"IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER": OUTSIDERS LEARNING FROM INSIDERS IN A HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

A healthy global humanitarian system depends on effective partnerships. Donors, implementing actors, local organizations, and individual experts are all presented with the opportunity to partner with local actors in a beneficial manner, with the goal of best serving disaster- and/or conflict affected populations. This paper argues that lost in the current process is the mutual respect, compassion, and humility needed to establish such meaningful partnerships between the mobilizing team, or outsiders, and the local organizations and affected population, or insiders. Even with the recent emphasis on promoting the localization of aid delivery, the system has missed the mark by using semantics such as "developing local capacity," which subtly labels the insiders as not equal to, and therefore lesser than, the outsiders. Such a relationship fails to allow those whose lives have been directly affected by disaster and conflict to have an active role in re-shaping the world around them. By relating the impact of a personal experience in Western Darfur, Sudan, and examining the experience within the partnership system approach, the author shows that outsiders who do not build adequate partnerships fail to respect the affected population, and thus fail to learn from them. What needs to be understood about such partnerships is that the affected population, used interchangeably with insiders throughout this discussion, continue to live their lives both through and beyond the crisis, while the international humanitarian actors, outsiders, come and go as is convenient for themselves and/or their organizations. While the insiders inherently live as the experts of their own lives, the outsiders continuously fail to apply the humility and mutual respect needed to partner with these experts.

Key Words: partnerships, humanitarian system, disaster, conflict, affected communities, Western Darfur, Sudan

INTRODUCTION

The international humanitarian system, which responds to global disasters and conflicts, is driven by external stakeholders. These stakeholders consist of donors, implementing organizations, and individual humanitarian actors. Within this system, specialized United Nations (UN) agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), which are external actors rushed into service over and over again, face the challenge of establishing meaningful partnerships with the local actors and the affected populations. As argued by Buchanan-Smith et al., (2016), the ability to create such partnerships has the potential to produce positive impacts for the entire system and, most importantly, for the affected population.

Although the global humanitarian system has recognized that external stakeholders should partner with affected populations to create beneficial change, the system continues to experience a lack of genuine willingness, the social skills needed, and the cultural understanding, or a mix of all three, to develop meaningful partnerships (Anderson et al., 2012). For example, even though the Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami (Cosgrave, 2007) mandated international agencies to change their methodologies to focus on transferring the ownership of humanitarian response to the affected population, the shift has yet to be seen (Jayawickrama, 2018).

With this brief discussion as the backdrop, this paper will tell the first-hand story of a partnership between an outsider and an insider within a humanitarian context. Based on Eisler's cultural transformation theory (2003), this paper examines the concept of partnership in the following seven pillars, each of which are rooted in humility, compassion and mutual respect:

1.   Love and Care
2.   Attitudes and Values

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3.   Community

4.   Policy and Practice

5.   Insiders and Outsiders

6.   Natural World

7.   Spirituality

Through the story to come, the author aims to disrupt the existing system by arguing that it is wholly possible to establish meaningful partnerships, particularly when based on humility, compassion, and mutual respect, but that doing so requires external actors to abandon their perceived monopoly on knowledge. By adopting such an approach, both the insider and outsider can learn and grow with each other, becoming active change agents, in pursuit of a common goal. If learning and growing with each other is accomplished, then the global humanitarian system can increase its effectiveness and relevance and the overall impact of its responses, while the affected population can continue to own and take responsibility for their lives.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACHES IN THE CONTEMPORARY HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

Over the past five years the global humanitarian system has witnessed a growing focus on the localization-of-aid agenda. There are two important milestones within this recent history. The first is the Charter for Change (2015), currently signed by 32 international humanitarian agencies and endorsed by roughly 200 national NGOs in crisis-affected countries. The Charter promotes principled partnership based on the same ideals of equality, transparency, results-based approaches, responsibility, and complementarity, that were introduced in the 2007 Global Humanitarian Platform (Charter for Change, 2015).

The second milestone is the Grand Bargain (2016). The Grand Bargain emphasizes the importance of localizing aid by urging the humanitarian system to make the necessary commitments to bring localization out of the theoretical and into the practical.

Particularly, bringing localisation into the practical is addressed in the sixth commitment, which calls for the inclusion of the people receiving the aid in the very decisions that will affect their lives (Grand Bargain, 2016).

Localization as a concept, however, is difficult to understand. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),

> localizing humanitarian response is a process of recognizing, respecting, and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses. (OECD, 2017, p. 14)

Additionally, de Geoffroy and Grunewald (2017) argue that localization of aid should be a united effort by various humanitarian actors that include donors, UN agencies, and NGOS, to bring the local stakeholders, such as local authorities, to a decision-making role within the system. However, there are numerous weaknesses that need to be addressed in this understanding of localization. Many views any and all programmes, projects, and activities that involve local actors as effective localization (Wall & Hedlund, 2016). But a major requirement is absent in this understanding: the need for partnership between the external agencies and the affected population.

Both the Charter for Change (2015) and the Grand Bargain (2016), which strongly emphasize the need for strengthening local capacity, deserve similar critiques. The focus on strengthening capacity is based on a fallacious assumption that perpetuates the notion that local actors and the affected population do not have the capacity, or ability, to take control of their lives. This idea itself establishes an unequal notion of partnerships and creates a paternalistic relationship between the external agencies and their local partners. Such inequality echoes the same colonialism that undermined

communities, their wisdoms, and their way of life throughout the 20th century, the ramifications of which continue to be felt today. Skinner and Lester, argue that

> … it is not a simple matter of resemblance – how contemporary humanitarian action appears to echo the patterns and ambitions of earlier imperial 'projects' – but that the two phenomena are ultimately bound together in a series of mutually constituting histories, in which the ideas and practices associated with imperial politics and administration have both been shaped by and have in themselves informed developing notions of humanitarianism.
> (Skinner & Lester, 2013, p.731)

Unlike the colonial project, which was built on overt policies meant to forcibly change the social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental structures of continents, the global humanitarian system is built on tenets of care and compassion that are meant to assist, not lead, in rebuilding the lives of affected populations. This is important to note so that we remember that in any crisis, it is always the affected population who acts as first responders (O'Keefe, O'Brien, & Jayawickrama, 2015). They do not sit back and wait for the external humanitarian agencies to come and save them. Additionally, we must not ignore the fact that most crisis-affected communities in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have been experiencing disasters and conflicts for generations, and have developed sophisticated yet pragmatic approaches to dealing with such events. In many ways, these skills and approaches are intertwined with the people's skills and their traditional wisdoms. Such methodologies must no longer be viewed as "unscientific" and thus relevant only to local contexts; this view negates powerful and needed resources (Wignaraja, 2005). Such wisdoms and methodologies can be a critical element in creating effective humanitarian response, and this is why it is crucial for external humanitarian agencies to learn from affected populations.

GAPS IN CURRENT HUMANITARIAN PARTNERSHIP APPROACHES

The concept of partnership in humanitarian affairs has been a long-lasting discussion in the field. In 2007, the humanitarian system collectively endorsed Principles of Partnership in the Global Humanitarian Platform (2007), in an effort to respond to changing realities and to create a common understanding of how effective partnerships could contribute to efficient humanitarian responses. According to the Platform's Statement of Commitment, the Principles of Partnership consist of equality, transparency, a result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity (Global Humanitarian Platform, 2007). However, the focus of the Global Humanitarian Platform was to review the rules of engagement between UN and non-UN agencies (Knudsen, 2011). Until the establishment of the Charter for Change (2015) and the Grand Bargain (2016), local actors and affected communities were not part of this discussion of partnerships.

In humanitarian responses to both the 2010 Haiti earthquake and the 2015 Nepal earthquake, criticisms pointed towards the humanitarian system for its failure to coordinate and partner effectively with local actors (Buchanan-Smith et al., 2016; Apea, 2015; Karunakara, 2010). As argued by Eisler (2017), these humanitarian efforts were more in line with autocratic and unjust systems, which impose rigid rankings of domination. According to Eisler (2017), the system of domination can be characterised as authoritarian and top-down, with an aim to influence all social structures; the current humanitarian partnership model contains an attitude of superiority over local actors, including the affected populations.

Scholars such as Wignaraja (2005), Buchanan-Smith et al., (2016) and Jayawickrama (2018) have argued that the current international humanitarian and development system, which assumes the superiority of European and North American knowledge, is unequivocally undemocratic and exclusive. These criticisms point toward dismantling political, economic, and social elements of the humanitarian system and critically

examining its foundational values. As explained by Eisler (2012), unless the humanitarian system pays attention to these values, ineffective dominant partnership models will keep rebuilding themselves in different forms.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

I have been active within the humanitarian system since 1994, first as a local humanitarian worker in Sri Lanka and then as an international worker, primarily in South Asia. Since 2004, I have aimed at contributing to the humanitarian system as a researcher and as an academic. Throughout this journey, I have directly collaborated with crisis-affected communities in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Such opportunity has allowed me to develop meaningful partnerships and learn from the expertise and experiences of affected communities.

The experience, or story to be told, that is examined in this paper is based on my work in Western Darfur, Sudan, in 2005. The objective of my work with a UN agency in Western Darfur was to conduct a mental health assessment of internally displaced populations. While performing this work, I unintentionally yet organically developed a long-lasting partnership with a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) there. For the purpose of this paper, this experience is identified as an accidental ethnography that will be used by the author to examine past experiences to contribute to scholarly discussion (Levitan et al., 2017).

The conversations and experiences presented in this article took place within the social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental context of Western Darfur in 2005. The reflections of these experiences are examined through the lens of current humanitarian affairs discourse, namely the ideal of effective partnership. The name of the TBA has been changed to protect her anonymity.

OUR PARTNERSHIP: LEARNING TO SEEK AS AMINA SHARES

Amina has been a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) in Western Darfur since she was a teenager. She is a devoted Muslim, yet when I first met her she reminded me of a nun from the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic Religious Order established by Mother Theresa of Calcutta (Kolkata). She possesses a calm and polite kindness, captured in her compassionate eyes and relaxed body movements, which puts people at ease as soon as they talk with her. She forever walks around with a smile on her face, and this fact is verified by her colleagues, who claim they have never seen her angry. Amina is 'illiterate' in the modern sense of the word, and she could not tell me her exact age or the number of years she has been in her profession. However, following our first dialogue, mediated by my English-and Arabic-speaking colleague, we estimated that Amina had assisted in the delivery of more than 2,000 babies. Over the course of my time in Western Darfur, I would have many conversations with Amina that allowed me to learn and grow from her wisdom; wisdom unique to a woman who has brought so many lives into this world. When I asked how she learned her profession, Amina shared:

> I learn this skill from my mother. She used to be the only TBA in my village. People loved her, and she was a respectable woman. Although I have many sisters and brothers, I am the only one who is interested about this service. My father is a useless person – he used to drink and beat my mother and us children. So, I found peace and understanding in life within this service. This service satisfies me. Helping a mother, then the child (some cases children), a father and a whole family or a community makes me smile. When I come home to my children and husband, I can easily take their problems and issues because of this. Otherwise, I would become a useless woman. Also, Allah is being kind to me – I have a good husband and wonderful children. Without them I cannot do this service.

As explained by Eisler (2003), Amina's world view is filled with love and care. The core foundation of Amina's approach to her profession is humanity.

Although labelled by outsiders as illiterate, Amina acted as the local memory of her community. All of the medical NGOs and the United Nations agencies came to her for information. Additionally, she is viewed as a leader within the community, and Amina adopted a humble appreciation for such recognition. In this approach, Amina's understanding of her surroundings were based on the value of humanity, as well as stereotypical feminine values such as caring and nonviolence (Eisler, 2014). These attitudes and values she brought into her personal and professional lives are sophisticated yet spiritually pragmatic.

> I think that I am blessed by Allah, and that is why I get this much respect from people. Because I know some of my friends in other villages and cities that are TBAs, but they do not get what I get. So, I think that this is a special situation. I have to be very careful and down to earth if I am to continue with this service. This is an honorable service and one [has] to be honourable to receive honour.

I learned that Amina worked with medical NGOs in assisting doctors who have come from foreign countries. In discussing this work with her I learned that her experiences with these doctors are not always peaceful or honourable. When asked about it, Amina shared:

> Sometimes I meet very good doctors and health people from other countries. We share our experiences and knowledge as I do with you. Sometimes I get very difficult people to work with. They think that I don't know anything about my service. I agree that sometimes they know some new knowledge, but the problem is that most of the time one cannot practice this new knowledge, because we do not have electricity and other facilities. One time there was a lady [who] came from America and she wanted to provide training to me and my colleagues. Then she came with a TV [computer and multimedia] and did not speak any Arabic and had no translator. She got really angry with us and from a colleague who understand English we learned that she told us that we are a stupid lot as we do

not read or write. I think that this is part of my service, sometimes I meet good people who like me and sometimes I meet people who hate me.

Despite such prejudice and ignorance, Amina always maintained the calmness of a true leader. She dealt with these prejudices with a caring perspective, understanding the meaning of establishing harmonious relationships between insiders and outsiders (Eisler, 2003). In later discussions I was able to learn her perspective on the conflict that was at the root of much of the turmoil that she and her community experienced. Amina hoped that the conflict would go away one day and that the people would return to living their lives in peace. According to her understanding, this conflict was part of the natural order sent by God. Bad and corrupt leaders, Amina said, are the beginning of such conflict. To her, these are reminders to all human beings that they should be good, kind, and courageous. As our conversation continued, Amina shared:

> When rulers are bad and corrupted, as in Sudan now, this type of conflict is unavoidable. It is the innocent women, children and men who [have] got to pay for these injustices. It is Allah's way of reminding all of us to be good, kind and courageous during these difficult times. If we all work hard, we can overcome this situation. Throughout this conflict situation I never got in trouble as many other women whom I work with – they got raped, tortured and assaulted. I think that [is] because I am doing my good service to people, I am protected by my good deeds. So, if everyone is doing good deeds they would protect them. But the problem is that most people in our communities don't understand that.

In this process, Amina continued to examine her surroundings within her spirituality to understand her community and the environment. These are very important pillars within the partnership model, and explain Amina's struggle as well as her strong will to continue her service for the community (Eisler, 2003). She examined critically the violence, political unrest, and challenges within her society, yet actively contributed to finding solutions within these challenges.

When I asked Amina about her own experience with violence and atrocities in the community, she recognized that there are problems, of course. However, she refused to use the word "trauma" in discussing the conflict affected populations in Western Darfur, Sudan. I watched as she spoke with absolute confidence but with the utmost humility, a combination one does not see often in academia. Amina shared:

> I have heard this word [trauma] you mentioned. I have heard this word many times with outsiders I meet. We, however, do not have a specific word for this in Arabic or local dialects. What the outsider experts think is that mind is a body part like a hand or leg. So, they think that when the mind gets wounded it needs treatments like a hand or leg. But, I do not think so. My understanding is that [the] mind is like a huge tree. There are many parts to it, like roots, branches and the leaves of the tree. Mind has social, cultural, political, economic and environmental parts to it. These parts are being built by our own experiences, religion, attitudes and values, which are like the sunlight and water for a tree. A tree doesn't need a doctor or an outsider to come and fix its broken branches. It happens naturally. Likewise, when we experience violence and atrocities, it is painful and difficult. I have seen people who got many problems due to their bad experiences. They know how to overcome pain and problems. They only need care, love and physical support like financial assistance, security and peaceful surroundings. Like a tree needs water and sunlight. All this support is social, political, cultural, economic and environmental. Not medicine. When people have this support their mental health is improved and overall wellbeing is secured. I do not think that one has to be an expert to deal with these problems. Some of these problems are with the government, some are with the community, some are within ourselves and some are with the environment, which we live [in]. This is not an easy environment – it is too hot and there are few resources we share. So, if we are not wise enough to share these with each other then we are in trouble.

Within the partnership model, Amina understands the challenges of humanitarian policy and practice (Eisler, 2003). Her gentle yet determined approach to collaborating with everyone, including the international humanitarian system, is based on understanding the useful elements of partnerships rather than blindly following the external agencies without questioning. This is a very important learning to be incorporated into humanitarian partnerships. The international humanitarian agencies should not expect the affected populations to be passive recipients of aid, but to engage with them in order to learn from them. As argued by Cosgrave (2007), this is a major shift in vision and mission for the global humanitarian system.

According to Amina, life is too short and is better to be satisfied with what is available than to worry about what you do not have. A pearl of wisdom equal to that of the Stoic Philosopher Epictetus (c. 55–135 CE), who quipped that, "to have great wealth is not to have many things, but to have few wants" (Epictetus, n.d.). Amina was an embodiment of her own philosophy as, throughout all of our conversations, I never once heard her complaining or saw her upset about what was happening to her community.

My partnership with Amina continued for many years after our initial time together in 2005. We worked to establish the Learning Forum, a process that created a space for local staff members of the UN and NGOs to learn and improve their skills by partnering with members of the affected population. Due to advances in technology, we were able to continue our conversations for many years, until one day my colleague in Western Darfur who translated and facilitated our talks, disappeared. Because of this, we do not have our conversations any more, and I do not know what Amina is currently doing. However, I am thankful for the impact she made on my life, and I can say today that what I learned from her continues to motivate me to be a compassionate, humble, and respectful partner with every community with whom I am able to collaborate.

FINDING WISDOM

The key point is that continuing the same philosophical foundations that created the challenges in current humanitarian partnerships cannot solve them (Eisler, 2014). There has to be a critical evaluation of the existing philosophical foundations of the global humanitarian system in order to dismantle it and create new foundations for solutions. The partnership model argues that humans are the most creative life forms on the planet, with the ability to change (Eisler, 2003). In this, Amina presents an example to understand who we are, and what we can do and be, as well as what is needed to establish a more equitable, sustainable, and peaceful society. Although arrived at through a very different philosophical and spiritual path, Amina approached the concept of partnership with humility, compassion, and mutual respect (Eisler, 2003). Amina delivered her services with love and care for her community, with an attitude of openness, and collaborated with her colleagues and international humanitarian workers within her own humility, compassion, and respect.

In developing an effective partnership, it is important for the insider and the outsider to work together to establish a dialogue (Eisler, 2003). Paulo Freire (2005) referred to this approach as *co-intentionality;* the principle that partners are equal, and the role of expert shifts back and forth depending on who holds the knowledge of the subject being discussed. As Freire puts it, the individuals are, "co-intent on reality, both are subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 2005, p.69).

As explained by the partnership system, one partner is never superior to the other, as both are equal agents in the act of learning (Eisler, 2014). The dialogue should never create the feeling of an inferior talking to a superior. As seen in Amina's partnership, the process of partnerships should happen without an agenda, as a natural friendship founded in a curiosity that motivates both sides to listen to each other's stories with humility, compassion, and mutual respect. These feelings are based on both individuals

accepting in themselves that they do not know, and such intellectual humility allows them to seek, not knowledge, but wisdom.

The global humanitarian system can learn from Amina and the partnership system approach to realise that both outsiders and insiders have to share the realities of a crisis, albeit through different experiences, attitudes, and values. As explained by Kleinman (2006), underneath vast differences of cultural meanings and social experiences, the experiences of loss, threat, and uncertainty establish the thread of a mutual condition of being human.

Amina demonstrated an example of challenging the attitudes and values of an outsider, not in a threatening way but in an intellectual way (Eisler, 2014). Such a challenge sparked a mutual love and care that the insider and outsider had for the communities suffering due to the conflict. Regardless of any humanitarian policy or practice, there is a spiritual element to humanitarian responses. In this, Amina presents the case that equality is not a concept, but a natural and self-evident truth. Coming to these realizations, the global humanitarian system that is generally considered to be 'experts' in disaster response has to change. Such a realization breaks from mainstream conceptions of humanitarian partnership, in which the outsider comes to 'teach' or 'train' the insider in the name of strengthening capacity. And it breaks from the paternalistic style of humanitarian partnership, developing into a two-way process of partnership. Amina's life and services explain that compassion plus humility equals wisdom. This is not based on project management cycles, needs assessments, financial management mechanisms, or preconceived notions.

Compassion in this context is the understanding and baring of suffering through the uncertainty and danger of life (Munindo, 2005). Hidden in this discovery and baring of suffering is humility, as it forces us to realize that we do not know the answer needed to alleviate the suffering (Buddharakkhita, 1985). Accepting this not-knowing, one must enter an open space and begin to seek wisdom, which can be defined as conscious

insight. Such an adoption, however, is a different way of thinking compared to the mainstream idea of knowledge production systems rooted in European and North American philosophy. Much of this way of thinking, in fact, is grounded in ancient traditions of seeking such as Native America philosophies, African traditional systems, and various philosophies found in Asia and the Middle East, such as the Advaita Vedanta tradition. Acknowledging the existence of such systems proves that non-Europeans have the ability to think in their own ways and that knowledge systems do not necessarily fall under the universalist induction or deduction methodologies of learning (Dabashi, 2015).

If the global humanitarian system is to establish effective and relevant partnerships, it needs to seriously examine its current policies on partnerships, including Principles of Partnership (2007), the Charter for Change (2015) and the Grand Bargain (2016). This examination has to transcend the existing policies. The international humanitarian system has to employ new methods of analysis that draw from experiences, expertise, and wisdoms of affected populations, to develop a holistic picture that includes the whole of humanity (Eisler, 2014). There has to be an open, honest, and transparent discourse about humanitarian partnerships for effective and relevant responses rooted in humility, compassion, and mutual respect. Such discourse has to aim at developing new philosophical foundations that are based on the seven pillars of the partnership system (Eisler, 2003). Amina's perspectives and approach to service provide evidence that it is possible to establish partnerships that are based on love and care. These partnerships have to be rooted in attitudes and values based on service rather than domination. In this process, the global humanitarian system has to partner with local actors, including affected populations, as equal partners in change. There won't be any 'experts' or 'passive recipients of aid', but rather humble learners from each other.

The basis of Amina's courage, to challenge the dominant humanitarian perspectives, was not just political, but deeply rooted in her spirituality and connection to the natural world. This is very much in line with the partnership system, as Eisler states that "…

spirituality is no longer an escape to otherworldly realms from the suffering inherent in a domination world but an active engagement in creating a better world right here on Earth" (2014, p. 54).

To transform the global humanitarian system from domination to partnership, all the stakeholders have to work together. The aim of these partnerships to build the new foundations for more sustainable, peaceful, and equitable solutions to crises is needed for relevant and effective humanitarian responses.

CONCLUSION

The intent of this article has been to open the minds of humanitarian policy makers and practitioners and reshape the discussion around partnerships in humanitarian responses. The foundation of the discussion should be acceptance of the fact that when external humanitarian agencies enter a community that is in crisis, they have much to learn from the affected populations. The agencies must accept with humility that the things they will learn may not be found in a standard textbook, article, research report, book, or PowerPoint presentation. Embracing this opportunity to learn will contribute to the elimination of the intellectual elitism found in many researchers and humanitarian workers who believe their degrees or titles of "expert" allow them to discredit the knowledge of the very population they are meant to serve. Even at the risk of being contentious, this article supports the view that in many ways the "illiterate" and "uneducated" communities in crisis-affected countries are wiser and cleverer that the "literate" and "educated" workers who come with European and North American knowledge qualifications. This is stated not to undermine the workers themselves, for neither group is universally right or wrong, but the partnership approach in the humanitarian system as currently framed is wrong. Through this realization, both the insider and outsider can learn from and grow with one another, becoming active and effective agents of change amid the conditions of a crisis.

In re-shaping the discussion around partnerships, the global humanitarian system must also broaden and investigate its very foundation. Officially codified in 1945 with the creation of the United Nations, the international humanitarian system was founded in the midst of colonial aspirations, and has continued to implement policies that have little or no connection to the political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts of the affected populations in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; policies implemented in the belief that they are doing good based on the deontic principle that the action is morally right in and of itself. However, it is time to open our eyes and scrutinize this belief, beginning at the ground level by finding real ways to partner with affected populations as equal partners of change.

In the Asian tradition of teaching, there is a clear vision and operational methodology of critical examination of any learning. The Buddha, about 2,500 years ago, guided his students through this valuable and critical methodology of teaching:

> Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, "The monk is our teacher." Kalamas, when you yourselves know: These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness, enter on and abide in them. (Devamitta, 1929, Verse 4)

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