

Chapter 6

The Expression of Religion and Identity in International Funding: Gauging Levels of Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Donor preference is a significant component that can either promote or inhibit sustainable development results, yet the involvement of private donors in international development work has not yet been examined in academic literature. Models for integrative negotiation in funding processes have been proposed, but without having the voice of donors present in literature, all previous negotiation models are incomplete because a major party to the negotiation is absent from the model. Conflict analysis and resolution is a new approach that will bring clarity to the role of private donors in international development work and generate integrative solutions for donors to employ in their work should they choose. This phenomenographic study analyzed the content, process, identity, and relational aspects of conflict in private international development projects through the viewpoint of donors. The research goals were to (1) generate understanding about how private donors understand their role in the international development work they fund, (2) ascertain how donors experience conflict in the course of this work, and (3) determine which conflict resolution techniques can be integrated to align their intentions, resources, and outcomes more accurately. The purposive snowball sample was comprised of six donors who fund private international work outside the US. The interrelated culmination of knowledge generated from this study demonstrates a broad landscape of experiences that describe how donors experience conflict and what may motivate them to consider alternative behaviors that can change the course of their work.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key components of effective humanitarian assistance is sustainability. In light of the changing discourse surrounding development work, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies are confusing relief programs with sustainable development. Relief is immediate and temporary assistance given to people in emergency situations. These programs are typically short lived, perhaps one fiscal year, and end when another global situation is deemed more urgent. When national economies budget around foreign aid, their immediate priorities shift to what is not being funded, and what is being provided for in aid falls to the wayside (CNN.com, 2009; Kaplan, 2006). For example, relief emergency health care provided to post-war Liberia postponed the development of a health care infrastructure (World Health Organization, 2005; World Health Organization, 2006; World Health Organization, 2009; US Department of State, 2009; US Agency on International Development, 2005). Relief programs help in the short term- term, but can actually be detrimental when they detract public attention from domestic issues that need to be handled at the policy level. However, relief efforts are easy to count and gain quick public support.

Studies that examine philanthropic giving have been undertaken largely by those in the professional field of philanthropy. Existing studies that examine philanthropic giving have been conducted almost solely by people who work in the field of professional philanthropy. These studies are premised on the notion that money should be spent however the donor sees fit; and this premise inherently assumes that philanthropists are entitled to be part of the development process regardless of their credentials. Their work is usually focused on sustaining foundations themselves, without mention of the people who have to live with the outcome of the foundation's choices. Private donors develop strategies that reflect their own interests and mirror the actions of larger institutions, but researchers have yet to learn how philanthropists understand their position in the development process. Motivation among private donors as it pertains to sustainable development is conflicting at best. Participation in philanthropic activity ranges from sharing a family activity to holding a deep commitment to human rights. While these motivations are not mutually exclusive, they do vary according to the source of the funding.. Donor motives and intentionality are largely misrepresented or unclear and how individuals reconcile this seeming disparity is not clear.

Some important initial questions to ask are why funding entities become involved in the development process in the first place, and what do they have to gain from their involvement? Although humanitarian aid started in a different place, programs are now increasingly subject to the influences of hegemonic principles and capitalistic notions (Mitlin, et al., 2007). This almost sounds sinister until one considers the explicit motivations for why governments, foundations, and individuals give aid money and participate in development activities. The literature addresses the motivations and utility of international entities, private philanthropists, and NGOs involvement in development work, and several problematic aspects become evident. Each party has divergent utility and incentive to be involved in humanitarian development work, and little of the utility and few of the incentives are focused on the people who have to live with the outcomes of the work. Elite discourse dominates the discussion about international development and perpetuates control of resources in a way that does not benefit poor people (Adam & O'Connell, 1999), reflecting the transference of values from rich countries to poor countries.

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