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## Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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

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

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

- **Vulnerable Mission and Community Development**

- **"If you have allowed a student to misunderstand a concept, it can become a wildfire you cannot control." (Kevin Ncube)**

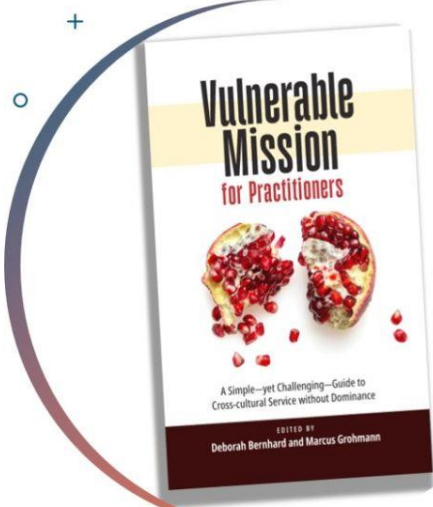
- **Nice but Crazy? 'Indigenous Lawyers in Guatemala'. Review by Jim Harries.**

- **Webinars coming up soon - register now!**

## Now available on Amazon: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners

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

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



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

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

## Vulnerable Mission and Community Development

In early May 2025, the Christian Community Development Conference (CCDC) took place in Frankfurt, essentially the network of Micah Global in Europe. Participants from the AVM side were Frank Paul (member of the AVM advisory board; part of the CCDC preparation team) and Deborah Bernhard (deputy director of the AVM).

*"I had many conversations about the importance of language and resources in power dynamics on the mission field. Most were unfamiliar with the ideas that the AVM promotes." (Deborah Bernhard)*

*"As AVMs, we naturally belong to the CCD network: our convictions and experiences in relation to mother tongues and local resources bring something into the dialogue that does not automatically occur – but is absolutely not a minor matter. ... It is also a space for us AVM'ers to learn where we can contribute our concerns and our expertise and what that looks like in concrete terms." (Frank Paul)*

Deborah and Frank share more of their experiences at CCDC 2025 [here](#).



## “If you have allowed a student to misunderstand a concept, it can become a wildfire you cannot control.” (Kevin Ncube)

Marcus Grohmann reports on a seminar held by Dr. Kevin Ncube at the School of Education/University of Cape Town on 13 May 2025 on the theme of ‘*Centring Africology in the Revitalisation of the African Epistemologies*’. Africology refers to holistic knowledge situated in and produced based on African traditions, in which African languages play a key role. Ncube, a senior lecturer in Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Research at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) in Cape Town, grew up with the isiZulu and isiXhosa languages.

Less through activism and more through his testimony, he motivated for multilingual practices in education. Faced with classrooms of 90% black students at CPUT, Kevin found that often the concepts taught in marketing did not resonate much with them. Locating the problems in their sometimes-limited English proved to be a futile approach. Rather, understanding that English is *not* a universal language opened up the promising avenue of engaging with the language resources of the students in the process of teaching theories. This brought to light both the cultural-linguistic assumptions of the theories and parallel but not necessarily equivalent concepts in the socio-cultural contexts of the learners.

Ncube used compelling examples to showcase both the difficulty of translation and the potential in mutual learning that lies in using the linguistic resources at hand. What I found missing was reverse reflections on the contextual nature of English and its implications. More serious thought needs to be given to the possibilities and limitations of students from outside the Western homelands of English to profoundly articulate concepts for contexts they are relatively unfamiliar with.

What stood out for me was the amazement how a lecturer in marketing was able to use translanguaging so effectively. Wouldn’t there be even more potential in theology?

## Nice but Crazy? ‘Indigenous Lawyers in Guatemala’. Review by Jim Harries.

Review of: Lieselotte Viaene & María Ximena González-Serrano (2024) ‘The right to be, to feel and to exist: Indigenous lawyers and strategic litigation over Indigenous territories in Guatemala’, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 28:4, 555-577. DOI:10.1080/13642987.2023.2279165

It can be hard, I think, for Western people to handle claims like that apparently emerging from indigenous people in Guatemala, that “water is alive”, and can be killed, and that one cannot say “my water” but only “I am water”. Parallel things come from Luoland in Kenya, in which one cannot say ‘I have water (*pi*)’, but only ‘I am with water’, and in which the land (*piny*) can die (*tho*).

Parallels between Guatemala and Africa spiked my interest in this article by Viaeno and Gonzalez, that described how local people are emerging from colonial and racial discrimination through practicing as indigenous lawyers. They promote “a counter hegemonic legal practice ... beyond dominant Euro-Western and colonial legal positivistic assumptions” (555). Unlike neo-colonial principles, indigenous knowledge is “enunciated through ‘feeling’ and ‘collective awareness and consciousness’” (563).

The mind boggles! The authors discourage us from being too romantic. The process of indigenizing legal systems is problematic. My own take on this issue would be that the greatest importance of rooting legal systems in indigenous concepts might lie in ways in which it begins to free people to think for themselves. Positivistically rooted Western originated legal systems have a lot going for them. But, being unfamiliar to indigenous people, while foisted onto them, constitutes a serious situation, helpfully tackled in this article. I believe that Western people who keep to vulnerable mission principles, using local languages and resources in key relationships, will be taking a step in the direction of comprehending and promoting legal and other systems that make sense indigenously.

Review by Jim Harries

Review of: Lieselotte Viaene & María Ximena González-Serrano (2024) ‘The right to be, to feel and to exist: Indigenous lawyers and strategic litigation over Indigenous territories in Guatemala’, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 28:4, 555-577.

## Webinars coming up soon - register now!

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

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

Sign-up [here](#).

24<sup>th</sup> July 2025: Claire Chong

**Is Religion a Western idea?**

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

Webinar on  
24 July 2025

Register now!

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

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

Sign-up [here](#).

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

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

A decolonial approach

Webinar on  
9 October 2025

Register now!

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- Relating to people through their languages and local resources -