit's stated purpose, as described for this book, links sustainable development with reducing poverty and the vulnerability of people in Shan State to human trafficking. The connection is morally compelling. A household with more secure resources may have greater freedom to refuse a dangerous offer, withstand a sudden loss, or pursue work on better terms. Whether a particular programme produces those effects is a question to investigate.

The distinction matters when speaking to supporters. A plausible pathway from improved livelihoods to reduced vulnerability is a defensible explanation of why the work may help. Demonstrating that trafficking has been prevented requires further evidence. The book should develop the pathway carefully without turning a reasonable expectation into a measured result.

This chapter considers poverty within a wider set of relationships: violence, displacement, recruitment, debt, migration, access to care, and unequal power. It also asks how much can be known from the available data. People experiencing exploitation are often missing from routine records, while those who reach services represent a selected part of the problem.

Be clear about what trafficking means

The international Trafficking Protocol defines trafficking through acts such as recruitment or transfer, specified means such as coercion or deception, and a purpose of exploitation. For children, establishing those means is not required. Where the specified means are used, a person's earlier consent does not settle the question. The definition itself does not require a border crossing. This is the international framework used here, rather than a

comprehensive statement of any country's current domestic law.¹²⁷

Those distinctions prevent several mistakes. Migration is not itself trafficking. A person can choose to migrate and later be subjected to coercion or deception. Exploitation can occur without a long journey. Assistance should therefore attend to the terms of recruitment, work, and control rather than treat movement alone as the problem.

Different forms of exploitation also require different inquiries. Forced marriage, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and forced criminality can involve distinct recruitment arrangements and sources of control. They should not be merged into an undifferentiated count. A programme suited to one pathway may have little effect on another.

Article 9 of the Protocol recognises poverty, underdevelopment, and unequal opportunity among factors that prevention should address. It also includes other measures, including attention to demand for exploitation. The document provides a normative basis for a broad prevention response. It does not establish the effect size of a livelihood programme.¹²⁸

The practical implication is that prevention can involve expanding safe options and addressing the conduct of exploiters. It should not place responsibility for avoiding abuse entirely on the person at risk. Someone can make a considered decision and still be deceived, threatened, or trapped by circumstances they could not reasonably control.

Poverty creates constraints, but it is not a complete explanation

Economic insecurity can narrow the options available to a household. A sudden expense or lost income may make an urgent offer more attractive. Debt can limit a worker's

ability to leave. These are proposed mechanisms to examine in a particular setting, not a claim that poor people are unable to assess risk or that every person experiencing trafficking came from the poorest group.

A World Bank and International Organization for Migration report studies economic shocks using IOM records of identified and assisted trafficking victims. It finds associations between adverse economic conditions and observed cases. The data depend on service access and organisational presence, which vary across places and time; unidentified victims are absent. The report supports attention to economic vulnerability while providing no population prevalence estimate and no direct test of Circuit's programmes. Its global records include years before this book's contemporary Myanmar window and are used here for comparative analysis.¹²⁹

An important counterexample to a simple poverty-only account appears in OHCHR's study of online scam operations and trafficking into forced criminality. Its reported victim profiles include educated people and people with professional experience recruited through apparently attractive employment. The report is a human rights synthesis with selected testimony and other evidence, not a representative survey of all victims. It nevertheless gives reason to examine deception and control beyond assumptions about extreme poverty.¹³⁰

The appropriate development question is therefore specific: which constraint does the activity intend to change, for whom, and through what mechanism? Better income might reduce reliance on an urgent recruitment offer. More reliable access to a service might reduce a household's need to borrow. Improved information might make an offer easier to assess. Each link needs evidence; none can stand in automatically for the final outcome of reduced exploitation.

Migration can be part of a better life

A programme that improves resources may make migration more feasible. A household could use greater financial security to pursue education or employment elsewhere. That movement might be part of the benefit people value. Counting everyone who stays as protected and everyone who leaves as a failure would impose an outside preference on their choices.

The relevant concern is the quality of the options available before, during, and after movement. Can people understand a contract or verify an employer? Do they retain access to their documents? Can they contact someone independent of the recruiter? Can they obtain help if conditions change? These are questions for locally informed inquiry, not a complete safety checklist or a guarantee that a migration decision will be safe.

Legal insecurity can also affect bargaining power and access to services. Its significance has to be examined within the relevant jurisdiction and period. The book should not imply that it has verified every current Thai or Myanmar rule. Historical research can identify mechanisms worth investigating without serving as present legal guidance.

This approach respects both aspiration and vulnerability. People may want to remain near their families, or they may want to leave. A development programme can improve the conditions under which either choice is made. The prevention argument is strongest when it addresses coercion and exploitation while respecting that wider freedom.

Conflict and disaster change the available options

Household decisions in Myanmar cannot be understood only through personal income or information. OHCHR's

annual update on 2025 documents military attacks, displacement, coercion, and restrictions on humanitarian assistance, alongside abuses by other armed actors. It attributes the vast majority of the documented incidents and casualties to the military. The report also describes the impact of the March 2025 earthquake and continued attacks during the emergency. These are national monitoring findings, with verification limits; they are not a separate Shan State casualty estimate.¹³¹

These conditions can disrupt several parts of a prevention strategy at once. A livelihood may become inaccessible. A household may lose contact with a trusted support network. A service may cease operating or become dangerous to reach. A person may need to move urgently, with less time to investigate an offer. The effect of each disruption in a particular community requires evidence, but the possibility should shape programme design.

Natural disasters and military action should remain distinct in causal accounts. An earthquake is a physical hazard; a decision to attack civilians or restrict assistance is an exercise of power. Both can affect people's options, and the consequences can interact. Describing all suffering as a generalised crisis can obscure responsibility for deliberate acts.

A development programme cannot promise to compensate for every consequence of armed violence. Emergency relief, protection, access to health care, and advocacy may be necessary alongside livelihood work. Their value should not be discounted because a long-term development strategy exists. Programme claims need to reflect the conditions under which people are actually trying to live.

Evidence from northern Myanmar needs its boundaries preserved

Research by Johns Hopkins University and the Kachin Women's Association Thailand addresses trafficking for forced marriage and childbearing involving women from Kachin and northern Shan State. Its mixed methods and defined study populations make it relevant to particular pathways of exploitation. Those boundaries must remain attached to any estimate: the results cannot be restated as the proportion of all women in Shan State who have been trafficked, or as evidence about every community Circuit serves.¹³²

Geography and identity also need care. A finding from northern Shan State is not automatically a finding about ethnic Shan people. A study involving Kachin women does not become representative of every group in the same administrative state. Nationality, ethnicity, place of origin, place of residence, and displacement status answer different questions.

The same discipline applies to time. Evidence gathered before a major escalation of conflict can illuminate mechanisms without describing today's prevalence. A new report may analyse old observations. The date of publication and the period of fieldwork should both remain visible in the research record.

These qualifications strengthen the argument. They allow a reader to understand what the study establishes and what still needs investigation. Precision is particularly important in fundraising, where a figure can travel far beyond the context in which it was produced.

Narcotics, authority, and the claim about population control

Drug production, drug use, drug dependence, and drug-related harm are connected but distinct phenomena. An estimate of cultivated land does not measure the number of people experiencing dependence. A seizure does not measure total production, local consumption, or the underlying trend without further assumptions. The UNODC opium survey and synthetic drug reporting use different forms of evidence, including remote sensing, field information, and official law-enforcement data. Their dependence on some government inputs must remain visible; an international publisher does not make every input independently verified.¹³³

The political question also requires distinctions. Thomson and Meehan's review describes connections among conflict, drug economies, enforcement, and the authority of armed actors. It includes accounts of militia financing, protection, and unequal enforcement. Such evidence can support an argument that drug economies and the treatment of users are embedded in political power. It does not, by itself, prove a single centrally directed policy to create addiction throughout the population.¹³⁴

Qualitative work by Meehan and colleagues examines young people's pathways into drug harms in Taunggyi through forty extended interviews and life histories gathered in 2018–2020. Accounts connect harm with insecurity, social and economic pressures, and the conduct of authorities. The purposive sample provides insight into experiences and mechanisms. It does not estimate prevalence across Shan State or establish the intention of every institution implicated in those accounts.¹³⁵

The distinction between consequence and intention is essential. Drug-related fear, debt, stigma, or punishment may reduce people's freedom. Particular authorities may

profit from a trade or use enforcement coercively. A community may interpret those experiences as deliberate political weakening. Each is a claim that can be investigated, but they require different evidence. A conclusion about a centrally ordered strategy would need direct and corroborated evidence of that strategy, beyond the existence of severe harms.

This standard does not minimise suffering or excuse complicity. It allows the book to criticise documented conduct precisely. It also keeps people who use drugs from being treated merely as symbols in a political argument. Their access to care, freedom from abuse, family relationships, and own accounts of their needs deserve attention.

Development activities should consequently be assessed for their relationship to those needs without claiming to be a complete response to dependence. Employment or a stronger support network may matter, but a livelihood programme cannot substitute for every necessary health service. Moral pressure, shame, or forced disclosure can create additional barriers. Any claim about treatment effectiveness would require a separate clinical evidence base.

The Shan migrant HIV research belongs in this argument

The earlier research on Shan migrants living with HIV in northern Thailand adds a concrete account of how movement, exclusion, and access to care intersect. Murray and colleagues' qualitative study describes barriers involving language, fear of arrest or deportation, costs, knowledge, and social marginality. It also describes forms of assistance that helped participants navigate care. Because recruitment was connected to a district hospital, the study cannot represent everyone excluded from

services, and it does not estimate HIV prevalence among Shan migrants.¹³⁶

Ayuttacorn and colleagues' research with Shan women living with HIV examines decisions around disclosure. Its purposive clinical sample is useful for understanding experiences of privacy, relationships, and anticipated reactions. It should not be used to infer that migrant women generally have HIV or that migration itself identifies someone as a trafficking victim.¹³⁷

These studies belong in the development argument because a person's practical freedom can depend on being able to obtain care and keep control of sensitive information. A household livelihood measure may improve while a member remains afraid to approach a service. An evaluation should therefore consider whether relevant barriers changed, while collecting only the information necessary and safe for its purpose.

The connection to trafficking is a proposed pathway requiring further investigation. Illness-related costs, interrupted work, and difficulty obtaining support could constrain options; successful access to care could improve security. The cited qualitative studies do not establish that an HIV service reduced trafficking. Their contribution is to make the account of vulnerability more realistic and attentive to people whose needs might otherwise be overlooked.

This also carries a clear implication for Christian practice. Access to appropriate care and respect for privacy should not depend on a person performing gratitude, discussing their faith, or allowing their medical history to become a fundraising story. That is the ethical position advanced here, not a claim that a particular breach has occurred at Circuit.

Awareness is an intermediate outcome

Information can be useful, but an awareness activity should be evaluated for what it actually changes. A research brief by Boittin and colleagues, based on household and leader surveys and randomised campaign exposure in selected Nepal districts, reports that messages could increase recognition of trafficking as a national concern without increasing perceived local relevance. These are findings about beliefs and perceptions, not demonstrated reductions in exploitation.¹³⁸

A participant may know that trafficking occurs and still lack an affordable alternative to a risky offer. Another may understand a general warning but not recognise how it applies to a familiar recruiter. Improved knowledge can be one useful result, while leaving important constraints unchanged. Programme reporting should identify that distinction.

The same applies to confidence. People may feel better able to assess an offer without becoming more accurate, or may become more cautious without obtaining better options. An evaluation needs to explain what its questions measure. A positive response immediately after a session is especially limited as evidence of a lasting change in circumstances.

The practical response is to connect information with the conditions under which it can be used. That might involve trustworthy advice, independent verification, access to services, or resources that make refusal possible. These are possibilities for design and testing, not a claim that a particular combination has been established as effective in Circuit's setting.

What Circuit could reasonably measure and claim

A credible evaluation would begin with a defined programme, a specified population, and a clear account of the proposed pathway. It would distinguish activities delivered from changes in people's options and from experiences of exploitation. Providing training, increasing income, and preventing trafficking are different outcomes, even when the programme hopes to connect them.

Intermediate measures might include greater ability to meet an urgent expense, reduced reliance on a coercive debt arrangement, or improved access to independent advice. Each would need a locally appropriate definition and a method that does not put participants at risk. The measures should reflect participants' priorities as well as the organisation's theory of change.

Trafficking outcomes are harder to assess. A rise in recorded cases might reflect a worsening problem, improved recognition, safer reporting, or a combination. A fall might reflect reduced exploitation or the loss of access to services. Counts of people identified, referred, assisted, and verified through a particular process should remain separate. They cannot be added together without checking for overlap and differences in definition.

Similarly, no known case among participants is not evidence that every participant was protected. People may move, withdraw, choose not to disclose, or remain unreachable. Follow-up must take those possibilities seriously without turning assistance into intrusive surveillance. The person seeking help retains interests that come before an evaluator's wish for complete data.

If a programme improves livelihoods but has no adequate trafficking outcome study, the appropriate claim is that livelihoods improved under the conditions the evaluation can establish. The organisation may also explain the

plausible prevention pathway and the uncertainty around it. This is a substantial contribution; it need not be enlarged into an unsupported count of trafficking cases averted.

A stronger claim because it is bounded

The argument for compassionate development becomes stronger when it identifies both its contribution and its limits. Greater security and meaningful choices can be worthwhile in themselves. They may also reduce particular vulnerabilities to exploitation, alongside protection, health services, better recruitment conditions, and action against perpetrators. Which effects occur must be established through evidence suited to the setting.

For the book's theological argument, no person's value depends on supplying a successful prevention statistic. The neighbour who continues to need assistance, the migrant who chooses to leave, and the person whose experience complicates the programme's theory all remain within the scope of care. Their lives should determine whether the work is helpful, rather than being arranged to confirm a preferred account of mission.

These standards apply to Circuit as readily as to any other charity. Assessing its practice would require organisational records and safely obtained accounts of decisions and experiences. The argument developed here supplies criteria for that assessment, not an evaluation completed in advance. The conclusion now returns to the question Christian audiences ask and considers the answer this evidence can support.

Conclusion

Answering the church and changing the questions

“Where does the gospel fit into all this?”

The shortest answer is: it does not need to be inserted into truthful, compassionate, liberating work as though it were absent. When people gain safer livelihoods, greater influence over decisions, access to care, protection from exploitation, and freedom from religious pressure, something consonant with the good news Jesus announces is being enacted. That work is not the whole of the gospel, and its outcomes cannot be identified without remainder with the kingdom of God. But neither is it a merely secular platform waiting for a religious message to make it Christian.

The fuller answer requires everything this book has examined. Jesus announces God’s reign, calls people to repentance and trust, teaches disciples, heals, feeds, restores belonging, confronts oppressive uses of status and wealth, and receives the agency of those he meets. The Gospels do not permit a choice between all words and all action. They do require us to ask what kind of words, what kind of action, and what kind of power make a witness truthful.

The answer after the presentation

A public speaker may reasonably say:

We do not hide that we are Christian. We understand the gospel through Jesus’ announcement of God’s kingdom and through his compassion, truthfulness, invitation, and refusal to make mercy a commodity. In Shan State, people face conflict, displacement, poverty, trafficking risk, disrupted health care, and

the legacies of colonial Christianity. So we work with communities to strengthen the choices and capacities they identify. We use words when words serve the person before us—when we are asked, when explanation is needed, and when a relationship permits honest conversation. We do not make assistance conditional on worship, conversion, or listening to us. The freedom to accept or reject our faith is part of the freedom we are bound to protect. That is not the absence of the gospel. It is one way of refusing to contradict it.

This answer improves on “How are we not communicating the gospel?” because it explains both the positive claim and its limits. A development organisation could communicate domination, dependency, vanity, or falsehood while using Christian language. Christian intent is not self-validating. The question must therefore remain open to evidence and correction.

The saying “Preach the gospel at all times; use words if necessary” captures a real protest against hypocritical speech, but it is not securely attributable to Francis of Assisi and can be used too simplistically. Francis’s actual rule instructed friars to live peaceably among non-Christians and also allowed verbal proclamation when they judged it pleasing to God.¹³⁹ Conduct communicates, but deeds do not state by themselves who Jesus is, what the kingdom means, or why a Christian acts. Words are sometimes necessary. The moral issue is whether they are truthful, fitting, and free from leverage.

Good news is larger than a conversion count

The four Gospels are not embarrassed by response. People leave nets, follow, believe, return home, bear witness, misunderstand, refuse, betray, and begin again. Matthew’s closing commission includes baptising and teaching people to obey all Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18–20). Luke

joins proclamation with release, healing, table fellowship, and the formation of a new people. John explicitly seeks belief and life in Jesus' name (John 20:30–31). Mark begins by naming “the good news of Jesus Christ” and calls hearers to repent and believe (Mark 1:1, 14–15). A Christian charity need not deny these claims to protect religious freedom.

It must, however, refuse a managerial substitute for them. A conversion count can record an answer on a form. It cannot measure the truthfulness of faith, the freedom of the response, reconciliation with a community, or obedience to Jesus. Where the enumerator also controls valued assistance, the count may reward politeness, strategic compliance, or fear. Even a sincere profession should not be claimed as the organisation's production.

Christian guidance on witness recognises this danger. The interreligious recommendations *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* call Christians to reject coercion and improper inducement, respect freedom of religion, and act with humility and love.¹⁴⁰ The Lausanne Covenant retains a serious commitment to evangelism while also affirming Christian social responsibility; its history shows that evangelicals need not solve the relationship by making compassionate action an advertising device.¹⁴¹ These documents are normative commitments, not proof that organisations follow them. They nevertheless make clear that refusing material leverage is not retreat from Christian mission.

Four serious objections

The first objection is that compassionate work without explicit explanation can be mistaken for generic humanitarianism. That is true. A well, livelihood programme, clinic referral, or anti-trafficking initiative does not by itself communicate the resurrection, the identity of Jesus, or the call to discipleship. The answer is

not to pretend that deeds contain propositions. It is to speak honestly about Christian identity and motivation where that information is relevant, and to make voluntary conversation possible without attaching it to eligibility. Institutional work can be a truthful part of witness without pretending to perform every task of a church.

The second objection is that fear of coercion may become an excuse for silence. That danger is also real. Staff may avoid every religious subject because it is professionally awkward rather than because they respect conscience. The remedy is not a compulsory presentation but moral competence: workers should know what the organisation believes, understand the power they hold, answer questions without manipulation, and recognise when referral to an independent pastor or church creates freer conditions for further conversation.

The third objection is that people have agency and should not be patronised as though poverty makes them incapable of hearing a religious invitation. This book agrees. Protection from leverage is not the judgement that poor people cannot think. It is recognition that a person can be intellectually capable while facing material dependence on the speaker. Agency is respected by providing information, genuine alternatives, privacy, and the ability to end the conversation without penalty. An organisation that assumes every expression of interest is false is as disrespectful as one that counts every polite response as conversion.

The fourth objection is theological: the church's mission cannot be reduced to social improvement. Again, the objection is correct. The kingdom of God is not identical to a development indicator, and death, sin, forgiveness, worship, judgement, reconciliation, and resurrection exceed the mandate of a poverty programme. The error lies in the next step—concluding that social action has Christian value only when it leads to verbal evangelism. In

the Gospels, mercy is not a disguised transaction. The person healed, fed, welcomed, or defended is not required to become evidence that compassion worked spiritually.

These objections sharpen the thesis rather than defeat it. They prevent sustainable development from claiming to be the whole mission, while preventing proclamation from becoming the price of help.

The historical question beneath the question

Christian institutions have sometimes joined faith to imperial law, conquest, slavery, assimilation, racial hierarchy, and foreign control. That history does not make every request for evangelism a colonial demand. It does make the conditions surrounding a religious invitation part of the question. In Burma, Protestant mission expanded within a landscape transformed by British conquest. Christianity became entangled in ethnic politics and could be perceived as alien even as local Christians made the faith their own, preserved minority institutions, and resisted state domination.

An international charity therefore speaks from inside an inherited asymmetry. It may have access to donors, passports, media, and institutional protection unavailable to the people about whom it speaks. If it portrays Shan communities chiefly as recipients of foreign Christian benevolence, it can reproduce the colonial story even while funding a sustainable project. If it makes religious response the proof that donations were spiritually worthwhile, the community becomes a means to the donor's assurance.

Repentance in this setting is organisational. It appears in who controls money, who authors the story, whose knowledge changes the programme, how complaints are handled, and whether people may say no without consequence. It also appears in intellectual honesty:

admitting that there is no representative measure of contemporary Shan attitudes to Christianity, that current health and conflict statistics are incomplete, and that Circuit's intentions are not evidence of its effects.

Development as a practice of neighbour-love

The central thesis of this book can now be stated conditionally and precisely. Development is especially compatible with Jesus' message when it improves well-being while strengthening people's meaningful power to shape their lives and communities; when it gives priority to those excluded from ordinary influence; when it tells the truth about effects and limits; and when it protects freedom of conscience. It ceases to be compatible when "sustainability" becomes abandonment, when local ownership becomes rule by the already powerful, when productivity determines human worth, or when aid becomes leverage for faith.

This is why emergency relief and long-term development should not be made rivals. A person under bombardment may need shelter before a participatory livelihood process. A child with a disability or a person requiring lifelong treatment may always depend on relationships and institutions. Jesus' compassion is not restricted to interventions that graduate beneficiaries into economic independence. Human life is interdependent. Sustainable practice means that responsibilities, resources, knowledge, and care can endure appropriately—not that every person must become self-sufficient.

Nor is community agency the romantic belief that every local decision is just. Communities contain unequal power. Women, young people, minority religions, people who use drugs, migrants, people with disabilities, and those who dissent may be excluded from apparently participatory decisions. The standard is meaningful agency: access to relevant information, real options, influence over

consequential choices, and the capacity to refuse or appeal. Naila Kabeer's distinction among resources, agency, and achievements helps explain why a favourable outcome alone does not prove empowerment.¹⁴²

In Shan State, this approach has practical relevance to trafficking prevention. Poverty reduction can widen safe options, but poverty is neither a necessary nor a sufficient explanation of trafficking. Conflict, displacement, armed recruitment, unsafe migration channels, documentation, gender, demand, criminal protection, and deception also matter. A livelihood project may plausibly reduce some vulnerability; it should not claim to have "prevented trafficking" without an explicit causal design and evidence. Honest restraint is part of witness.

What proclamation can look like

None of this requires institutional silence. A Christian organisation can identify itself publicly, explain the convictions that animate its work, answer questions, support churches in their distinct ecclesial work, and make room for voluntary conversation. It can train staff to distinguish invitation from pressure and to recognise how authority changes an encounter. It can publish eligibility criteria that exclude religious participation. It can refrain from collecting conversion data within service relationships. It can refer anyone who wants sustained religious formation to a setting in which consent is clearer and assistance is not at stake.

The practical boundary should be visible before a difficult encounter occurs. A field worker should not have to improvise whether prayer is part of an assessment, whether a testimony belongs in a distribution meeting, or whether religious interest is entered in a participant record. Policies can state that services do not depend on belief; that prayer and religious discussion require consent; that declining has no programme consequence; that

sensitive religious information is not collected without a defined safeguarding reason; and that complaints can bypass the staff member involved.

Separation of roles can sometimes help. A livelihood team can explain the organisation's Christian identity without being tasked with producing religious responses. Local churches can conduct worship and discipleship as churches, provided access to development benefits is not routed through participation. This is not an absolute institutional formula. In small communities, people inevitably hold several roles. The principle is that the person controlling a scarce benefit should not use that control to secure attention, agreement, or public religious performance.

The organisation should also prepare for genuine religious interest. Respect for conscience includes the freedom to convert, not only the freedom to refuse. A person asking about Jesus should not be treated as a safeguarding problem. They should receive truthful answers, privacy appropriate to the risk, and freedom from exaggerated promises. Where conversion may threaten family or community belonging, no outside organisation can guarantee safety. It should neither dramatise persecution to validate itself nor conceal foreseeable consequences.

The distinction is not between courageous evangelism and cowardly service. It is between witness that entrusts response to the other person and communication that uses scarcity to produce the appearance of response. Jesus can ask a direct question and allow departure. Christians who believe the gospel is true need not protect it with coercion.

Proclamation also includes naming realities that polite charity may avoid. To speak truthfully in Myanmar is to name military attacks, the political economy of narcotics, trafficking and forced criminality, health-system destruction, religious nationalism, and the limitations of international actors. Advocacy can be part of Christian

witness when it follows the priorities and protects the safety of affected communities. It can also become another form of appropriation if outsiders claim local courage as their own.

Better questions for Christian audiences

The original question need not be mocked. It can be converted into a more demanding examination. Instead of asking only, “How many people heard a gospel presentation?” churches can ask:

- Did people have a real voice in the decisions that affected them?
- Did those with less local status influence the project, or only recognised leaders?
- Could anyone decline prayer, religious conversation, or Christian participation without losing assistance?
- What changed in food security, livelihood stability, safety, access to care, or exposure to exploitative recruitment—and how do we know?
- What harms, exclusions, or unintended effects were reported?
- Who owns the data, photographs, and public story?
- What happens when funding ends, and who carries the continuing cost?
- Did the project strengthen local organisations or make the international charity indispensable?
- How did local Christians and people of other faiths interpret the organisation’s conduct?
- What did the organisation learn that caused it to change?

These are not less spiritual questions. They concern truth, power, neighbour-love, repentance, and the treatment of people as ends rather than instruments.

They also change what is reported to supporters. A church presentation can include stories of decisions returned to a village committee, a design altered after women objected,

a complaint that exposed harm, or a programme stopped because it was not working. Such accounts may be less triumphant than conversion totals. They show a form of repentance and accountability that Christian audiences should learn to recognise as faithfulness.

The questions must be directed inward as well. Does the donor allow local partners to disagree with the theological framing? Does the international organisation tolerate an evaluation that weakens its preferred story? Are salaries, risk, authorship, and public visibility distributed justly? A charity can protect community choice in a workshop while retaining colonial control over the larger institution.

Kilpatrick's research gives this inward questioning a useful practical form: the community may need to change the partner. Its members may understand a risk, a capacity, or a priority that the organisation has missed. A Christian supporter can welcome that correction without abandoning the convictions that prompted generosity. The change required may be in the donor's expectations, the organisation's decision rules, or the story told from a church platform. These are implications drawn from the discussion in this book, not outcomes established for Circuit by the thesis. The willingness to receive correction belongs within the account of faithfulness offered to donors.

Bell's research makes that responsibility personal. The earlier health programme she studied belongs to my own working history. I cannot ask churches to welcome uncomfortable evidence while selecting only the favourable parts of an account that concerns me. The appropriate response is to recognise other people's contributions, distinguish aspirations from demonstrated results, and allow criticism to change the story I tell. Readers should apply the same discipline to this book. An argument for compassionate development must remain answerable to the people whose experience gives it substance.

What donors are being invited to support

Fundraising commonly compresses complexity: a visible problem, a solvable intervention, a gift, and a happy result. The format is understandable, but it can train donors to expect mastery. Shan State resists that expectation. No charity controls the conflict, the border regime, the price of crops, an earthquake, or the decisions of armed actors. No honest speaker can guarantee that one intervention will end trafficking.

Donors can instead be invited into disciplined solidarity. They can fund patient work whose outcomes are bounded, local leadership whose decisions may differ from donor preference, evaluation that may reveal failure, safeguarding that limits access to stories, and continuing care that does not produce a dramatic graduation. They can accept that a person's refusal to convert is not a spiritual loss on the charity's balance sheet. They can support public truth without requiring vulnerable people to perform gratitude.

This does not weaken the fundraising case. It changes the object of confidence. Confidence rests not in a saviour organisation but in responsible partnership, learning, and the capacities of communities living under pressure. A Christian donor is invited to generosity without possession.

A conclusion that remains accountable

The thesis is not that sustainable development is always the gospel, that verbal evangelism is unnecessary, or that Christian organisations possess a uniquely effective development method. Faith-based actors can contribute trusted networks, motivation, persistence, local knowledge, and material capacity. They can also intensify stigma, exclusion, dependency, and religious competition. The evidence must be specific to the organisation, intervention, population, and comparison.

The thesis is that a particular kind of development is profoundly consonant with the message and practice of Jesus: compassionate action that restores relationship, attends to people pushed to the margins, expands rather than captures agency, and tells the truth. It is compatible with proclamation because it refuses to make proclamation coercive. It is compatible with conversion because it protects the freedom without which conversion is hollow. It is sustainable when communities possess real influence and when institutions accept continuing obligations to people whose care cannot be reduced to economic independence.

That thesis remains falsifiable in practice. If a project improves income while silencing women, it cannot claim the full moral argument made here. If it increases community control while excluding a minority religion, agency has been distributed unjustly. If it provides compassionate relief but falsifies outcomes to satisfy donors, its witness is compromised. If it speaks about Jesus while people fear that refusal will cost them help, the apparent proclamation contradicts its content. Conversely, an organisation need not demonstrate perfection before its work can be faithful. It must demonstrate the capacity to hear, correct, repair, and relinquish power.

Circuit International's stated commitment to sustainable development and reducing poverty-related trafficking risk expresses its purpose.¹⁴³ Assessing its effects requires evidence about decisions, participant experiences, and outcomes. The theological argument offers standards by which Circuit, its supporters, and its critics can judge the work. Those standards carry no exemption for an organisation the author values.

So where does the gospel fit?

It is heard when Jesus is named truthfully. It is seen when compassion refuses domination. It is contradicted when help purchases religious compliance. It is honoured when

neighbours retain the power to speak, choose, dissent, and act. And it remains good news when the person who receives no sermon, joins no church, or rejects the faith is still loved without remainder.

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- 43.** Kaewtep, S., Apidechkul, T., Suttana, W., and Chansareewittaya, K. Prevalence and Factors Associated with HIV Infection Among Ethnic Minority Male Sex Worker in Chiang Mai Province Thailand. 2021-06-29. Methods and results for 250 venue-recruited ethnic-minority male sex workers. Nine HIV-positive observations; not representative of all Shan or Myanmar migrants. [B160]
- 44.** Thant, K. S., Thongprachum, A., Chautrakarn, S., Chantaklang, P., and Chariyalertsak, S. Knowledge Attitude and Preventive Behaviors Related to HIV AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections among Myanmar Migrants in Chiang Mai Province Thailand. 2024-11-27. Methods and results for a 2023 convenience sample of 424 Myanmar migrants. Questionnaire with no biomarker testing; linked B162 uses the same sample. [B161]
- Thant, K. S., Thongprachum, A., Chautrakarn, S., Chantaklang, P., and Chariyalertsak, S. Stigma and Discrimination Towards People Living With HIV AIDS Among Myanmar Migrants in Chiang Mai Province Thailand. 2024-07-24. Methods and stigma-attitude results. Same 424-person convenience sample as B161; reported beliefs are not observed discrimination or infection prevalence. [B162]
- 45.** O'Connor, S. Y., Tangmunkongvorakul, A., Srithanaviboonchai, K., Sripan, P., Banwell, C., and Kelly, M. Association between Sociodemographic Factors and Condom Use among Migrant Sex Workers in Chiang Mai Northern Thailand. 2022-08-10. Methods and partner-specific condom-use results. Selected migrant sex-worker sample with overlapping partner groups and differing denominators. [B163]
- 46.** Murray, J. K., A. S. DiStefano, J. S. Yang, and M. M. Wood. "Displacement and HIV: Factors Influencing Antiretroviral

Therapy Use by Ethnic Shan Migrants in Northern Thailand.” *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 27, no. 5 (2016): 709–21. doi:10.1016/j.jana.2016.04.006. Methods and conclusion. Qualitative study at a Chiang Mai district hospital. Service-connected participants cannot represent every migrant or those entirely excluded from care. [B164]

Ayuttacorn, A., et al. “Disclosure of HIV Status among Shan Female Migrant Workers Living with HIV in Northern Thailand: A Qualitative Study.” *PLOS ONE* 14 (2019): e0216382. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0216382. Methods and results. Purposive interviews with Shan women living with HIV. Used here for mechanisms around disclosure and care, not prevalence. [B165]

47. United Nations Network on Migration in Thailand. Thailand Migration Report 2024. 2024-12. Thailand Migration Report 2024, selected insurance and treatment-programme sections. National eligible-worker and programme counts; excludes some migrants and supplies no Chiang Mai HIV rate. [B167]
48. UNAIDS. Delivery of Antiretroviral Medicines in Conflict Environments Myanmar. 2024. UNAIDS operational narrative after the December 2023 Lashio escalation. Service counts may overlap and are not audited coverage or evidence of completed Thailand referral. [B169]
49. Médecins Sans Frontières. World AIDS Day 2021 Myanmar Political Turmoil Threatens HIV Care. 2021-12-22; updated 2023-05-02. MSF 2021 operational account, updated 2023. Appointments and lost contacts are not necessarily distinct patients, deaths or treatment cessation. [B170]
50. Theodosius I, Gratian, and Valentinian II. Theodosian Code 16.1.2. 380. English excerpt in Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (1943), 31; reproduced by Fordham. Theodosian Code 16.1.2. Primary imperial text; it does not by itself establish uniform enforcement throughout the empire. [B032]
51. Augustine. Letter 93 to Vincentius. 408. English translation reproduced in *New Advent, Church Fathers*. Letter 93, selected sections 1–5. A situated defence of compulsion in the Donatist controversy, not a complete history of Christian coercion. [B033]
52. Nicholas V. Romanus Pontifex. January 8, 1455. In *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648*, edited by Frances Gardiner Davenport,

- 20–26. Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917. English reproduction at Papal Encyclicals Online. Selected translated clauses of *Romanus Pontifex* (1455). Primary papal text; the translation was used without claiming a direct genealogy to every later colonial policy. [B035]
- 53.** Council of Castile / Juan López de Palacios Rubios. *Requerimiento*. Early sixteenth century, conventionally 1513. English text reproduced by the National Humanities Center, 2006/2011, 1–2. Complete short translated text. Primary conquest ritual with editorial and dating caveats; the text demands submission and threatens conquest and enslavement. [B036]
- 54.** Hakluyt, Richard, the younger. *Discourse on Western Planting*. 1584. Excerpts from chapters 1–3 in Charles Deane, ed., *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, vol. 2 (1877), reproduced by Encyclopedia Virginia. Selected passages from *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584). Imperial and missionary advocacy, not evidence that every proposal was implemented. [B038]
- 55.** Gladney, VanJessica. George Whitefield. Penn & Slavery Project, University of Pennsylvania, July 10, 2025. Institutional historical synthesis and selected Whitefield correspondence. Used for the coexistence of evangelism, slaveholding and advocacy; no single-cause legislative claim is made. [B039]
- 56.** Codrington Renewal and Reconciliation Project. *History*. USPG and the Codrington Trust. Accessed September 15, 2026. Institutional historical account of the Codrington plantations. Acknowledges SPG ownership of plantations worked by enslaved people; detailed archival totals are not reproduced. [B040]
- 57.** Wesley, John. Letter to William Wilberforce. February 24, 1791. *The Letters of John Wesley*, reproduced by the Wesley Center Online, Northwest Nazarene University. Complete short letter to William Wilberforce. Primary antislavery Christian witness; it does not make white Christians the sole agents of abolition. [B041]
- 58.** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939*. Final report, vol. 1. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015. Selected sections of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission history volume. Canadian institutional history; no claim that it describes every school or denomination identically. [B042]

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation repository. Opening findings of the Commission summary. "Cultural genocide" is attributed to the Commission's finding. [B043]

59. Kairos theologians. The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church. A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa. September 25, 1985. Reproduced by Kairos Southern Africa, May 8, 2011. Selected sections of the 1985 Kairos Document. Primary Christian dissent from apartheid, not independent proof of all historical claims. [B047]

Dutch Reformed Mission Church. The Belhar Confession. Drafted 1982; adopted 1986. English text reproduced by the Reformed Church in America. Selected articles of the Belhar Confession. Primary ecclesial confession; adoption does not by itself establish completed institutional reform. [B048]

60. Schendel, Jörg. 1999. Christian Missionaries in Upper Burma, 1853–85. *South East Asia Research* 7 (1): 61–91. Publisher abstract consulted; full article not obtained. Abstract and bibliographic record. Full article not appraised; used only for a bounded pre-annexation chronology point. [B102]
61. Mang, Pum Za. 2016. Buddhist Nationalism and Burmese Christianity. *Studies in World Christianity* 22 (2): 148–167. DOI 10.3366/swc.2016.0147. Selected sections of the author-posted full text consulted. Selected author-posted full-text sections. Historical and theological interpretation; not a representative survey of current attitudes. [B104]

Mang, Pum Za. 2023. Christianity, Colonialism, and Burmanization. *The Expository Times* 134 (4): 153–163. First published online 2022. DOI 10.1177/00145246221132455. Abstract and selected sections of author-posted text consulted. Abstract and selected author-posted sections. Argument distinguishes intensification from creation of ethnic division; full evidentiary apparatus not reappraised. [B105]

62. Mang, Pum Za. Mission Education in Burma, 1600–1948. *International Review of Mission* 111, no. 1 (2022): 123–137. doi:10.1111/irom.12406. Abstract and selected sections of the free-to-read article, pp. 123–137. Corrective Myanmar Christian

history of mission education; educational contribution does not establish political neutrality or absence of cultural harm. [B189]

63. O'Morchoe, Frances. Narrating Loss and Differentiation: Lahu Origin Stories on the Margins of Burma, China, and Siam. *Southeast Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (August 2020): 161-180. doi:10.20495/seas.9.2_161. pp. 161-180, especially comparative sources and discussion of classification, migration and Baptist conversion. Lahu narrative history across periods and borders; not interchangeable with ethnic Shan identity or all Shan State communities. [B188]

64. Shan Missions. n.d. History of Shan Baptist Churches in Burma (1861-2001) & Beyond: Chapter One. Retrospective church history reproducing nineteenth-century correspondence. Selected sections read; original archival letters not independently checked. Chapter 1 and reproduced historical correspondence. Retrospective mission history; institutional memory is not independent evidence of population attitudes. [B106]

Shan Missions. n.d. History of Shan Baptist Churches in Burma (1861-2001) & Beyond: Chapter Four. Retrospective historical and practitioner account. Relevant sections read. Authorship, observation dates, and population representativeness not independently established; broad demographic estimates not used. Selected retrospective chapter. Practitioner history with uncertain representativeness; no broad demographic claim rests on it. [B107]

65. Mang, Pum Za. 2016. Buddhist Nationalism and Burmese Christianity. *Studies in World Christianity* 22 (2): 148-167. DOI 10.3366/swc.2016.0147. Selected sections of the author-posted full text consulted. Selected author-posted full-text sections. Historical and theological interpretation; not a representative survey of current attitudes. [B104]

Kham, Zam Khat. 2016. Burmese Nationalism and Christianity in Myanmar: Christian Identity and Witness in Myanmar Today. PhD dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Repository gives 2016; some subsequent citations give 2015. Repository abstract read; full thesis not obtained. Repository abstract. Doctoral thesis located but not fully obtained; no detailed empirical claim rests on it. [B120]

- 66.** Transnational Institute. Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context: The 2014 Census, Identity and Citizenship in Burma/Myanmar. Burma Policy Briefing No. 13, February 2014. Overview and selected identity, classification and census sections. Critical 2014 pre-census policy briefing; not a neutral census audit, present-day population description or attitudes survey. [B186]

Clarke, Sarah L., Seng Aung Sein Myint, and Zabra Yu Siwa. Re-Examining Ethnic Identity in Myanmar. Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, May 31, 2019. Introduction and methods, historical framework, identity narratives and conclusion. Selected consultations and interviews; no Shan case study and limited religious-identity analysis. Not representative of Myanmar opinion. [B187]

- 67.** Moe, David Thang. 2022. Beyond Academic Public Theology: Grassroots Asian Public Theology of Religions and Reconciliation in Southeast Asian Burmese Context of Buddhist Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict. PhD dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, March. Repository record verified; full text not obtained. Listed as priority reading, not substantive evidence. Repository abstract and metadata. Doctoral work located but not fully obtained; used only as a signpost to local public-theology scholarship. [B121]

- 68.** Frydenlund, Iselin, Pum Za Mang, Phyo Wai, and Susan Hayward. 2021. Religious Responses to the Military Coup in Myanmar. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19 (3): 77–88. DOI 10.1080/15570274.2021.1954409. Selected author-posted full text read, especially the Christian responses section. Selected author-posted full text. Comparative account of religious responses to the coup; actors within each tradition differed. [B111]

Frydenlund, Iselin, and Phyo Wai. 2024. Revolution or Order? Buddhist Responses to the 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 54 (5): 801–823. DOI 10.1080/00472336.2024.2364224. Journal abstract and authors' New Mandala abridgment, "Buddhist Division and Polarisation in Myanmar's Revolutionary Situation," October 1, read. Full journal article not obtained. Abstract and author abridgement. Focused on Buddhist responses; complete published article was not appraised. [B112]

- 69.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 83–100, especially pp. 99–100. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
- 70.** Goodacre, Mark. The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001; T&T Clark reissue, 2004. Author-hosted excerpt. Chapter 3, selected author-hosted excerpt. Only the excerpt was appraised; no full adjudication of Synoptic source theories is claimed. [B061]
- 71.** World English Bible. Gospel according to Mark. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Mark; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. Reading translation with a broadly Byzantine textual base, not a critical Greek edition. [B056]

World English Bible. Gospel according to Matthew. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Matthew; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B057]

World English Bible. Gospel according to Luke. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Luke; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B058]

World English Bible. Gospel according to John. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. John; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B059]

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Notes to Mark 16. New American Bible, Revised Edition. Accessed September 15, 2026. Notes on Mark 16:9–20. Editorial textual guidance; no central conclusion rests on the longer ending. [B076]

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Notes to John 7:53–8:11. New American Bible, Revised Edition, John 8 webpage. Accessed September 15, 2026. Note on John 7:53–8:11. Editorial textual guidance; no central conclusion rests on this passage. [B077]

72. Levine, Amy-Jill. The Jewish Context of Jesus. Bible Odyssey, Society of Biblical Literature, June 22, 2016. Complete short essay, originally appraised for Study Three. Introductory scholarly essay. Re-access returned a 403 response during this instalment; the reading status is retained from the earlier study. [B060]
 73. Ryan, Maurice. Revisiting the Parable of the Good Samaritan. *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1-15. Selected pages 1-8 and 13-15. Interpretive critique of common readings; the present argument also identifies what Luke does and does not state. [B073]
 74. Gosnell, Peter W. The Ethics of Valuing Others in the Gospel According to Luke. *Tyndale Bulletin* 76 (2025): 131-151. <https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.141348>. Selected pages 131-41 and 147-48. Narrative ethical interpretation, not evidence of contemporary programme effectiveness. [B063]
 75. Hartog, Paul Anthony. Johannine Ethics: An Exegetical-Theological Summary and a “Desiderative” Extension of Mimesis. *Religions* 13, no. 6 (2022): 503. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060503>. Selected sections 2.1 and 2.3-2.6, especially pages 5-6. Only Gospel material is used for the book’s primary theological argument. [B071]
 76. van Staden, Pieter. Compassion the Essence of Life: A Social-Scientific Study of the Religious Symbolic Universe Reflected in the Ideology/Theology of Luke. HTS Supplementum 4. Pretoria, 1991. Reworked doctoral dissertation. Selected discussion, pages 224-32, with introductory material. Reworked doctoral dissertation. Its broad contrast involving purity requires qualification through scholarship on Jesus’ Jewish context. [B064]
 77. World English Bible. Gospel according to Mark. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Mark; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. Reading translation with a broadly Byzantine textual base, not a critical Greek edition. [B056]
- World English Bible. Gospel according to Matthew. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Matthew; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B057]
- World English Bible. Gospel according to Luke. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Luke; chapter and

- verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B058]
- World English Bible. Gospel according to John. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. John; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B059]
- 78.** Lewis, Karoline. Commentary on John 4:5–42. Working Preacher, Luther Seminary, February 24, 2008. Complete short commentary. Scholarly pastoral interpretation, not a complete historical reconstruction of the Samaritan woman’s life. [B181]
- 79.** Chung, YongHan. The Canaanite Women in Korean Context: A Postcolonial Feminist Reading of Matthew 15:21–28. *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81, no. 1 (2025): a10529. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10529>. Article body, especially the reading of Matthew 15:21–28. Contextual interpretation is distinguished from direct textual observation and verified contemporary evidence. [B069]
- 80.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 74–77 and 181–187. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
- 81.** Ireland, Jerry M. Matthew 25:40 and “The Least of These”: Interpretive Implications for a Missional Ecclesiology. *Journal of the Evangelical Missiological Society* 6, no. 1 (2026): 1–14. Pages 5–12; earlier study also appraised pages 1–6. Missionary interpretation is contested. Wider canonical arguments and unverified fundraising generalisations are not adopted. [B067]
- 82.** McMahon, Christopher. Christology, the Poor, and Surpassing Righteousness: Reading Matthew 25,31–46 with 26,6–13. *Revue Biblique* 123, no. 4 (2016): 554–566. <https://doi.org/10.2143/RBI.123.4.3180794>. Publisher abstract and opening three pages of author proof. Limited access; the complete argument has not been appraised and no definitive adjudication is claimed. [B068]
- 83.** World English Bible. Gospel according to Matthew. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Matthew;

chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B057]

- 84.** World English Bible. Gospel according to Luke. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Luke; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B058]
- 85.** World English Bible. Gospel according to John. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. John; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B059]
- 86.** Lausanne Movement. The Lausanne Covenant. 1974. Sections 4–6. Primary theological statement; it does not establish the outcomes of a development programme. [B026]
- 87.** Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and World Evangelical Fellowship. Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment. Lausanne Occasional Paper 21. Report of the Grand Rapids consultation, June 19–25, 1982. Sections 4B–D. Particular callings and the relationship and priority of evangelism and social responsibility; the report retains an explicit commitment to evangelism. [B178]
- 88.** Lausanne Movement. The Cape Town Commitment. 2011. Part I, section 10, and Part II, IIA1. Later evangelical theological position; cited for its account of integral mission, not as a substitute for Gospel exegesis. [B175]
- 89.** DeYoung, Kevin, and Greg Gilbert. “Interview with Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert: What Is the Mission of the Church?” Interview published by Crossway, September 16, 2011. Complete short interview, especially the questions on institutional mission, resources, good works, and mercy ministries. The associated book remains a further reading priority; the authors have not endorsed this manuscript or Circuit. [B180]
- 90.** Padilla, C. René. Evangelism and the World. Address delivered at the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, July 25, 1974. Official Lausanne transcript. Selected discussion of cultural accommodation, numerical methods, repentance, and other-worldliness. Official delivered-address transcript. The related books have not been fully read; Pauline references do not control this Gospel study. [B179]
- 91.** World English Bible. Gospel according to Mark. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Mark; chapter and

- verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. Reading translation with a broadly Byzantine textual base, not a critical Greek edition. [B056]
- 92.** World English Bible. Gospel according to John. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. John; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B059]
 - 93.** World English Bible. Gospel according to Luke. Classic edition. eBible.org. Accessed September 15, 2026. Luke; chapter and verse references in the text. World English Bible Classic, public domain. [B058]
 - 94.** Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches, and World Evangelical Alliance. Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct. 2011. Preamble, basis for witness, and principles 1-12; PDF pages 3-5. Joint recommendations for conduct, not a comprehensive common theology or implementation evaluation. [B025]
 - 95.** International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and International Committee of the Red Cross. Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. 1994. Official English reproduction hosted by IFRC. Principles 1-10, printed pages 3-5. A voluntary disaster-relief code; applying it to long-term development requires contextual reasoning. [B096]
 - 96.** CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, and Sphere Association. Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. 2024 edition. Official English booklet; current edition verified September 15, 2026. Nine commitments and previously appraised requirements 1-5; printed pages 4-10. Normative standard, not evidence of compliance. The earlier local text was retained after re-access failed in this instalment. [B097]
 - 97.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. p. 81 and pp. 152-160, especially p. 155. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis's full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
 - 98.** Deneulin, Séverine, and Carole Rakodi. Revisiting Religion: Development Studies Thirty Years On. World Development 39,

no. 1 (2011): 45–54. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.05.007. Original abstract and institutional record. Conceptual framing only; the complete article was not appraised. [B001]

Olivier, Jill. Hoist by Our Own Petard: Backing Slowly out of Religion and Development Advocacy. *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): a3564. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v72i4.3564. Introduction, advocacy/evidence sections, and conclusions. Critical methodological discussion; selected full text, not a pooled effect estimate. [B005]

99. Olivier, Jill, Clarence Tsimpo, Regina Gemignani, Mari Shoji, Harold Coulombe, Frank Dimmock, Minh Cong Nguyen, et al. Understanding the Roles of Faith-Based Health-Care Providers in Africa: Review of the Evidence with a Focus on Magnitude, Reach, Cost, and Satisfaction. *Lancet* 386, no. 10005 (2015): 1765–75. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60251-3. Original abstract and publication record. Review scope and evidence limitations only. No uniform provider market share or comparative advantage is inferred. [B004]

100. Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 25–27, 123–127 and 251. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]

101. Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 176–180 and 199–208. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]

102. Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. p. 34 and pp. 249–253. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]

- 103.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 15, 121, 152-160 and 235. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis's full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
- 104.** Bell, Sharon Margaret. Health justice for all: The development of alternative health system capabilities in the conflict-affected context of Shan State, Myanmar. PhD thesis in Development Studies, Massey University, 2018. pp. 68-70, especially p. 69 n. 27; pp. 85-92 and 125. Historical qualitative study of one earlier programme; no direct rural community health-outcome assessment. See Chapter 9 and the foreword for the author's connection. [B191]
- 105.** Bell, Sharon Margaret. Health justice for all: The development of alternative health system capabilities in the conflict-affected context of Shan State, Myanmar. PhD thesis in Development Studies, Massey University, 2018. pp. 68-69, 77-79, 243 and 250. Historical qualitative study of one earlier programme; no direct rural community health-outcome assessment. See Chapter 9 and the foreword for the author's connection. [B191]
- 106.** Downs, Jennifer A., Agrey H. Mwakisole, Alphonse B. Chandika, Sospeter Lugoba, Ramadhani Kassim, Emmanuel Laizer, Kajiru A. Magambo, et al. Educating Religious Leaders to Promote Uptake of Male Circumcision in Tanzania: A Cluster Randomised Trial. *Lancet* 389, no. 10074 (2017): 1124-32. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(16)32055-4. Methods, results, and discussion of the Tanzanian cluster randomised trial. Additional leader education versus standard outreach in sixteen villages; no equally trained secular-leader comparison. Census male population is the uptake denominator. [B007]
- 107.** Bryan, Gharad, James J. Choi, and Dean Karlan. Randomizing Religion: The Impact of Protestant Evangelism on Economic Outcomes. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136, no. 1 (2021): 293-380. DOI: 10.1093/qje/qjaa023. Updated NBER manuscript, printed pp. 1-10 and 29-38; abstract and opening results revisited. Published article: *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136 (2021): 293-380. Randomised invitations, several arms and time points; six-month income is not a general estimate of conversion ending poverty. [B009]

108. Goymann, Hannah, Astrid Berner-Rodoreda, Mxolisi Mavuso, Shannon McMahon, Sindy Matse, Albrecht Jahn, and Kate Bärnighausen. “If I Wasn’t a Pastor, I Would Be Telling Them about Condoms, Contraceptives and PrEP”—Conflicts, Dilemmas and Credibility: Qualitative Insights from Religious Leaders and the Promotion of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in Eswatini. *BMJ Global Health* 10, no. 4 (2025): e018174. DOI: 10.1136/bmjgh-2024-018174. Methods, results, and discussion; leader credibility and conclusions revisited. Qualitative mechanisms affecting prevention discussion; no estimate of infections caused by religious authority. [B017]

109. Swart, Ignatius. African Initiated Churches and Development from Below: Subjecting a Thesis to Closer Scrutiny. In *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development: Sustainable Development in Pentecostal and Independent Churches*, edited by Philipp Öhlmann, Wilhelm Gräb, and Marie-Luise Frost, 73–94. Routledge, 2020. Book DOI: 10.4324/9780367823825. Selected chapter introduction and critical conclusion, printed pp. 73–77 and 86–92. Used to widen the comparative frame, not to rank religions by development effects. [B015]

Borchgrevink, Kaja. Negotiating Rights and Faith: A Study of Rights-Based Approaches to Humanitarian Action in Pakistan. *Disasters* 46, no. 2 (2022): 427–49. First published online 2021. DOI: 10.1111/disa.12480. Methods, rights translation, partner negotiations, and limitations. Qualitative contextual findings; not a pooled estimate of Islamic charity. [B016]

Tomalin, Emma. *Buddhism and Development: A Background Paper*. Religions and Development Working Paper 18. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2007. Preface and Sarvodaya discussion, printed pp. 25–27. Selected conceptual and historical material; limited basis for programme-effect claims. [B019]

Tomalin, Emma. *Hinduism and International Development: Religions and Development Background Paper*. Religions and Development Working Paper 19. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2009. Selected social-ethical, hierarchy, reform, and economic discussion, pp. 15–17, 23–24, and 33–35. Comparative framing; no uniform effect attributed to Hindu traditions. [B020]

- 110.** Woodberry, Robert D. The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 244–74. DOI: 10.1017/S0003055412000093. Opening argument, definitions, and selected historical mechanisms. Not every model or appendix appraised; contested historical causal argument. [B011]

Nikolova, Elena, and Jakub Polansky. Conversionary Protestants Do Not Cause Democracy. *British Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2021): 1723–33. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123420000174. Abstract and opening manuscript argument. Complete replication appraisal remains pending. [B012]

Woodberry, Robert D. First Response to “Conversionary Protestants Do Not Cause Democracy” by Nikolova and Polansky. Unrefereed response, dated 2019; uploaded 2021. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.11552.71680. Opening pp. 1–2 of the available response. Selected response, not a resolution of the full empirical dispute. [B013]

- 111.** Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert. *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012. Revised edition; selected extracts in the official *Reconsider: Poverty sampler*. Sampler, printed pp. 58–66 and 72–73. The full book remains unread; the distinctions are a practical framework, not an effectiveness evaluation. [B081]
- 112.** Harvey, Paul, and Jeremy Lind. *Dependency and Humanitarian Relief: A Critical Analysis*. HPG Report 19. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2005. Executive summary, methodology, participation discussion, and conclusion; printed pp. 3, 8, and 40–43. Published 2005 and used as methodological background, not as a contemporary Myanmar observation. [B082]
- 113.** Banerjee, Abhijit V., Rema Hanna, Gabriel E. Kreindler, and Benjamin A. Olken. Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient: Evidence from Cash Transfer Programs. *World Bank Research Observer* 32, no. 2 (2017): 155–84. DOI: 10.1093/wbro/lkx002. September 2016 author manuscript, abstract and introduction, pp. 1–3; article published 2017. Seven randomised evaluations in six countries; labour supply is not a complete measure of dependency or agency. [B086]
- 114.** Swidler, Ann, and Susan Cotts Watkins. “Teach a Man to Fish”: The Sustainability Doctrine and Its Social Consequences. *World*

Development 37, no. 7 (2009): 1182–96. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.11.002. Sections 1–2 and the opening of section 3(a), author manuscript. Selected sections read. Context-specific observational research; no universal estimate of the effects of training or continuing aid. [B083]

- 115.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 244–248. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
 - 116.** Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. Localizing Development: Does Participation Work? Washington, DC: World Bank, 2013. Printed overview pp. 1–6 and 8–11; latter pages added in this instalment. Selected sections, not the full research-synthesis book. General institutional findings do not justify any particular Myanmar routing arrangement. [B022]
 - 117.** Bell, Sharon Margaret. Health justice for all: The development of alternative health system capabilities in the conflict-affected context of Shan State, Myanmar. PhD thesis in Development Studies, Massey University, 2018. pp. 189–200 and 243–244. Historical qualitative study of one earlier programme; no direct rural community health-outcome assessment. See Chapter 9 and the foreword for the author’s connection. [B191]
 - 118.** International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and International Committee of the Red Cross. Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. 1994. Official English reproduction hosted by IFRC. Principles 1–10, printed pages 3–5. A voluntary disaster-relief code; applying it to long-term development requires contextual reasoning. [B096]
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- 121.** Kabeer, Naila. The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment. UNRISD Discussion Paper 108. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, August 1999. Printed pp. 2–4 and 30–31. A separate UNRISD paper from B002. Conceptual account and indicator critique; not a Myanmar evaluation or validated universal index. [B182]
- 122.** Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. Localizing Development: Does Participation Work? Washington, DC: World Bank, 2013. Printed overview pp. 1–6 and 8–11; latter pages added in this instalment. Selected sections, not the full research-synthesis book. General institutional findings do not justify any particular Myanmar routing arrangement. [B022]
- 123.** Casey, Katherine, Rachel Glennerster, and Edward Miguel. Reshaping Institutions: Evidence on Aid Impacts Using a Preanalysis Plan. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127, no. 4 (2012): 1755–1812. DOI: 10.1093/qje/qje027. June 2012 author manuscript, printed pp. 1–7. Selected opening design and results; bundled grants and facilitation. Interpret with the later follow-up B085. [B084]
- 124.** Casey, Katherine, Rachel Glennerster, Edward Miguel, and Maarten Voors. Long-Run Effects of Aid: Forecasts and Evidence from Sierra Leone. *Economic Journal* 133, no. 652 (2023): 1348–70. DOI: 10.1093/ej/uead001. October 18, 2022 author

manuscript, printed pp. 1–8; article published 2023. Follow-on facilitation and nonrandom additional grants were part of the programme history. Not a pure test after all assistance ended. [B085]

- 125.** Kilpatrick, Robert. The business of peace-building: Redeeming the entrepreneurial spirit for reconciliation. PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2016. User-supplied full text. pp. 209–217, especially pp. 210 and 214; see pp. 123–124 on anonymity. Practitioner accounts and a separate Armenian survey comparison; not a representative Shan survey or an evaluation of Circuit. Relevant sections were read closely; the thesis’s full reference list was not independently audited. [B190]
- 126.** Bell, Sharon Margaret. Health justice for all: The development of alternative health system capabilities in the conflict-affected context of Shan State, Myanmar. PhD thesis in Development Studies, Massey University, 2018. pp. 125–126, 205–207 and 244. Historical qualitative study of one earlier programme; no direct rural community health-outcome assessment. See Chapter 9 and the foreword for the author’s connection. [B191]
- 127.** United Nations. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Adopted November 15, 2000. Text hosted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Articles 3–9; especially Article 3 on definitions and Article 9 on prevention. International framework; distinguish Article 4 scope and current domestic implementation. Not an intervention evaluation. [B183]
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- 129.** World Bank and International Organization for Migration. Economic Shocks and Human Trafficking Risks: Evidence from IOM’s Victims of Human Trafficking Database. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022. Printed pp. vii–viii, 11–13, 23–24, and 29. Selected administrative cases and observational comparisons,

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- 130.** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Online Scam Operations and Trafficking into Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia Recommendations for a Human Rights Response. 2023-08. Introduction, evidentiary approach, and victim profiles. Selected testimony and synthesis, not a representative victim survey. No headline scale estimate adopted. [B148]
 - 131.** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Annual Update on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar Overview of Developments in 2025. 2026-02-26. Annual update on 2025, opening summary and pp. 2-6, plus earlier protection sections. Published February 26, 2026. National monitoring under access constraints; no Shan casualty subtotal or new combined count is inferred. [B134]
 - 132.** Robinson, W. C., and Branchini, C. / Johns Hopkins University and Kachin Women's Association Thailand. Estimating Trafficking of Myanmar Women for Forced Marriage and Childbearing in China. 2018-12. Methods and forced-marriage results. Defined Kachin and northern Shan study populations; no extrapolation to all Shan State women or ethnic Shan populations. [B146]
 - 133.** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Myanmar Opium Survey 2025. 2025-12-03. Fact sheet, cultivation and production tables, and methodology. Remote sensing and field estimates with official inputs. Cultivation and production do not measure dependence prevalence. [B144]
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia Latest Developments and Challenges 2026. 2026. Key takeaways, PDF p. 11, and earlier recorded source appraisal. Law-enforcement synthesis. Seizures are not a direct measure of total production or consumption. [B145]
- 134.** Thomson, N., and Meehan, P. / Drugs and (dis)order. Understanding the Drugs Policy Landscape in Myanmar How Drugs Policies and Programmes Intersect with Conflict Peace Health and Development. 2021-05. Executive summary, PDF pp. 7-8, and selected militia, financing, and enforcement discussion; earlier policy appraisal retained. Political economy and reported

experience do not alone establish a centrally ordered strategy to cause addiction. [B150]

135. Meehan, P., M. Sadan, S. A. Hla, S. K. Phu, and N. M. Oo. "Young People's Everyday Pathways into Drug Harms in Shan State, Myanmar." *Third World Quarterly* (2022). doi:10.1080/01436597.2022.2090923. Methods and selected findings from forty extended interviews and life histories. Purposive Taunggyi qualitative evidence; neither statewide prevalence nor proof of centrally directed addiction policy. [B151]
136. Murray, J. K., A. S. DiStefano, J. S. Yang, and M. M. Wood. "Displacement and HIV: Factors Influencing Antiretroviral Therapy Use by Ethnic Shan Migrants in Northern Thailand." *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 27, no. 5 (2016): 709-21. doi:10.1016/j.jana.2016.04.006. Methods and conclusion. Qualitative study at a Chiang Mai district hospital. Service-connected participants cannot represent every migrant or those entirely excluded from care. [B164]
137. Ayuttacorn, A., et al. "Disclosure of HIV Status among Shan Female Migrant Workers Living with HIV in Northern Thailand: A Qualitative Study." *PLOS ONE* 14 (2019): e0216382. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0216382. Methods and results. Purposive interviews with Shan women living with HIV. Used here for mechanisms around disclosure and care, not prevalence. [B165]
138. Boittin, Margaret, Claire Q. Evans, Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, and Frank T. Tota II. An Issue of "Otherness": Beliefs that Human Trafficking Cannot Affect One's In-Group Present Obstacle to Combatting Human Trafficking. *LAPOP Global Insights* 001. Vanderbilt University, June 6, 2018. Printed pp. 1-8 and 10-11. Perception outcomes in selected Nepal districts; no demonstrated exploitation reduction. Body and figure labels differ on survey year. The longer underlying report was not retrieved. [B185]
139. McCloskey, Pat, OFM. "Origin of Saint Francis' Peace Prayer." *Franciscan Media*, June 16, 2026. Response to the question about the "use words if necessary" saying. The article distinguishes the unauthenticated wording from the Rule of 1221, chapter XVII. The modern saying in the text is supplied in the author's own account. [B176]
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- 142.** Kabeer, Naila. The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. UNRISD Discussion Paper 108. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, August 1999. Printed pp. 2-4 and 30-31. A separate UNRISD paper from B002. Conceptual account and indicator critique; not a Myanmar evaluation or validated universal index. [B182]
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