"AT RISK" PEOPLE

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"A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call"

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This Issue Group on At Risk People was Issue Group No.5
(there were 31 Issue Groups at the Forum)

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The context for the production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers

The Lausanne Movement is an international movement committed to energising
"the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world."

With roots going back to the historical conferences in Edinburgh (1910) and Berlin (1966), the Lausanne Movement was born out of the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974. The landmark outcome of this Congress was the **Lausanne Covenant** supported by the 2,430 participants from 150 nations. The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith. Many activities have emerged from the Lausanne Congress and from the second congress held in Manila in 1989. The Covenant (in a number of languages), and details about the many regional events and specialised conferences which have been undertaken in the name of Lausanne, may be examined online at www.lausanne.org.

The Lausanne International Committee believed it was led by the Holy Spirit to hold another conference which would bring together Christian leaders from around the world. This time the Committee planned to have younger emerging leaders involved and sought funds to enable it to bring a significant contingent from those parts of the world where the church is rapidly growing today. It decided to call the conference a **Forum.** As a Forum its structure would allow people to come and participate if they had something to contribute to one of 31 issues (around which were formed Issue Groups). These issues were chosen through a global research programme seeking to identify the most significant issues in the world today which are of concern in our task to take the *good news* to the world.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) is the report that has emerged from one of these Issue Groups. LOPs have been produced for each of the Issue Groups and information on these and other publications may be obtained online at www.lausanne.org.

The theme of the Forum for World Evangelization held in 2004 was **"A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call."** This Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. 1,530 participants came from 130 countries to work in one of the 31 Issue Groups.

The Affirmations at the conclusion of the Forum stated:

"There has been a spirit of working together in serious dialogue and prayerful reflection. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world have come together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization. They committed themselves to joint action under divine guidance.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God's direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges.

In the 31 Issue Groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront.

There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6,000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority.

Secondly, the words of our Lord call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this we have failed greatly. We renew our commitment to reach out in love and compassion to those who are marginalised because of disabilities or who have different lifestyles and spiritual perspectives. We commit to reach out to children and young people who constitute a majority of the world's population, many of whom are being abused, forced into slavery, armies and child labour.

A third stream of a strategic nature acknowledges that the growth of the church is now accelerating outside of the western world. Through the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, we recognise the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the church in the *South*. Church leaders from the *South* are increasingly providing exemplary leadership in world evangelization.

Fourthly, we acknowledge the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables.

Fifthly, we call on the church to use media to effectively engage the culture in ways that draw non-believers toward spiritual truth and to proclaim Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways.

Finally, we affirm the priesthood of all believers and call on the church to equip, encourage and empower women, men and youth to fulfil their calling as witnesses and co-labourers in the world wide task of evangelization.

Transformation was a theme which emerged from the working groups. We acknowledge our own need to be continually transformed, to continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges of God's word and to grow in Christ together with fellow Christians in ways that result in social and economic transformation. We acknowledge that the scope of the gospel and building the Kingdom of God involves, body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore we call for increasing integration of service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

We pray for those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith and for those who live in constant fear of their lives. We uphold our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We recognize that the reality of the persecuted church needs to be increasingly on the agenda of the whole Body of Christ. At the same time, we also acknowledge the importance of loving and doing good to our enemies while we fight for the right of freedom of conscience everywhere.

We are deeply moved by the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the greatest human emergency in history. The Lausanne movement calls all churches everywhere to prayer and holistic response to this plague.

"9/11," the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel or the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities.

We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers.

We pray for peace and reconciliation and God's guidance in how to bring about peace through our work of evangelization. We pray for God to work in the affairs of nations to open doors of opportunity for the gospel. We call on the church to mobilize every believer to focus specific consistent prayer for the evangelization of their communities and the world.

In this Forum we have experienced the partnership of men and women working together. We call on the church around the world to work towards full partnership of men and women in the work of world evangelism by maximising the gifts of all.

We also recognize the need for greater intentionality in developing future leaders. We call on the church to find creative ways to release emerging leaders to serve effectively."

Numerous practical recommendations for local churches to consider were offered. These will be available on the Lausanne website and in the Lausanne Occasional Papers. It is our prayer that these many case studies and action plans will be used of God to mobilise the church to share a clear and relevant message using a variety of methods to reach the most neglected or resistant groups so that everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and be able to respond to this good news in faith.

We express our gratitude to the Thai Church which has hosted us and to their welcoming presentation to the Forum. We are profoundly gratefully to God for the privilege of being able to gather here from the four corners of the earth. We have developed new partnerships, made new friends and encouraged one another in our various ministries. Not withstanding the resistance to the gospel in many places and the richness of an inherited religious and cultural tradition we here at the Forum have accepted afresh the renewed call to be obedient to the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to making His saving love known so that the whole world may have opportunity to accept God's gift of salvation through Christ."

These affirmations indicate the response of the participants to the Forum outcomes and their longing that the whole church may be motivated by the outcomes of the Forum to strengthen its determination to be obedient to God's calling.

May the case studies and the practical suggestions in this and the other LOPs be of great help to you and your church as you seek to find new ways and a renewed call to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ

David Claydon

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

Jesus' approach to people is counter-intuitive, even shocking. Instead of the King of all consorting with rulers and dignitaries, He preferred to spend his time with those that nobody else wanted to be with – let alone touch. As we, the 'At Risk' People Issue Group of the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization have worked together, we have been discovering that this teaches us a great deal: about those whom Jesus values most in his Kingdom and, invitingly, how we can come close to Him through our own association with those same people today. It is these people, the ones that are shunned by society and are considered to have no potential to benefit society, whom we call 'at risk' in this Paper.

This Paper is the product of sharing experiences, thoughts, feelings and prayers as a group from a very diverse range of nationalities, backgrounds and ministries. We draw from the real-life examples of people who work day-to-day with 'at risk' people. You will find stories and examples from our work and relationships throughout this Paper. We are trying to learn continually – very often directly from those we serve.

We offer our shared understandings to you as a resource and invite you to add your own consideration and experience to this dialogue, whether as an individual or a church group. We believe that in joining in, you too will find that being with 'at risk' people is not an optional extra but a vital expression of Christian discipleship, just as it was a vital part of Jesus' ministry on earth.

We start in Chapter 2 by considering what it is to be 'at risk'. In discussing who is 'at risk', we will see that there are people 'at risk' through the whole world. If we want to reach the Whole World with the gospel, then we cannot neglect those 'at risk'.

By looking next at some of the biblical teaching on the 'at risk' in Chapter 3, especially through the teaching of Jesus, we see the need to bring the Whole Gospel to 'at risk' people as a witness to them and to the world. Jesus' teaching shows that the responsibility for this falls on the Whole Church.

Then, in Chapter 4, we focus more attention on Luke's Gospel, which shows clearly how Jesus taught His disciples to value and be concerned for 'at risk' people. This was primarily through spending time and personal energy on the 'outcasts' of His day such as those with leprosy, tax collectors and the woman, ceremonially unclean because of her discharge of blood. We use the term 'association' to describe the way that Jesus spent time with and related to these 'outcasts' of society, because of the proverb that you can tell a person by the company they keep, that is, their associates.

Being born again leads to a God-given tendency to 'associate' with 'at risk' people, but pressures within and without the church stifle this tendency. So we need to learn from Jesus' example of a spiritually and practically integrated pattern of discipleship that leads to association, which we set out in Chapter 5. In doing so, we realise that we will also need to follow Jesus in bearing the cost of discipleship and accepting the risks of association.

In Chapter 6, we consider how churches can best be equipped as they try to put association into practice and how this process may involve some changes to our understanding of church. Recognising that this work is for the Whole Church and that the work will be better done together. Chapter 7 provides a selection of starting point resources and links to help you further your contacts and work with 'at risk' people. Finally, in Chapter 8, we suggest some questions that you can use individually or as a group to help work out some next steps and recommend some practical actions that we can take as part of the ***Whole Church*** in responding to Christ's call to the costly discipleship of bringing ***the Whole Gospel*** to those at the centre of ***His World***.

2. Who are the 'at risk' people?

To answer this question we start by considering what it means to be 'at risk' in terms of the relationship between 'at risk' people and society as a whole. This understanding is developed by considering some of the dimensions of being 'at risk'. Then, in thinking of real examples of people who are 'at risk', we show that there are people 'at risk' across the world, if not evenly distributed. Therefore, if we want to reach the whole world, then we cannot neglect those 'at risk' and if we want to reach 'at risk' people then we must try to consider the whole of their situation.

Towards a definition of 'at risk' people

There are many understandings, forms and degrees of risk. We are aware that in one sense or another, everyone is at risk, whether in the senses of physical danger, emotional problems and social exclusion or in the more serious sense of not being saved from the consequences of sin. The children of wealthy parents whose main interest is that their children get into the best schools, get the best jobs and so on, are certainly at risk of not understanding their need for the gospel, for example.

We acknowledge that the affluent and comfortable do face risks. We also recognise gladly the compassionate efforts of the church to minister holistically to each and any of those people and to love them as God does. However, these are not the people that we are considering here. Rather, our primary attention in this Paper is directed at those who are the most vulnerable, the most powerless, the most voiceless and those excluded by society. Our concern is for those people that society shuts out or even shuns. Yet it is these very people that Jesus deliberately made the centre of his ministry and Kingdom. It is these that the church should be ministering to but often leaves on the outside, whether unthinkingly or deliberately.

Figure 1 is a brief global survey of 'at risk' peoples gives some indication of the kind of situations or groups of people where the 'at risk' can be found.

Figure 1. A brief global survey of 'at risk' peoples

A brief global survey of 'at risk peoples'

The following survey of statistics is intended to give an idea of the range of groups of people that could be considered 'at risk' and also the large scale of the number of people involved: each number representing a person struggling to maintain dignity of life in difficult circumstances. The most 'at risk" appear in many of the criteria.

Refugees

The UN estimates that there are over 17 million refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people.[1]

Prisoners

More than 8.75 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, mostly as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) without having been convicted and sentenced. About half of all people held in penal institutions are in the United States (1.96m), Russia (0.92m) or China (1.43m excluding pre-trial detainees and prisoners in administrative detention').[2]

Drugs[3]

There are an estimated 13 million injecting drug users worldwide, 78% of whom live in the majority world.[4]

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[1] http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics, 1st Jan 2004

[2] www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r188.pdf World Prison Population List (fourth edition) 2003Roy Walmsley

[3]

[4] Reference Group on the Prevention and Care of HIV/AIDS Among Injecting Drug Users, 2002.

Mental Health Disorders

20-25% of all people suffer mental health problems at some time during their life. These are universal problems that affect all countries and societies, and individuals of all ages. The disorders have a large direct and indirect economic impact on societies, including service costs. The negative impact on the quality of life of individuals and families is massive. It is estimated that, in 2000, mental and neurological disorders accounted for 12% of the total disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost due to all diseases and injuries. By 2020, it is projected that the burden of these disorders will have increased by 15%.[5]

TB

Overall, one-third of the world's population is currently infected with the TB bacillus. 5-10% of people who are infected with TB bacilli (more if also infected with HIV) become sick or infectious at some time during their life[6]

Violence

In every country where reliable, large-scale studies have been conducted, results indicate that between 10% and 50% of women report they have been physically abused by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Violence kills more than 1.6 million people every year. Violence is among the leading causes of death for people aged 15-44 years of age, accounting for 14% of deaths among males and 7% of deaths among females. For every young person killed by violence, an estimated 20-40 people receive injuries that require treatment. [7]

Sexual Abuse

Data from selected countries suggest that about 20% of women and 5-10% of men suffered sexual abuse as children.[8]

Elderly

In 2050, 17% of the global population will be 65 years and older, compared with 7% in 2002.[9]
 Up to 6% of the elderly report having been abused.[10]

Disability

Overall global disability statistics are not easy to obtain, but most of the UN agencies use the

http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2004/Chap1_injecting_drugs.pdf

[5] WHO Fact sheet 218 *Mental health problems: the undefined and hidden burden*
Revised November 2001 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs218/en/

[6] WHO Fact Sheet 104, *Tuberculosis* Revised March 2004 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/

[7] The World report on violence and health http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/pr73/en/

[8] The World report on violence and health http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/pr73/en/

[9] Global Population at a glance 2002 and beyond US Census Bureau March 2004
http://www.census.gov/ipc/prod/wp02/wp02-1.pdf

[10] The World report on violence and health http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/pr73/en/

[11] Disability World no. 19 June to August 2003 http://www.disabilityworld.org/06-08_03/children/unicef.shtml

[12] Learning Disabilities http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/page.cfm?pagecode=ISBISTMT

[13] D. Sobsey, D. Wells, R. Lucardie, and S. Mansell. Violence and Disability: An Annotated Bibliography. 1995.
Baltimore, MD. Brookes Publishing. http://www.corr.ca.gov/VictimServices/Stats/crime_&_victimization_stats.asp

[14] World bank Global Poverty Monitoring http://www.worldbank.org/research/povmonitor/

[15] State of the World's Children UNICEF, 2000

[16] Children on the Brink 2002, UNICEF

[17] Global Population at a glance 2002 and beyond US Census Bureau March 2004
http://www.census.gov/ipc/prod/wp02/wp02-1.pdf

[18] Doug Nichols, Action International

[19] State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 1999

[20] Facts on Child Labour, International Labour Organization, 2003

[21] ACTION

[22] http://www.webster.edu/~woolflm/trafficking.html

[23] UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, 2003

[24] www.worldhungeryear.org

[25] D. Gordon, *et al.* Child Poverty in the Developing World, Bristol, UK: The Policy Press, 2003

rough calculation that 10% of the world's population, i.e. currently 600,000,000 people are born with or acquire a disability within their lifetimes. Around one quarter or 150 million are children. Within the majority world the rate may be significantly higher.[11]

Visual impairment and Blindness

Today, there are an estimated 180 million people worldwide who are visually impaired.

Of these, between 40 and 45 million persons are blind and, by definition, cannot walk about unaid

Learning Difficulties

Studies show that between 3-6 people in every 1000 people have severe learning difficulties. Globally that results in up to 36 million people.[12]

People with developmental disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be victims of crime than other people are.[13]

Poverty

Nearly 1.1 billion people are estimated to be struggling to survive in poverty with less that $1 per day.[14]

HIV / AIDS

250,000 children and young people are infected with HIV/AIDS every month.[15]

It is estimated that 25 million children will have lost one or both parents to AIDS by 2010. [16]

40 million people are living with HIV and are expected to die within the next 10 years unless a cure is found. Twelve countries in sub-Saharan Africa have HIV prevalence rates above 10% in the 15-49 age group.[17]

Street Children

There are 160 million street children in the world. If you named 1 each second without pausing, it would take you 5.07 years to count every one of the street children.[18]

Lack of Education

130 million children lack access to education.[19]

Child Labourers

246 million children are child labourers.[20]

Exploitation and Abuse

8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities.[21] Two million children are forced into poverty every year. Half of them live in Asia.[22] The UN estimates that 700,000 to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world for purposes of force.

Children in Armed Conflict

300,000 young people under 18 are exploited as child soldiers.[23]

Disease

30,000 children die each day from preventable diseases.[24]

Notes on these statistics:

Global figures give one perspective on 'at risk' people by highlighting the large numbers in the world. However, it is impossible to give a definitive number of people at risk for the following reasons:

1. Some of the statistics change continually as different events affect different groups of people: it is not always the same group of people who are at risk - for example, when war or natural disasters strike.

2. There is overlap between many of these groupings so that we cannot meaningfully add up figures to produce a total number of at risk people in the world.

It should also be remembered that global figures do not reflect the unequal distribution of at risk people around the world. For example, global under-5 mortality was 82 in every thousand in 2002. However, in the least developed countries this figure is 158, compared with 8 in industrialised countries. There are also differences between urban and rural populations with rural people usually suffering more than urban. For example, 17% of rural children suffer

severe educational deprivation compared with 5% of urban children as found in a recent study for UNICEF[25]. Even at the local level there will be patchiness in the distribution.

Consideration of these factors means it is essential that Christians individually and as a church find out the facts in their own area about 'at risk' people and the type and extent of problems they face. Although some statistical information may be helpful in mobilising others to be involved, it is more important to be informed of both the individual and community situation of the person. It is also helpful to be able to see that specific situation through the eyes of the 'at risk' person. For example, with refugees, whole communities may be affected (though not all equally) even while work may be with individuals. In other cases, it may be more a question of working with individuals, for example those with mental health problems (although even so, the community situation, will need to be considered). How Christians and churches can work with 'at risk' people, is covered in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6. We now consider the more generally applicable aspects of what it means to be 'at risk'

'At risk' people are vulnerable.
They lack the support mechanisms that would help provide the resilience to face life shocks, and they do not have the status or resources to defend themselves against outside threats – whether from people, nature or systems. Those caring for children often make a distinction of degree of risk about children in need. Children everywhere are at risk, but turn the screw of events a little tighter, by adding illness onto poverty or disability onto the need to migrate, for example, and many become 'Children in extremely difficult circumstances'. The 'at risk' we are crying out for are 'people in extremely difficult circumstances'.

'At risk' people are powerless.
Without access to decision making processes, or equally importantly to justice, 'at risk' people have little opportunity to influence the wider world that would enable them to reduce their risks and improve their lives. Furthermore, 'at risk' people are often actively oppressed for the gain of those who hold power.

'At risk' people are voiceless.
Not only in decision-making but throughout society, the voices of 'at risk' people are not heard or indeed their voice is even prevented from being heard to avoid embarrassment and the discomfort that might result. As a result, society and Christians are often unaware of the situation of 'at risk' people and so less likely and less able to respond.

'At risk' people are excluded.
They are excluded from mainstream society. All too often they are excluded by the church and indeed, are beyond the traditional reach of the church because of the church's emphasis on reaching those who are like existing members. They are excluded from: health care, education, social contacts, church life, employment, recreation and much more. Indeed, we can think of exclusion in all spheres of living including social, economic, psychological, political, intellectual, emotional and spiritual (though we may prefer think of these categories loosely remembering that life is not easily sub-divided).

By thinking of 'at risk' people in these terms, we begin to understand, in general terms, something of their position in society. As a result, 'at risk' people have few choices in their circumstances and little chance to change their lives. They are at the bottom of the pile, unable to help themselves because of the way they are treated by society and its attitudes. The church is too often complicit in this, at best ignoring, at worst keeping them vulnerable, powerless, voiceless and excluded.

A second essential strand in our way of thinking is to consider our relationship as Christians to 'at risk' people. 'At risk' people are, in effect, outcasts: those whom we are "passing by on the other side", or "outside the camp", whether across the street or across the

world. Many people who are marginalised by society are at risk from dangers that are usually obvious. Provision for their care can be found within certain branches of church activity and their cause is, to a certain extent, embraced by wider society. There are others, however, who are often beyond even that peripheral placement in society. They are outsiders. They are outcasts. Even secular writers concur that these are today's outcasts. *"Time after time sex workers refer to themselves as being 'outside society'"*, writes Louise Brown in the book, <u>Sex Slaves</u>. She continues: *"And they are right. They are despised outcasts."*

They are not reached both because they are difficult to reach and may not be the most responsive group. In programmes to improve living standards, greater changes can be effected for the same resource input with those who are not beyond normal reach. We prioritise those who we think are easier to get out of poverty. It is relatively much easier to improve standards for those in the second to bottom ten percent than in the bottom ten percent. For those at the bottom, far more resources may be needed before even partial transformation is realised.

Because of this, there is great personal cost in meeting them and ministering effectively to those who are 'at risk'. In fact, if it does not cost to reach someone, then that person is probably not considered 'at risk' in the way this term is used here. Why does the church follow society in denying them God's love? The cost of ministry may indeed often seem too high to be worthwhile in our sight. Yet in God's sight they are the most precious, the most loved and the most sought after. We discuss this cost in more detail in Chapter 5 of this Paper, but we can now give a summary definition that:

> 'At risk' people are those who are vulnerable, powerless, voiceless and excluded. In particular, they are those where there is a personal cost of ministry to them"

Matthew 9:36 - *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Psalm 10:12:   *Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.*

The experience and causes of being 'at risk'

"The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends." Proverbs 14:20

The truth of this proverb, even through to the present day, shows one of the commonest underlying reasons for someone to be 'at risk': their poverty. Of course, each 'at risk' person's experience is different, with a number of different factors interacting in each situation. However, low income and consequent material disadvantages are very common factors, and these, of course, may be related to many other issues – unfair discrimination, exploitation, corruption or natural disaster. As one *at risk* factor leads to and builds on another, 'at risk' people become increasingly vulnerable. Indeed, poverty hugely decreases a person's resilience to other factors. Someone living on less than a dollar per day cannot afford medicine when they are ill or education for their children or to move when an area is under threat of war or famine. (Use of the 'But Why?' method, described in Appendix 1, can help to disentangle the different reasons why someone is 'at risk'.)

Underlying *at risk* situations, prejudice is commonly to be found. Prejudice is underlying negative attitudes towards others and takes many forms. The very fact that 'at risk' people are different may be enough to generate suspicion - the classic example being racism, discrimination because of skin coloration. There are many other discriminatory attitudes such as believing that if people worked harder, they would not be poor; or that people deserve their situation for some other reason (e.g. those who are disabled have bad karma). Then there may be stigma attached to certain factors - be it accent, disability, coloration, ethnic background etc. Where such attitudes prevail, there will be less incentive to associate with different people or to intervene to help. In fact there will be disincentive because of the perception of going against what is 'normal' and 'right'.

Prejudice thus leads to people becoming 'at risk' and also prevents others from attempting to address the situation. Prejudice can also be seen reflected in the spending and legal priorities of governments and by the attitudes of those in society. For example, the Rohingya people of Myanmar are looked down on within their own country. This prejudice led to their persecution, and then to them fleeing their country. Now in neighbouring counties, they are further affected by prejudice toward them both as foreigners and especially as refugees. As refugees they have been denied legal status and are not allowed to be employed thus robbing them of the support they need.

At a more local level, we see how prejudice affects survivors of Hansen's disease (leprosy) and people living with AIDS. Whilst living in, or being rehabilitated to the local community should be an opportunity and improvement in lifestyle, it frequently leads to fear and disruption when they are 'found out'. A typical example is quoted by UNAIDS of a mother and a young HIV positive child in a school in Kerala who were victimized and forced to move when the son's infection was 'leaked' by a school authority.[26] Such stories can be found in almost every country.

Those who could be considered most vulnerable may vary from time to time and place to place, as do the risks that people face. A contrast in the perceptions of the most prominent 'at risk' groups of people in Uganda and New Zealand may help to illustrate this.

In Uganda, the most prominent groups of 'at risk' people are unemployed youth, orphaned children, children with disabilities, teenage mothers, people with HIV and AIDS, whereas in New Zealand people with mental health difficulties, alcohol and drugs addicts were most prominently at risk. This does not mean that teenage mothers would not be at risk in New Zealand or people with mental health difficulties at risk in Uganda, but that some groups stand out more urgently in different places.

For each individual, different combinations of factors lead to more or less 'at riskness'. So for example disabled children are generally at greater risk than disabled adults. Refugees with HIV will be more at risk than those without. Experiencing more at risk factors may result in ever faster decline of living standards. In fact very few risk factors are 'stand alone'. Rather, one risk predisposes individuals to still other risks.

There is also an intergenerational factor to consider with many 'at risk' factors being passed on from parent to child, sometimes through the community or by accident of birth. We see this being worked out in the cycle of at risk conditions. As an example, a mother's lack of education means that she has a low income. As a result her children are malnourished and susceptible to disease, limiting their opportunity to attend school, and so repeating the cycle. The desocialising effects of at risk conditions cause a spiralling of other problems. Although wealth generates more wealth for some, the poor get ever more excluded. Appropriate intervention to break such a cycle is needed.

The macro-situation for a person (i.e. the socio-economic operation of their country) changes the individual's experience of being at risk. For example, if in a rich country there is an effective social security net and general societal awareness with a lack of prejudice, a person with visual impairment may have relatively few material disadvantages compared with a sighted citizen. This is different in a poor country, where such social security is lacking.

Conclusion to this chapter

The macro-global overview of 'at risk' people confirms that if we sincerely believe that we must take the *Whole Gospel to the Whole World*, then we need to be much more active in reaching the large groups of 'at risk' people. In order to do this, individuals, groups and churches will need to engage with 'at risk' people themselves. They can only do this

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[26] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2821347.stm 5/3/2003 'boys to be educated at home after other children all stayed at home for fear of infection'

successfully through personally considering what it means to be 'at risk' from the perspective of the 'at risk' person.

In this paper, we are not in any way concerned with promoting the needs of one group of 'at risk' people over another. Rather, it is about recognising the whole world that Jesus 'so loved'. How Jesus showed loved to 'at risk' people is the focus of the next chapter.

3. How does God see 'at risk' people?

In this chapter we consider biblical teaching on people 'at risk' with a close look at Jesus' teaching and interactions with 'at risk' people. We affirm that this is an essential part of the *Whole Gospel* and thus integral to the Lausanne movement.

We start by trying to understand God's concern for people 'at risk'. Because we will concentrate on examples from Jesus' life, and His interpretations, we do not have space here to do an Old and New Testament survey.

'At risk' people through the Bible

We must not miss out on our essential starting point – God's Creation. Everybody has God-given dignity – all are born into God's image (Genesis 1-2; 1:27); all are 'fearlessly and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:14). Yet because of the Fall, sin and its consequences have entered the world. These consequences include the break up of social structures, violence, antagonism and the abuse of power. Although all of humankind has sinned, the consequences seem to be borne disproportionately on 'at risk' people – but not because of any extra sinfulness on their behalf.

The remaining theology is about redemption, with its allusions of judgement. We understand this redemption to be holistic in its nature, but its target is recognising and acting on God's image in each fallen, hurting individual.

A broad summary of how God sees the 'at risk' through the Bible is:

i)   The Law: God's provision for the marginalized, the orphan, the alien and the widow in a just society.

ii) The Prophets: God's judgement on Israel and Judah for injustice, and his passion for justice.

iii) In History and Wisdom (particularly the Psalms), God's personal care for the down-trodden.

iv) The Epistles: the key texts would be from James (1:27): "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress…" and Paul "you who once were far away have been brought near" (Ephesians 2:14). The gospel reconciles human relationships.

It is helpful to remember that rather than a book of theology the Bible is a book of the stories that people told about God[27]. The Gospel writers were writing to normal people who were often poor themselves, often only a step from being the abandoned or oppressed. These first gospel-hearers would have understood from the Gospels the following Good News that:

a) In Jesus, God not only became human, but also became poor. This is not hidden in the gospel accounts but made clear: when Mary and Joseph sacrificing doves (rather than a lamb) for the first-born son at the temple. And when challenged over whether to pay taxes, Jesus asked to see a coin, implying that He did not have a coin with Him and a state of poverty throughout His ministry years.

b) Jesus' incarnation was framed explicitly as a social as well as a spiritual revolution: the young, newly pregnant Mary sings, "*He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty*" (Luke 1:53). This is an integral part of the Messiah's ushering in of the Kingdom.

c) Jesus was a friend of the outcast. This can be seen even before the birth of Jesus in His genealogy. All of the women mentioned conceived in morally dubious circumstances, or were themselves outcasts: Tamar, who pretended to be a shrine prostitute (Genesis 38); Rahab the prostitute of Jericho (Joshua 2), Ruth, the Moabitess, the despised foreigner (Ruth); Bathsheba, the partner in King David's adultery (2 Samuel 11-12) and Mary, the

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[27] For this section we are indebted to the work of Mr CB Samuel, the director of Prabhaav, India.

unwed mother. Jesus Himself experienced life as a refugee with His family in Egypt in His early childhood. That being 'at risk' is not a direct consequence of one's own personal sin (John 9:1-12). One of the reasons why the 'at risk' were also described as 'sinners' is that the religious establishment saw being 'at risk' as a direct and immediate judgement.

d) Jesus' stories provocatively include the marginalized as central figures, for example the Good Samaritan (Luke 11: 25-37); the beggar Lazarus (dog-licked and so religiously as well as physically unclean) (Luke 16:19-31); the little child demonstrating Kingdom greatness (e.g. Matthew 18:1-4).

e) Equally, maybe more provocatively, the 'great and good' of the day are those most denigrated: the Pharisees are whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27); and it is next to impossible for the rich to enter the Kingdom (Luke 18:24).

f) Jesus' actions were actions of justice and mercy and many of the gospel stories indicate this clearly: for example driving out the sellers from the temple. The story of the widow's mite shows that God notices and sees the difference. This justice reverses the world's pattern of demanding from the poor and instead makes demands on the rich instead. Jesus talks about the rich giving back ('sell all you have and give the money to the poor') and the danger of holding on to wealth, for example, the parable of the rich fool who stored up his wealth, but that night died and had nothing, or the rich man and Lazarus.

g) God has already brought perfect justice in the place of gross injustice. God's righteous resurrection of Jesus in the place of man's unjust crucifixion of the good is in itself a promise. This promise is that God will also bring justice to all the injustices in his time.

Figure 2. **Messages from Jesus' life and teaching relevant to 'at risk' people**

The Subject:		**The startling fact:**
a)	The Incarnation	God is poor
b)	The Messiah's purpose	A social revolution
c)	Jesus' friends	God associates with the outcast
d)	About sin and its consequences	Being outcast is not a consequence of sin
e)	King of kings	Jesus brings the marginalized to the centre
f)	The Judge	The Messiah brings judgement on the powerful, rich and religious
g)	The crucifixion	Injustice happens to the righteous
h)	The resurrection	The promise of future justice

The Gospel writers made sure that the oppressed and abandoned realised Jesus was their friend. The crux, literally, is not a global wealth redistribution scheme; it is not about rich people giving money to poor people; it is about imputing people their God-given dignity and so coming into equal relationship with them. We will consider the implications of this for our discipleship in Chapter 5. For now, we note that each of these people was somebody 'beyond the margins of society'. Finally, in what Peter Kuzmic calls "The Great Compassion", Jesus deliberately and personally identifies Himself with them throughout all time: "*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me*" (Matthew 25:40).

Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor. Is it that being poor is good news? No, but the condition of poverty has special appeal to the ear of God. Nor is the good news that the poor might become rich (e.g. through the programmes of the church) that is good news. Rather, it is that the poor can hear the good news! The Kingdom has come and the poor are in a special position to see, appreciate and trust in that fact. The poor don't get to heaven because they are poor but because they are in a position to respond to the gospel.

The Lausanne Covenant and the Manila Manifesto help us to understand the gospel. The gospel for people 'at risk' is no different from that in any other context. It needs to, it must, be centred on the Cross. People are broken. They need forgiveness and healing. They need to find the Love that can give them a new start and the abundant life Jesus promised. There could be few for whom this is less relevant than those living "at risk", caught in the hopelessness, bondage and despair of a life in which they feel trapped. For them, the gospel is, without a doubt, Good News.

The Manila Manifesto and the Lausanne Covenant record,

> "The whole Gospel is the good news of God's salvation from the power of evil, the establishment of his eternal kingdom and *his final victory over everything which defies his purpose."* (Manila Manifesto, our italics)

> "The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist." (Lausanne Covenant)

Going inside-out to the true centre

"God must be understood as on the periphery of life, in solidarity with the oppressed and abandoned of this world. But because God is at the periphery, the periphery is revealed as the true centre."[28]

Figure 3. **A model of concentric circles to contrast the existing world values with those of God's Kingdom.**
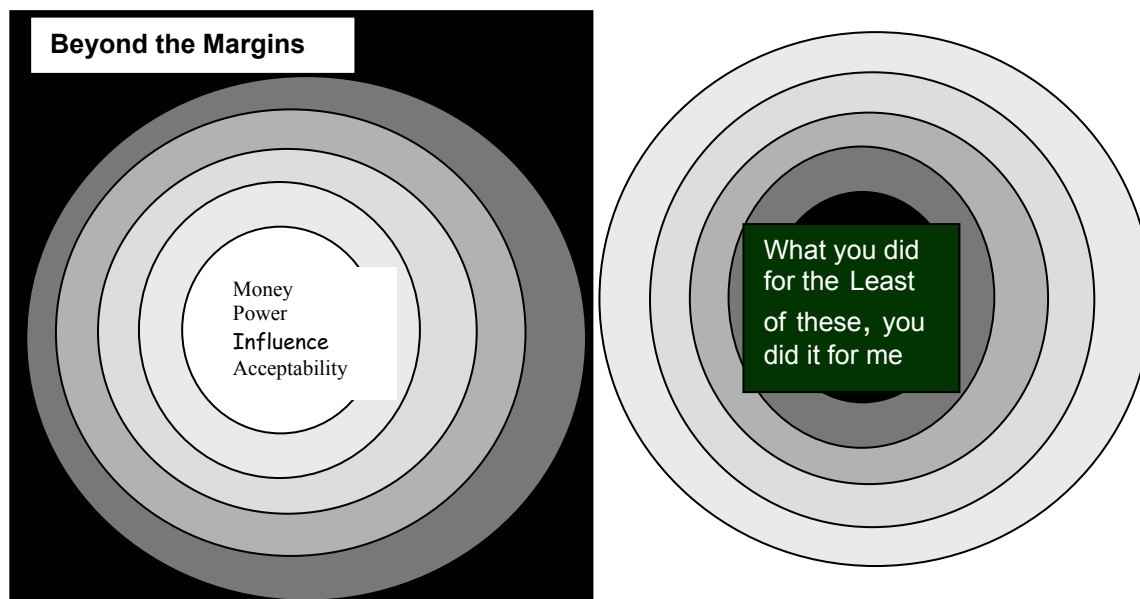
a) Existing world values   b) Biblical Kingdom values

The first diagram shows the world's way of doing things, and the way that the church all-too easily functions. Those with money, power and influence are perceived to be at the centre. In the following concentric circles, moving away from the centre, with increasing shading, show

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[28] Koyama, "The Asian Approach to Christ", <u>Missiology</u> XII, 4 (October 1984), 435-47, in Stephen Bevans <u>Models of Contextual Theology</u> NY:Orbis Books, 2002.

those who are increasingly marginalized in their lack of prestige, power, voice and wealth. They play a peripheral role and receive less focus. Those in the outer circle, are on the fringes of church and society involvement.

'At risk' people could be considered to be those who are not even within the circle of influence, well beyond the traditional reach of the church.

The second diagram shows that in the true situation of the Kingdom of God, the positions are reversed, just as Jesus modelled in His ministry. Those who are most 'at risk' and were perceived to be outside any sphere of influence are here found right in the middle of God's Kingdom. For Jesus, 'at risk' people are not cursed, despised, excluded or ignored, but central to His Kingdom. Those who were at the centre in the world's view are now at the edge or maybe even outside the circles in God's view.

We need to ask if and where the church may be following the worldly pattern of placing the richest and most powerful at the centre of their concerns. We have often failed to notice that those whom Jesus targeted with God's love are those whom we have excluded or even shunned. The model shows the totally reversed situation in God's Kingdom. It means that for the church to behave as part of the kingdom, it needs to behave as if those who are 'at risk' truly are placed at the centre: in terms of time, resources and attitudes.

The 1974 Lausanne Covenant's affirmation that mission includes evangelism and social action working hand-in-hand. In paragraph 5 of the Lausanne Covenant: "we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty". Very helpfully, the Micah Network has developed this from a potential dualistic interpretation, to a genuinely whole-person centred understanding. This is their definition of what they call "Integral Mission":

> Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life and our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

Because humankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, colour, culture, class, gender, ability/disability, material possessions or age, has dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Do we respect that in the most 'at risk'? At many churches, it does not seem to be so. We need to consider what it means to give dignity to despised ethnic groups, drug addicts etc. in the 21st century. It is even harder for us to identify those we unwittingly ignore when relating within our own spheres of influence and who are therefore further marginalised. But unless we treat the most vulnerable with dignity there is no good news, irrespective of the material changes that we try to effect.

4. Association - Jesus, the disciples and 'at risk' people

Jesus' mission on earth was very clear - to redeem a people for Himself through the cross. His core strategy during His earthly ministry was to mentor, disciple and train the twelve people, through whom He would build His church after His resurrection. Jesus was very focused and strategic in preparing the disciples for mission in which 'at risk' people were central. The way in which Jesus did this was what we call 'association'. We will look at the pattern Jesus followed below, but first we need to define association:

> **Association is the intentional being with 'at risk' people that involves some cost to self, some putting at risk of self, in order to minister the whole gospel.**

Note that this relates to the definition of 'at risk' people given in chapter 2: "'At risk' people are those who are excluded, they are those where there is a personal cost of ministry to them".

Luke's Gospel as a Handbook of Discipleship

To think through association, we suggest here one way of looking at the Gospel of Luke by viewing it as a handbook of discipleship[29]. We are not claiming that this is in any way an exhaustive analysis of Luke. Rather, we offer it as a helpful way of understanding Jesus' calling, training and public appointing of the twelve disciples:

1. **Preparation for the selection process**: *Prayer and Fasting* (chapters 1-4)
2. **Association - The Foundational Course** of six modules (chapters 5-9):
   - **Methodology: Modelling and Mentoring**
   - **Context: Real World exposure**
   - **The Content:**
     a. The man with Leprosy (5:12-16)
     b. The paralysed man (5:17-26)
     c. Dinner with Tax Collectors (5:29-31)
     d. The Centurion (7:1-10)
     e. A Sinful Woman (7:36-50)
     f. A Demon Possessed Man (8:26-39)
     g. A Sick Woman (8:40-48)
     h. Jesus' teaching of the crowds and others through these chapters
   - **Objectives:**
     a. Understanding the mission and the main audience
     b. Understanding the core strategy: association with at risk people
3. **Internship**: Sent out his disciples two by two (9:1-56):
     a. The experience in the field leading to Peter's Confession
     b. Affirmed by the Transfiguration
4. **The Cost**: To the disciples (9:57ff., 12:49ff., 14:25ff.); To the Mentor (11:14ff., 18:31ff.)
5. **The Conceptual Understanding** (10:25 to 19:27)
     a. 12 parables
     b. 12 Teachings
6. **Final Episode: The Disciples' Final Test**- the Cross (19:28–24)
7. **Graduation**: Acts chapter 2.

Unlike many systems of education, which start the learning processes by laying a theoretical foundation for action, Jesus began by setting his own actions as a model for His disciples. He exposed them to real life situations in which His response could be clearly seen.

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[29] Thanks to Dr Bambang Budijanto for this analysis.

In Jesus' system of education, much of the theory came later (chapters 10-19), once the disciples had understood their mission, main audience and core strategy. We can learn from this that our own training and discipleship needs to be more than theoretical courses on theology but centre more on learning Godly relationships. The way to learn this involves a large practical component.

The 'Foundational Course' (chapters 5-9) is very important. The passages indicate that following the selection of the disciples; seven of Jesus' first direct encounters were all with the "Outcast," the unwanted people (man with leprosy, tax collector, paralysed man, sinful woman, Roman soldier[30], demon possessed man, unclean-sick woman). They all failed the tests of religiosity according to the Law of Moses. They all also failed the tests of society: to be with them would involve social cost, personal accusation, and loss of status, but Jesus chose to be with them. He deliberately involved the disciples both in these activities and in His reflections.

When Jesus touched those with leprosy and was touched by the bleeding woman, He deliberately allowed Himself to become unclean according to the Law of Moses. When He went to the centurion's house, He was at risk of being considered a traitor, against his fellow countrymen. When He allowed the sinful woman to kiss His feet, He was risking His reputation; His moral standing in the community was in grave danger.

So the opinion-makers of Jesus' day saw the 'at risk' as unclean and actively excluded them, often equating being 'at risk' with personal (or group) sin. However, we see that God, in Jesus, seeks out this group, not as an afterthought, but as a priority, refusing to automatically label them as sinners. In all those encounters, Jesus intentionally and repeatedly demonstrated his conviction, that they were the primary audience of His mission (5:31). These were exactly the kind of people that "normal" people did not want to be associated with. (We note too, that He was willing, twice, to touch dead people, also making himself unclean but making them whole - Luke 7:11-16 and 8:40-56.)

The Risks and Costs of Association to Jesus

There was a risk for Jesus when He touched the man with leprosy (5:13) as He became ceremonially unclean according to the law of Moses. When He ate dinner with the tax collectors, He was associating Himself with those who collaborated with the Roman oppressors and might have been thought a traitor. When He allowed the sinful woman to kiss His feet (7:38) Jesus risked His own reputation as His relationship with the woman could have been misunderstood. When He went to the house of the Roman soldier, He was dealing directly with a representative of the oppressors and at risk of being considered a traitor, against His fellow countrymen. When the bleeding woman touched Him, He was again allowing Himself to be made ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:25). The risk involved people's social, political, and doctrinal perceptions. People accused Jesus of serving the prince of demons (Luke 11:4). He was rejected by the people (8:37); the community leaders complained about him (5:30). These encounters are set out in the table at the end of this Chapter.

Jesus' modelling of association was through teaching the disciples much about their attitudes to others. They would have learnt that associating is about being with 'at risk' people as genuine friends sharing the whole love of God. This was more than classroom theory. Jesus intentionally touched the man with leprosy (becoming unclean) although he could simply have healed at a distance. He ate with rather than preached to the tax collectors, the traitors to the nation. These were costly choices.

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[30] We recognise that the position of the Roman soldier, the Centurion, is perhaps ambiguous. He had built a synagogue to appeal to the Jewish people and sent Jewish elders as his emissaries – but he remained a Gentile agent of an occupying military force. As with most occupations, there would have been a spectrum of positions among the occupied people from those of Zealot freedom fighters to collaborators.

More than any of the other Gospel writers, Luke records at least three times that Jesus reminded his disciples about the cost of following him (9:57-62; 12:49-53; 14:25-33). Can we quantify the risk, or cost, to Jesus? Here we simply note that the stated reasons in the Gospels for the conspiracy against Jesus, which finally led to His crucifixion, were for breaking the law of Moses (in particular for healing on the Sabbath, Mark 3:6).

The Praxis of Holistic Mission

We often struggle to understand the praxis of 'holistic mission', that is, translating the theories into action. It is instructive that in most of these encounters, Jesus explains the spiritual dimension of a physical happening – His actions embody the spiritual truths. It is not the dualistic ('secular-or-spiritual') understanding of holistic mission which leads to a 'feed with wheat bread on the one hand, and provide spiritual bread on the other' response. It recognises the spiritual element of a physical act. This is thus freeing, for it means that we can accept physical acts of mercy as spiritual and within God's mission (without claiming this is evangelism). We notice that Jesus used the encounters to call other people to repentance, not just the 'at risk' person He was associating with. We infer that association – with explanation - is in itself a witness about the nature of the Kingdom of God to society.

The Centurion and the sick woman provided Jesus with opportunities to teach about faith; the sinful woman about forgiveness; the man with leprosy and the demoniac about the power of God. This need to demonstrate this latter is something perhaps forgotten too often by westerners, particularly non-charismatics, but demonstrated time and again in spiritual encounters across the world. Finally, the tax-collectors provided an opportunity for Jesus to talk about His mission: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:31-32, NIV). Bible teaching often recognises that those who thought of themselves as righteous (usually the Pharisees) were not righteous. The irony is that the 'sinners' are practically closer to God (because they recognise their state of need), in the same way we saw that the gospel is good news to the poor in the previous Chapter.

Too frequently, evangelicals deal with outcasts in a hit-and-run way. Often the outcast has to join in with the church establishment or the ministry does not continue. The discipleship that Jesus demonstrates gives full dignity to 'at risk' people and the opportunity for them to experience abundant life, spiritually and physically. Christians often choose the less risky, less costly option that does not impute full dignity, but there are others who will work long-term with outcasts and walk and live in their midst. In Chapter 5 we will go on to work out what Jesus' teaching and modelling of association means for us.

Figure 4. **Summary of Jesus' encounters with 'at risk' people in the Gospel of Luke, chapters 5-8**

Encounter	Jesus' personal act	Jesus' personal cost	Jesus' public explanation
The man with leprosy 5:12-16	He touched the man and made him clean.	Jesus became ceremonially unclean.	The man who had leprosy was a testimony to the priests in showing himself to them and offering sacrifices.
The paralysed man 5:17-26	He forgave the man's sins and healed him.	By revealing His nature, Jesus antagonised the unbelieving Pharisees.	Jesus demonstrated that He had authority from God to forgive sins by using the power of God to heal the paralytic.
The tax	He ate with tax collectors and	Allowed the Pharisees to judge	In response to the Pharisees' question, Jesus said that it is

collectors 5:29-32	others in Levi's house.	His character badly.	not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick.
The centurion 7:1-10	He went with the Centurion's friends.	It could appear suspicious that he helped a representative of the Roman oppressors.	Jesus explained that the great faith of the Centurion was greater than any he had found in Israel so indicating the importance of faith.
The sinful woman 7:36-50	He allowed her to anoint His feet with perfume and forgave her sins.	Jesus allowed His reputation to come under doubt because of the woman's history.	He explained to His host that the one who is forgiven much loves much and upheld her actions as a model.
The demon possessed man 8:26-39	He healed the man by commanding the demons to leave him and enter a herd of pigs.	He caused many people to fear him and some to say that his power came from the devil.	Jesus told the man to give his testimony about how much God had done for him.
The sick woman 8:43-48	He healed her of her bleeding by being touched by her in the crowd.	Her bleeding made her and those she touched ceremonially unclean.	In the presence of the crowd, Jesus told the woman that her faith (in his power) had made her clean.

5. Our Response of Association

A call to Radical Discipleship

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus' last earthly command, reminds us of our purpose: "*go and make disciples … teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" We need to seek out the most vulnerable, those 'at risk' because that is what Jesus did and what He commanded. His life is an example for us to follow, the very meaning of 'discipleship'.

To 'obey everything', we have to remember the 'Great Commandment' and the 'Great Compassion'. The Great Commandment is to love the Lord our God, and to love our neighbour as our self (Luke 10:27). The Great Compassion, (Matthew 25:40) is a specific application of the Great Commandment, directly applied to the most vulnerable people. Matthew 25:31-46 explains that Christian virtue is validated and qualified by our relationship to the poor and needy. Our willingness to serve Christ is shown by our willingness to serve the hungry, thirsty, stranger, the naked and those who are sick or in prison with appropriate responses. The righteous almost take their compassion as 'given', for they serve the needy without realising that they are doing it for the Lord. Their compassion is a natural response to their love for the Lord. The response of the 'cursed' who have done none of these acts of compassion shows that they have not felt compassion for they would only have acted if they had known that it was the Lord himself they were helping. All the compassionate acts described in his passage are very simple direct responses to need that are just as relevant and appropriate today. They are the response of all those described as righteous in the passage: compassion is not an optional extra for believers or a responsibility to be passed onto a select group. To take this passage seriously (and how can we not take it seriously given the division to eternal life and eternal punishment that Jesus makes clear?) means accepting the mandate to be compassionate by direct association.

Jesus was the bread of life broken for the world and the living water given to quench the thirst of the world. Henri Nouwen points out that Jesus was *"taken, blessed, broken and given by God to the world"*. As Jesus' brothers and sisters, followers and co-heirs, God wants to take us, bless us, break us and give us to the world.

God's concern becomes naturally ours when we are born again into His kingdom. Paul expresses this when recounting his visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 2). He went to visit the elders in Jerusalem to ensure that his gospel was the same one being taught by Peter and the others. The Jerusalem Christians recognised that Paul's gospel was true and merely reminded him to remember the poor (Gal 2:10). Paul adds, so no one can miss it, that this is "the very thing I was eager to do".

In the examples of Jesus' encounters given in Luke's gospel, and described in Chapter 4, there was a cost for Jesus to minister in each case and a risk to take. It is no wonder, perhaps, that the conclusion of that section (Luke 9) is all about the cost of following Jesus.

The Cost of Association

To reach 'at risk' people today, we must expect to face costs and take risks in order to do as Jesus did. Such people may be difficult or costly to reach and be with, but we know that we should do this because of Jesus' own example. We remember that although such people remain unreached in the 21st century, beyond the margins of society's consideration, Jesus makes them the centre of His attention.

How do we do this? How do we reckon the cost small enough? We titled this Chapter "A call to radical discipleship" because if we get our discipleship right, the cost of association will be relatively tiny. This discipleship is the one that takes up its cross, according to Jesus' command. Paul explains it in Philippians chapter two:

"*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

Who being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped;
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross".
(Philippians 2:5-8).

If we truly 'deny ourselves' to follow Jesus (Mark 8:38) then we have already paid the price of association. Like Paul, when we have counted all things loss (Philippians 3:8) then it can only be gain to love the unloved. We re-affirm that it is not by 'works' of association that we are saved; the 'works' that we do demonstrate our living faith; they demonstrate our new hearts, new minds, new value systems.

From the James passage on works (2:14-19) and Matthew 25, we note that we are not told to show compassion solely to win converts. Of course, we will want to tell people (both 'at risk' people themselves and others who are looking on) about the love of Christ that motivates us and how, by repentance, any can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Nevertheless, our actions are not dependent on the likelihood of success of this happening. Rather, we act because we want to be like Jesus and because we want to do the things that He commanded us in response to His love.

Because this style of discipleship is so fundamental to Christianity, and because 'at risk' people are present in all of our neighbourhoods, we affirm that such discipleship is a matter for the *Whole Church*.

The Jesuit writer Gerard Hughes expresses this well:

"As the life of Christ takes hold on us, our lives will be transformed from being lives of self-protection, self-care, self-cultivation, into lives given for others, because God, the God of compassion, will have taken possession of our being. When Jesus describes the Final Judgement, the saved are those who lived the compassion of God, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink, …' (Mt 25), and the lost are those without compassion: 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.'"

Without the 'life of Christ taking hold on us' then our association will be humanistic and liable to frustration and failure. Inevitably we will then be more inclined to programmeric and financial responses rather than risking personal close contact.

Christ-like association with 'at risk' people is likely to gain their trust and build relationships. However, it is very risky for Christians to associate themselves with the "unclean", the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, the tax collectors, the outcast, street children, troubled youth, the girl prostitutes, and other at risk people – not least in terms of reputation in the church. The costs that are faced by Christians through association with 'at risk' people are not usually the same as the risks faced by 'at risk' people themselves (as described in Chapter 2 above). To highlight this difference, the most frequent costs are set out in the table below.

Figure 5. **The costs faced when working with 'at risk' people**

Cost	For Jesus	For us
Misunderstood by the church - Loss of respect and or status within the church	Jesus' own position as a teacher in same way Jesus was criticised by the religious	Some ministry may appear controversial if it doesn't produce an immediate change in behaviour. Or it may look like social work without evangelistic component

Misunderstood by society	Jesus was called a "sinner" too and was considered of bad character	There may be an assumption that the ministry is solely for getting converts
Opposed by authorities	Jesus was hated by the political authorities	If method of working is different from authorities solution or understanding of the issue. For example authorities perception of street children may be as a criminal nuisance.
At physical risk	this eventually led to his death.	If working in opposition to criminal activities for example against trafficking,

These costs are why churches may stay away from teaching and practising "association" and choose to work with less risky communities. Since the Church does not have to associate itself with the outcast to be able to engage in social concern ministry, most churches prefer to work with people where the risks and costs are fewer. In addition we long for success, and it is true that the most vulnerable are often the least easy to give 'results'.

When ministry does not involve association, ministry does not match up to the ideals expressed in the Bible and may even result in a misuse of social ministry as a tool simply to provide a bridge for preaching the gospel. Thus social concern ministries have proliferated among the world's unreached people groups, where poverty is endemic, but it is arguable as to how holistic they have been. For communities receptive to the gospel, this has not been so significant, but for more resistant communities, the suspicion that social concern was a superficial cover to produce conversions and not motivated by genuine compassion has led to increased resistance to the gospel message. A truly holistic approach to mission could still be an effective strategy to approach these resistant people groups. But to do that a new, strong emphasis on "process", "relationship" and the "trust" factors is essential: achievable through association.

Some practical principles of good association

It is essential to ensuring that our theology is right. Yet it is also important to have a feel for what this association would look like when we are working with 'at risk' people. From Jesus' example and our own experiences of working with 'at risk' people, we can draw the following helpful principles, which we offer below.

(a) Be prayerful and listen to God

Be alert to the needs around you, just as Jesus was. Allow the Spirit to lead you.

(b) Research the needs and context

"Be as wise as serpents and innocent as lambs."

There are three essentials parts to research:

1. Use all available sources to find out about the 'at risk' people you are concerned about.
2. Learn from them their personal experience of being 'at risk' (see the 'But Why?' technique described in the Appendix for one way to do this).
3. Find out who else is working with and for those people and learn from their experience and how you can work together.

(c) Be prepared to be with and identify with 'at risk' people, but know where to draw the line

This means, for example, being prepared to live in the same street, share meals together and be friends in an equal manner etc; it doesn't mean joining in unhelpful activities!

(d) Establish a loving relationship with individuals

In this, we note that 'loving' is very often going to be practical and quiet (e.g. for an adult gang member) or it might be affirming (e.g. counselling a young and insecure street kid). We affirm the need for one-on-one, but taking individuals out of their group can be very threatening to them and so needs to be done sensitively, and only at the right time.

(e) Be non-judgemental of the person

Acknowledge and accept who they are, what they do, where they are - don't try to change them. What you can do is offer to help them change, to repent and be transformed by Christ. The key is giving them the dignity to make the choice – not that you or I know best. It is invaluable to remember where we have also come from, truly believing with Paul that 'I was the worst' is invaluable in order for sincerity! Thus a shared need for Christ helps us to speak the truth with compassion.

An example of practising non-judgementalism - with local beer brewers

'Mary' in Uganda works with poor women who brew local beer. Brewing beer is considered inappropriate work by the church and the woman has sometimes been condemned for her help. Nonetheless, she is able to bring the women into the church, gaining their trust, and she continues to support and associate with them sharing the gospel. These women often convert as a result of understanding the gospel and then later, they automatically change their ways through the work of the Spirit and find other ways to generate income.

(f) Be patient

It takes time to change, sometimes long periods of time. For example, unless a child can be taken from the streets within days of arriving there, it will be much harder to help that child make the transition back to more normal life.

(g) Be authentic

Be the model of a true Christian, including allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Those who we call 'at risk' are very often those who can spot insincerity at a distance. Insincerity leads the helper to be used for what they will give without establishing mutual relationship.

(h) Be personally committed

This cannot be done lightly!

(i) Be accountable

To other Christians for your actions.

(j) Know your limitations

Work with others so that you do no harm and do not come to harm. Find out resource people and resource centres; use experienced people to know when to refer for more specialist help and where to turn for resources.

Example of working with others

Go Fishnet ministries in Kenya is a small organisation committed to working with prostitutes in their places of work. Because of the risks involved and the complexities of the prostitutes' lives, team members will always try to go with a member of the local social services or similar so that they will be better able to help these women.

(k) Trust God for what happens

Remember we cannot own or control 'at risk' people or what happens to them, but that they belong to God.

(l) Be open to learn
    From both 'at risk' people and fellow-workers. Strive to improve your own capacities to work with 'at risk' people through learning from your own experiences and those of others.

(m) Be prepared to stand in the gap,
    'At risk' people, almost by definition, suffer discrimination. You need to be prepared to stand with and even speak on behalf of the people you serve. This can be a difficult form of identification.

(n) Pray for the people you are serving.
    Last in this list – but by no means least!

Figure 6. **Applying the principles: a model for reaching 'at risk' people**

An example that demonstrates many of the above principles of how to reach 'at risk' people is Rahab Ministries in Bangkok. The objectives are met through: bar visitation and friendship evangelism, counselling and teaching and serving women in beauty salons. Rahab's workers visit women in the bars offering friendship and personal affirmation seeking to build caring relationships with the women. Rahab Ministries demonstrates the key importance of association in reaching out to 'at risk' people:

Rahab workers go into the street to meet and mingle with the people where they are, in the bars where they work.

(*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this; to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* James 1:27 NKJ)

This association creates trust and allows opportunities to share the Gospel and in addition to provide help to meet the person's other needs

(*Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing and you say "well, goodbye and God bless you, stay warm and eat well" – but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?* James 2:15,16 NLT)

In fact, in this passage, it is the absence of practical help that is condemned. It is not that the person does not need to hear the full gospel of Christ, but our direct responsibility to that person entails trying to meet all their needs.

(*He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* 1 John 2:9-11 NKJ)

    Trust is maintained through continuity of association with 'at risk' people

(*So my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.* 1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT)

    The result of association is an authentic Christian expression of the incarnation - Immanuel, God is with us. Furthermore, it is transformative – for those working with 'at risk' people as much as for 'at risk' people themselves. The promised presence of Jesus with the poor becomes a context of mutual discipleship. The 'at risk' become our mentors and teachers through Jesus as we walk with them in community, in mutual relationship of love, agents of change in themselves[31]. The transformed lives of 'at risk' people are in turn powerful witnesses to those around them as the story of La-eit shows (see below).

    However, for Christians to be able to practise authentic association requires being equipped to meet the challenges for individuals and churches in reaching 'at risk' people. This is the subject of the next Chapter.

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[31] Chris Sugden, "What is good about good news to the poor?" Chapter 12 in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. Mission as Transformation (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 258

A challenging story

La-eit aged 15 was gang-raped on her way home from work in the very poor district where she lives. "You have to pass our gang every day!" the leader taunted. "Come live with me. I'll protect you!"

She did move in with him and stayed for several years. Once their children reached the ages of 5 and 7, however, he forced her into prostitution. That was when Patricia, from Rahab Ministries met her. La-eit was working as a dancer in a bar and a prostitute, at this time.

When she could get away from her partner, La-eit began visiting us to share a meal, fellowship and a Bible Study. La-eit was in desperate straits. On top of all the other degradation she faced, her partner was beating her and we often found her bruised. At Rahab Ministries, we offered shelter to her and her children, if they needed refuge.

She and the children moved into our centre and stayed with us for six months, during which time she gave her life to Jesus. At the end of that time, her partner discovered where she was and abducted their son, knowing that would force her to go back to him. It did. She went looking for their son and moved in with him again. He stopped beating her and no longer forced her into prostitution. Although he did not allow her to go to church, she was able to read the Bible daily, listen to Christian radio broadcasts and pray for him to find Jesus. She never left her partner again. In time, he too became a radiant Christian. They married. Now, La-eit leads worship and women's group in her church. God has blessed them with a wholesome, viable business. La-eit said, "Sometimes we can only eat once a day, because we are poor, but I am rich because of Jesus."

6. Equipping Churches to Respond to 'At Risk' People

We affirm that the church has in fact done (and is doing) a great deal. It has been said that, "The church is by far the largest body of people caring for the needy in the world."[32] While we recognise that there are different parts of the body within the church with their different functions, the truth remains that there is not enough emphasis on the part of most church congregations on behalf of the needy. There could be many reasons for such a lack of biblically mandated emphasis. The result ranges from no action, through piecemeal and uncoordinated action to, in the best cases, effective witness to Jesus' love that transforms individuals and communities.

In this chapter we look at some of the challenges that need to be faced if there is to be greater involvement with 'at risk' people and the necessary actions to be taken in facing these challenges. It is hoped that the summary in the box at the end of this Chapter ('The A B Challenges of reaching 'at risk' people') will help to draw attention to some of these challenges in a memorable way. We then look in more detail at some of the key challenges church leadership and relevant theological training; and our understanding of church. Finally, we look at some of the particular considerations in discipling 'at risk' people.

Issues for our understanding of church

1. Being inclusive

We affirm that Jesus' instruction to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth includes going to 'at risk' people. Further evidence of this is found in Jesus' teaching on the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-23 when he relates how the master instructed his servant to go out to the lanes and byways and bring in the poor, crippled, blind and lame.

The need to follow this instruction and associate with 'at risk' people means that we will have to be prepared to do church differently if they are to be truly included and involved in the covenant community. We need to work through the issues of how the church can be inclusive of people from the different sub-cultures of 'at risk' people, particularly given backgrounds that so often include exclusion, fear and disadvantage.

2. Meaning and measures of success

Redefining the meaning of success of church is essential if we are to make 'at risk' people more central to our ministry. If not, we may be focussed simply on the numbers coming into church. This is not necessarily an accurate guide to the overall kingdom influence that the church has. We need to find new ways to quantify church success. This will depend on the type of 'at risk' ministry. Success will look different depending on the circumstances, but will need to take into account whether we have acknowledged the dignity to the person. Of course, we will also want to consider if we have given enough opportunities for someone to know Jesus personally and if they have responded. We need to be aware that fulfilling our responsibility to 'at risk' people may not automatically produce responses to the invitation to know Christ and that response won't necessarily result in increased church attendance.

Related to the understanding of what the success of the church looks like, we need to work out what should be the measures of successful ministry to at risk people: is success to be measured in numbers of converts? Is it successful social interventions? Or is it incarnating Jesus' love without pre-condition? Many agencies and missionaries have tales of their churches reducing support because the numbers of converts were not adequate. Perceptions in some areas that Christians only help people in order to gain converts have significantly eroded credibility in Christian witness and the resulting 'converts' may only be 'rice Christians' who have

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[32] Patrick McDonald, Viva Network

converted for the material benefits. Some of the other changes that could be expected in a church that is open to 'at risk' people are given below, along with some real-life examples of where those changes have taken place.

3) What a church, changed for 'at risk' people might look like

(a) It changes ownership to those at risk and who participates or leads at the service to the 'at risk' people

In a church in Australia, a severely physically handicapped young man sat in a wheelchair participating in the Sunday morning meetings. Because the affluent congregation would not take the time to love, interact and associate with this individual, he eventually stopped coming to the meetings and dissociated himself from church. We had lost him because he was different and didn't fit into our church culture. By contrast, in another congregation in the same city, another young man, with a slight mental handicap has managed to overcome the difficulty of being rejected by church members. He felt the need to forgive, love and serve the very people who had rejected him and now serves communion, greets people at the door and is an active and for most part welcome participant in the church.

(b) It changes the environment to be "user friendly" and safe for those at risk

In New Zealand there is the model of the "Recovery Church" which is part of the Salvation Army. In this church, those in recovery, whether from addiction to drugs or gambling or from difficult times in their lives like divorce, are able to lead a church in which honest sharing is the norm. There are very few rules except that those in leadership should be 'clean'. Such a church will often feel more appropriate than the more conventional church for people in recovery. However the leaders were committed for the long-term and had been addicts themselves.

(c) It must be aware of its language and change if necessary

Those leading worship could invite people, for example, "to stand if they are able", rather than saying "please stand". The latter is a command which the disabled or infirm may feel awkward in disobeying. The former statement allows individuals to make a guilt-free independent judgment to stand "if they are able" and remain seated if they are not.

(d) It may change where, when and how the church takes place

A good example of this is provided by the story of Fernando, a street kid in Lima, Peru, who is addicted to crack cocaine. A team would regularly visit him and his friends, building through visits to them in their homes, shelters or prisons, playing football, providing healthcare and inviting them into the team's homes. The love of Christ was shared through everyday opportunities such as meals, birthdays, and religious occasions and also by taking them to churches and Bible studies. One day, one of the team interviewed Fernando and asked if he went to church. His rather surprising answer was that he went to church on the nights that the team came.

From this, we can see that our own view of what church is may be very different to an 'at risk' person's view. Perhaps even more importantly, it shows how important it is to take ourselves and the church out to 'at risk' people rather than expecting them to come to us. Through association, the team had crossed over from being outsiders to being included. The team were 'Jesus with skin on'.

(e) It may involve risk taking risks

Go Fishnet ministries reaches out to prostitutes in disco halls, nightclubs and beer bars. There are threats from drunkards and the risk of defamation of character as the workers go about trying to reach girls and young women in such places at night. By recognising these risks, suitable precautions can be taken, for example, involving social services.

(f) It may change the culture of the church

In one slum area in Uganda, 50% of the membership of one church was children. The senior pastor was a woman who had been opposed and shunned by the mainstream of her

denomination at her ordination (because she is a woman). For this reason, she decided to go ahead independently and planted three churches for the people she works with. In one church, the junior pastor fell sick and died. The majority of the adults, who depended on the pastor, left the church but the children remained. The children maintained their Sunday school. In addition, a few of them came to pray every evening as they returned from school. The number of children increased to over 80%. They started bringing in their parents and now most of the adults in the church have come at the invitation of their children. The children call the church the "children church". The children have shaped the church and the church has been shaped to respond to the membership: the children.

(g) Attitudes/hearts of the church members may change

Between 15-20 years ago in Austria, International Teams set up a project for refugees - the Oasis centre. International Teams had a policy that international missionaries would go to local churches and communicate their work. Seven years ago there began to be local interest with church members going to visit. Now, all the youth work has been taken over by Austrians. A similar change has taken place with refugee work in Sydney where Christians after 8 years, churches have taken over the direct work. The refugees ultimately became part of the leadership in the ministry teams.

Issues for Christian leadership

Examining Acts 6, we find how the church noticed a problem: that it was failing to provide food for needy widows. It is clear that the widows were an at-risk group in this context, lacking a voice and control over their situation. The church, having become aware of the problem, immediately made a plan through its leaders, regarding it as their duty to find a solution. Seven qualified leaders were chosen to serve this group, because it was such an important task and indeed, important enough to be included in scripture. The plan and its implementation were successful and the Lord blessed the church with continued growth according to the following verses.

From this passage, we see that Christian leaders have an important role to play in helping the whole church meet its responsibilities for 'at risk' people. Although the whole fellowship has responsibility for 'at risk' people, fellowships may shift the whole burden of responsibility to their leaders or the responsibility is actively assumed by the leaders. The danger with this is that it denies the responsibility for individual change and responsibility of everybody in a congregation. On the other hand, churches tend to have a heart for whatever the pastor's priority is, so if the pastor has a heart for 'at risk' people then the church body may well be stimulated to action. A leader who leads by example, as Jesus led His disciples and who shows sacrificial generosity to the poor, is more likely to mobilize a fellowship into genuine, compassionate association.

As well as the example of the lives of Christian leaders, the message that is preached should also be a powerful witness to the needs of 'at risk' people and the need to associate. This can be rooted in the theological understanding of God's image in people, for example, however broken that image is. Further teaching on the mandate to Christians to associate with 'at risk' people is vital, so each believer understands their responsibility.

Ultimately, working with people in the congregation, concentrating on behaviour change may be more effective than preaching from the pulpit. Development of strong life skills is more effective than telling people what to do. This is a long-term process however. Changing behaviour may require intensive efforts for at least 2-3 years, using small learning methods and a variety of interactive teaching that encourages people to develop and own the message for themselves.

Christian leaders need to be helped in their task if they were properly equipped. For example, there could be a greater emphasis on following the example of the life of Jesus in

seminaries and theological training courses, as well as practical equipping in ministry to 'at risk' people. Then both leaders and congregation can be fully involved in work with 'at risk' people.

Discipling 'at risk' people – considerations

First, we note the need to live in a paradox. The practice of unconditional love which stems from the conviction that "Jesus so loved the world" means that we are compelled to continue to love those who will neither listen nor respond to the gospel. At the same time, we expect and wait for Christ's Spirit to work. When he does, then there is the exciting process of leading this 'at risk' person into fellowship in the body of Christ. This may or may not mean one's local Sunday service!

Thought needs to be given to the task of discipling 'at risk' people as it would with any individual or group. In some ways, discipling is no different from what it would be with any group of people because we all need grounding in the basics of Christian living. There can be added difficulties for 'at risk' people so we will probably need to be more intentional about continuing our walk with 'at risk' people, as problems are likely to have a wider impact in their lives.   We need to make sure we don't just 'leave them to it' but that we are there to support (still holistically) at each stage. Exactly how this should happen would depend on the individual, their situation, particularly their own community and local expressions of Christian community.

An example - Recovery Church

The New Zealand Recovery Church for people in recovery from addiction, accepts people where they are – preaching God's love and acceptance. Addicts are lovingly taught how to participate and the level of honesty, joy and gratitude is exceptional. The church allows the Holy Spirit to challenge people in His time and involves people in recovery in the leadership of the church.   The practicalities of being with at risk' people involve sustained long-term commitment and taking care of oneself through supervision, spiritual direction and taking regular breaks.

Just because an 'at risk' person becomes a Christian does not mean their problems go away overnight! This may cause feelings of rejection, both to and from a local congregation. Thus, for example, in the case of a person who is a substance-abuser, there might need to be recognition that more time is needed for healing of the addiction and permanently changed behaviour for example. Or a long-term homeless person who has recently moved into accommodation may need help rather than judgement on managing new financial responsibilities.

How a church works out this relationship depends on the individual and the nature of the risk involved. The key consideration needs to be maintaining a relationship of trust where possible, but bearing in mind the helpful principles above, which may include seeking help from other bodies.

Individuals and congregations can easily feel uncomfortable if "outcasts" come too close, for example, by attending a church meeting – and the feeling may well be mutual! Homeless adults, street kids or prostitutes, for example, may make others feel awkward because of their dress, demeanour, state of hygiene, physical or psychological condition. Should a drug addict vomit at church, for example, the situation could become extremely uncomfortable. If outcasts wanted to "find God", by entering the doors of most traditional church worship contexts, they would probably feel they had to make a quick exit.   Some congregations make their environment deliberately welcoming for people who are traditionally "outcasts" however (story for example) and deliberately create Christian community in new ways, allowing a process of integration happen over time. However, drawing from our pictures of concentric circles about who has power and prominence, the congregation needs to be able to be challenged to consider who is given priority, and why. This is about practising James' admonition to not

discriminate (James 2:1-4). If the poor man is offered something that naturally is uncomfortable to him, then is that church failing James' test?

There can be also problems with over-optimistic disciplers: "Give your life to Christ and all will be well." In a broken world this is not always the case! An AIDS orphan remains an AIDS orphan, albeit adopted by her heavenly Father.   For an 'at risk' person re-integrating into church and society, having lived and learnt to survive 'beyond the margins' means that fear frequently leads to a desire for the predictability and even discomforts of that former life.

The emotionally and physically needy can easily be led into relationships of dependency, that do not restore dignity. The lesson from this is that those wanting to be involved in discipleship and practical help need to be informed of the potential issues themselves. It also highlights the need for ministry to 'at risk' people to involve, where possible, people who are in or who have come from 'at risk' groups, in order to better understand the situation and needs of those 'at risk'. Most of all, it highlights the need to listen to – very carefully – the needy person.

Angelique's story:

Angelique was 12 years old when the killings began in Rwanda. Her family were all killed except for one brother and she had to spend some time in hiding. Eventually, she found her brother, but he was very distant, emotionally traumatised. Following counselling for the trauma she had experienced at the Rwanda Christian Counselling centre, she was able to build a better relationship with her brother and more of a life for herself. She is now one of the more able youth counsellors at the centre because of the understanding brought about through her own experience.

If we deal with drug addicts or certain other groups of 'at risk' people, Christians face difficult decisions about what genuine help looks like. The needs for needle exchange services or giving out condoms, both of which are of proven benefit in reducing the transmission of HIV, are morally difficult issues.   We do not want to encourage harmful behaviour but need to decide what love looks like in any situation.

Our goal is to show an active loving concern that recognises the 'at risk' person's reality and reduce the damage to that person. It is sometimes difficult for the church to do this kind of damage limitation activity because it appears to run counter to the church's "morals" or Christian view and seems therefore to compromise the church's standards. This is one area where the thinking of the church may need to change in response to Godly direction and wisdom, and where there is room for further discussion. In our discussion group we did not have consensus!

The A B Challenges of reaching 'at risk' people

Affluence

The relative wealth that typifies many churches can prevent 'at risk' people from feeling at home among church members and vice versa. We must consider how to alter this.

Beauty of church

If we concentrate more on developing the inward beauty of the church as its people rather than the beauty of church buildings, it will be easier to welcome 'at risk' people sincerely.

Cost

We need to consider the costs and risks of associating with 'at risk' people so that we are prepared and do not back out if those costs seem too great.

Dedication

Great dedication to the cause of 'at risk' people is needed in order to reach them with the whole gospel.

Ease of association

Our aim should be to achieve the same ease of being with 'at risk' people as Jesus showed so that barriers are reduced.

Fear of being overwhelmed

We need to consider if a fear of being overwhelmed by more 'at risk' people than we can cope with is preventing us from reaching out to the few that we can help.

Growth focus

Too narrow a focus on increasing the numbers in church may reduce the chances of responding to or including 'at risk' people especially if regular churchgoers might change church as a result.

Hope

Although 'at risk' people may be perceived as being too stuck in their ways to be able to change, we must act in hope remembering

Newness and normality

The relative newness of the idea of association with 'at risk' people for many churches can and should become normal behaviour, but only if we're prepared to initiate change for ourselves.

Opposition

Those who reach out to 'at risk' people often meet opposition or outright persecution, as did Jesus himself. This possibility needs to be prepared for.

Paradigm

We need a paradigm shift in our thinking to see 'at risk' people at the centre of God's Kingdom rather than the prevailing worldview where they are beyond the margins.

Quiet cry

We need to listen out for 'at risk' people who usually have little voice in our churches or society.

Relationship with Jesus

A sincere ongoing relationship with Jesus, will help us to share his concern for 'at risk' people and give us the strength to do so.

Synergy

We need to ensure that we work with other Christians in other churches and parachurch organisations to ensure that we don't 'reinvent the wheel' and to maximise use of resources.

Theology

From academics in theological colleges through pastors to lay people we need a biblical understanding of how God sees 'at risk' people.

Umph!

Those with passion and calling for 'at risk' people need to be commissioned by church leadership and equipped to fulfill that vision.

that no one is beyond the transforming love of Jesus.

Intercession
Although it may be less comfortable, congregations need to 'stand in the gap' for 'at risk' people in their own community as well as those further away – even though they may have to be part of the answer to their own prayers.

Judging rightly
While we need to uphold God's standards of righteousness, we should also set aside hasty judgements of people, and challenge our own prejudices, so as to be better able to associate and offer the unconditional love of God.

Knowledge
Knowledge is essential for effective ministry to 'at risk' people. This knowledge must include personal understanding of the 'at risk' people as well as strategic training so that we can be used of God in transformation.

Leadership
From the pulpit and by their example, leaders can have a huge impact in challenging and empowering their congregation to minister to 'at risk' people.

Materialism
Many individuals and churches will need to challenge their preference to spend their time and money on their own comfort rather than on 'at risk' people.

Vulnerability
To minister effectively we need to be sensitive to the vulnerability and complications that 'at risk' people face because of their life history and situation.

Word
Through God's word, we can learn of, and be challenged by, God's heart for 'at risk' people and Jesus' example of association.

Xtra
Association with 'at risk' people must not be considered an extra church activity to add to the overload of church work, programmes, committees and so on. Rather it needs to be integral to the life and mission of the church.

Yoke
Being yoked with 'at risk' people may feel like a burdensome challenge. We need to remember that this is the yoke that Jesus took on and that Jesus' yoke is light as he tells us in Mt 11:28.

Zone of influence
We need to decide as individuals and congregations which 'at risk' people group we can best work with and how our influence can be most strategic.

7. Resources

This chapter mentions a range of ways in which Christians are responding to the pressing needs of At Risk People, along with a selection of relevant Networks, Networking organisations and resources. We have not evaluated the success of each type of response, recognising that this will vary according to the context.

There are many Christians who work with various groups of 'at risk' people using a wide range of approaches. It is our belief that we should work with existing groups wherever possible to share knowledge, experience and support. Our aim here is not to start new ministry itself or single-handedly declare what the best practices are in any particular field of ministry but to provide encouragement for Christians and the church as a whole to follow God's compassion in serving at risk people. Part of this encouragement is to help provide pointers in how to access the extensive experience of Christians already engaged in this area. There is a great opportunity to do this in many cases where groups involved in similar areas of ministry share resources through networks or umbrella organisations. Through these, Christians can begin to link up with others in their area to work alongside them or begin to fill in the gaps of provision. There are several organisations that are able to provide links to other organisations in many of the at risk people fields. These link organisations can help in finding more specific start-up or improvement information. We recommend that you work with such bodies to strengthen the response to at risk people locally and globally.

Christian interventions can occur at different points on a spectrum from prevention to support etc. In general the Christian response to 'at risk' people works in several different ways. The most direct is to work directly with people, ideally 'in association' with them, as described in part 2. This role involves ongoing listening, direct helps towards needs and need not require specialist training. Some specialist resources will be helpful of course, for example in health care, counselling or setting up micro-credit schemes. At the other end of the spectrum there is the Christian response of advocacy in trying to achieve local national and international policy change that is more just and brings about more favourable conditions for the group concerned. This type of work may require fact finding in order to persuade authorities.

Resource Organisations and Web sites

People group	Organisation	Description	Web site
Children at risk	Viva Network	Viva Network is a global movement of Christians passionately concerned for 'children at risk', committed to every child having the opportunity to become all that God intends. Rather than starting more children's projects, we create and sustain networks among people already working with 'children at risk', so that more children get better help. Today Viva Network is involved in developing and supporting 66 network initiatives in 43 countries around the world. These initiatives link 16,000 workers working in 4,000 projects which reach 160,000 children. (Street children, disabled, affected by war, sexually exploited …)	http://www.viva.org http://www.viva.org/tellme/events/lausanne/
People with substance addictions	International Substance Abuse and Addiction	ISAAC currently has 240 individual and project members from 35 different countries. They are also building links with other networks and are affiliated with the Christian Recovery Movement. Their priority is	http://www.isaacinternational.com/

	Coalition	to keep our members in touch with one another through the ISAAC web site and Newsletter so that they really do feel part of a wider family. They publish the *Forum* magazine, which provides clinical/technical information across the range of addiction related issues.	
Prisoners	International Network of Prison Ministries	The purpose is to bring under one Internet roof all Prison Ministries involved in crime prevention and in the rehabilitation of prisoners through the Word of God worldwide. There are 2746 member organisations around the world, mostly in the USA	http://prisonministry.net/

Refugees/Internally Displaced people	Refugee Highway	The Refugee Highway Partnership (RHP) was formed for the following purpose:
		Motivated by our God-inspired love for refugees and the biblical mandate to care for them and believing that we can do this best by collaborating together, the Refugee Highway Partnership seeks to create and nurture a Christian community that:
		    facilitates more effective refugee ministry
		    stimulates strategic initiatives
		    inspires and equips the church
		so that refugee ministries are strengthened and more refugees are served on the highway.
			http://refugeehighway.net/

Poverty issues	Micah Network	Established in late 1999 the Micah Network has grown into a world-wide group of more than 200 evangelical Christian relief, development and justice agencies. The aims involve helping each other to meet the needs of the poor and oppressed through what is called Integral Mission, and to encourage the wider church in its God-given responsibility to demonstrate God's love for the poor.	http://www.micahnetwork.org/
A selection of resource sites (not exhaustive)			
People with disabilities	Joni and Friends	Resources for people or families with a variety of disabilities (mobility, sensory, learning). Help with awareness raising and training in churches. Publishes disabled-accessible resources. Links to partners and resources in several countries globally.	www.joniandfriends.org
Prostitutes /Sexually Abused Women in prostitution	NCAP: National Christian Alliance on Prostitution	Regional networks of ministries to adult women working in prostitution are developing. The purpose is to encourage one another, exchange ministry ideas, advocacy, funding resources and prayer.	ncapoffice@aol.com
HIV/AIDS	AIDS Care Education and Training	ACET International Alliance is a rapidly growing global network of independent Christian organisations and church-based agencies responding to AIDS, run and staffed almost in every case by nationals.	http://www.acet-international.com/
Health Issues	Christian Connections for	Christian Connections for International Health promotes international health and wholeness from a Christian perspective. CCIH provides some field-	http://www.ccih.org

	International Health	oriented information resources and a forum for discussion, networking, and fellowship.	
At risk people generally	Salvation Army missions department	Children, people with substance addictions, HIV/AIDS, health issues, prisoners, poverty issues, affected by war, women and prostitutes and sexually abused. Resources and links with local contacts. The Salvation Army works with groups from other denominations.	www.salvationarmy.org

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8. Next Steps – questions to ask and actions to take

Questions for reflection and discussion:
You can use these questions for individual or group reflection as you consider how to make 'at risk' people more central. [33]

• How can you promote the needs of 'at risk' people in your sphere of influence?

• What is going on with 'at risk' people in your neighbourhood?

• Are you listening to 'at risk' people? Are they stakeholders with you in your work?

• What is happening to 'at risk' people in the church? How is your church involved in reaching out to 'at risk' people?

• What are we doing to ensure that every church has significant programmes to address the needs of 'at risk' people?

• How are seminaries in your country equipping and challenging students with the potential of 'at risk' people ministries?

• How should we respond to the challenge of Matthew 25?

• Are 'at risk' people in your budgets? Are 'at risk' people in your strategies? Are 'at risk' people in your prayer life?

Actions you can take:
Issue Group participants suggested the following ways that individuals and groups can begin to act.

Learn
- Read the entire scriptures being sensitive to their message about and for 'at risk' people
- Learn more about 'at risk' people from people and organisations that minister to them
- Learn how to minister to 'at risk' people and then teach others

Pray
- Pray for specific 'at risk' people locally and globally
- Pray about how you can serve
- Develop a forum for people to meet and pray together about specific [34]'at risk' people

Tell others
- Tell individuals and your church of the centrality of 'at risk' people to Jesus' mission
- Ask to address meetings: leaders meetings, women's meetings, youth meetings, Sunday school etc.
- Learn how to envision and equip young people to take up the cause of 'at risk' people
- Write about 'at risk' people in church newsletters, newspapers, and leaflets
- Speak on local radio
- Encourage those in the arts to work with and on behalf of 'at risk' people
- Encourage those in training to include training on ministry to 'at risk' people

Act
- Seek out those who are most in need locally
- Meet 'at risk' people where they are
- Take the gospel message with love
- Develop a web site that can link people and organisations who are or want to work with 'at risk' people in your area.
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[33] We gratefully acknowledge that these questions have been closely modelled on questions devised by Dr D Brewster in connection with children at risk.

A Final Thought

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

(Matthew 25, 34; 37-40, TNIV)

Our call to costly discipleship is seen to have a price that can be paid by any and all. The rewards of ministering to Jesus by serving at risk people are personal and eternal. We dare not miss out.
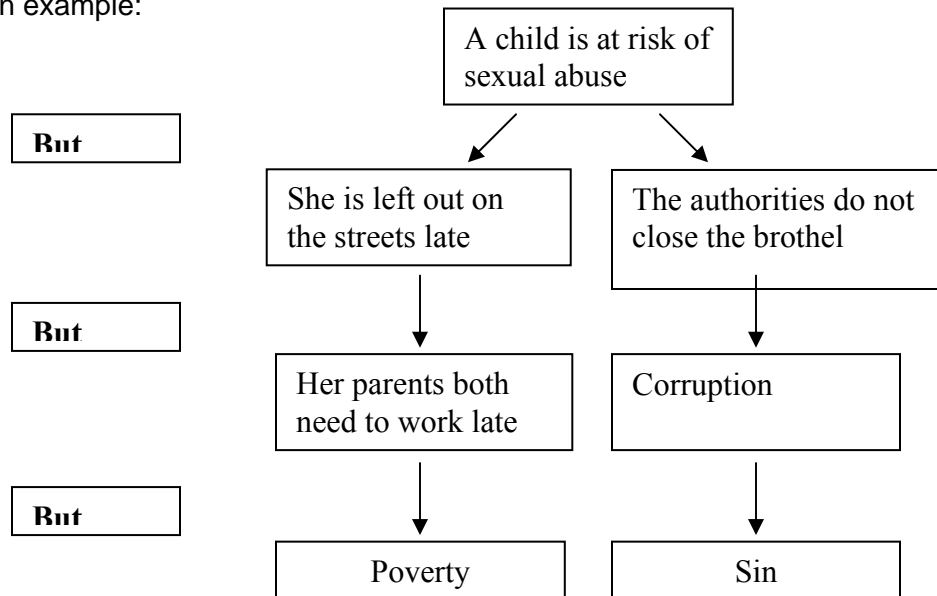
Appendix 1: The 'But Why?' Method

An essential step in working with 'at risk' people is to find out about them and their situation. This is an essential part of association. A major part of exclusion is not being listened to and listening is central part of the process of imputing dignity. Of course, listening also enables greater understanding to work out next steps.

There is also the need for actual information in looking at the causes behind being 'at risk'. For example, when looking at the causes for street children, James Grant, the late executive director of UNICEF recognized that as well as family breakdown, there is a chain of causality forcing children onto the streets that includes aspects of the international economic system, faulty development models, urbanization processes, degraded natural environments and non-existent social safety nets[35].

When trying to analyse the many different causes of risk, a useful technique is to use the 'But why?' flowchart. This technique can be used by people with a thorough knowledge of 'at risk' people or by at risk people themselves. The 'But why?' flowchart helps us think more deeply about the underlying causes of problems beyond superficial answers. In essence, it is a way of tracing through from the issue to the cause(s)

As an example:

A child is at risk of sexual abuse

But

She is left out on the streets late	The authorities do not close the brothel

But

Her parents both need to work late	Corruption

But

Poverty	Sin

Such a process points to the different underlying problems and the interaction of personal and corporate sin. It can also lead to suggestions on the different interventions that are possible in addressing the issue, since addressing different causes will require different interventions. A series of questions can be used in responding to the information generated from this technique.

- Who needs educating about this issue?
- Who needs to be lobbied?
- What laws need to be enforced?
- Who can be most effective in this enforcement /lobbying?
- What other groups can we work with to help achieve these goals?
- Where is prayer currently directed? Where else can it be directed?
- Which cause needs to be addressed first?

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[35] Culnane, (1997), 21

- Which group can address which cause (e.g. local community, family, local government, national government)?
- Which of the causes listed should the local church be involved in changing?
- Which causes should be tackled by the larger church at the political level?[36]

It is worth noting that if using this technique with at risk people, sensitivity needs to be exercised in the use of probing questions to get to the heart of causes. It is important too, to be an active listener so that world views such as 'I'm poor because of my fate' are not reinforced but that people are helped in understanding their own world views[37].

Churches need to be prepared to work at different levels appropriate to the situation of 'at risk' people. In some cases, they will need to advocate with government, local or national. In others, they may be using business models for income generation schemes. However, none of this is a substitute for individuals spending time with and forming direct loving friendships with 'at risk' people at the place where they are. Nevertheless, individuals and churches will need to decide where they can operate most strategically to serve 'at risk' people through consideration with 'at risk' people and the situation.

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[36] adapted from G. Miles, "A tool for analysing why children are at risk." in G. Miles, and J.J.Wright, eds. Celebrating Children (2003)115-6.

[37] G. Miles, as above.

Appendix 2: Advocacy principles

The second aspect of ministry with 'at risk' people that we consider in this Paper is advocacy, which is the process of ensuring that the voices of 'at risk' people are heard and acted on appropriately. Exactly how this happens will depend on the people themselves (which is why listening and finding out is so important, as described above) and also the context in which those voices are to be heard, but we outline a few general principles below:

1. Understand that God has called the church out to speak out on behalf of the oppressed. There is a need for people within the church to speak out with prophetic voices.
2. Cooperate with God – to follow God's mandate we need to speak on how God feels – "what is on the heart of God". If God cries, the church must cry. This will involve listening to God.
3. Be Creative – use music, dance, art, film, drama and so on. A release of Christian artists is needed to work with the vulnerable in making their voice heard.
4. Maintain Christian values – even when you belong to the minority or it is not 'politically correct' sometimes we may sound or look odd (not politically correct) to the church and the world, but we still need to speak up with anointing and authority.
5. Be open to all God-given opportunities to speak or act. These opportunities include world conferences on HIV/AIDS, globalisation, etc., but also local opportunities, not forgetting the church itself.
6. Work with decision-making bodies at all scales (where this does not compromise Christian values). This includes government and NGO bodies. Many governments are waiting to hear from the church even though the church's perception is that they are not listening
7. Aim for stronger partnerships and involvement in existing networks. Advocacy is more powerful when there is co-operation between groups.

Appendix 3: Church and Parachurch Relationships

A critical issue we need to consider is how best specialist parachurch agencies can partner and empower congregations to help them in their ministry to 'at risk' people.

Churches may sometimes leave ministry to 'at risk' people to the parachurch. A frequent reason for this is that churches lack the knowledge and resources to tackle the complex issues involved. Given the difficulties of starting work with 'at risk' people, it generally seems easier to reach out to them through specialized parachurch organizations.

If we leave work with 'at risk' people to 'the professionals' it denies us the chance and opportunities of the direct association that we have seen is so necessary. In addition, 'at risk' people will find it harder to fit into the culture of the church or to contextualize their own forms of church. In any case, there is a need to mobilise local churches to reach 'at risk' people because the task is for the *Whole Church* and it is the only way to reach a greater number of 'at risk' people.

Too commonly, when a church or parachurch organization works directly with 'at risk' people, they are isolated from the work of others and particularly congregations. It is normally better for the parachurch organisation to work in partnership: mobilising, equipping and supporting individual churches in their work and enabling churches to work together across denominations. In this way, parachurch organisations become like consultants for the churches. The parachurch works through mobilizing churches to reach 'at risk' people resulting in a contextualised church that continues to reach out to more 'at risk' people with the whole gospel. This model is being pursued effectively by agencies such as Malaysian CARE, and EFICOR in India.

The following case study and diagram serve to highlight the relationship described above, with an emphasis on multiple congregations working together, with the benefits of shared capacity, vision and the witness of Christian unity.

Case study of how a parachurch organisation can work effectively to mobilise local churches for work with 'at risk' people.
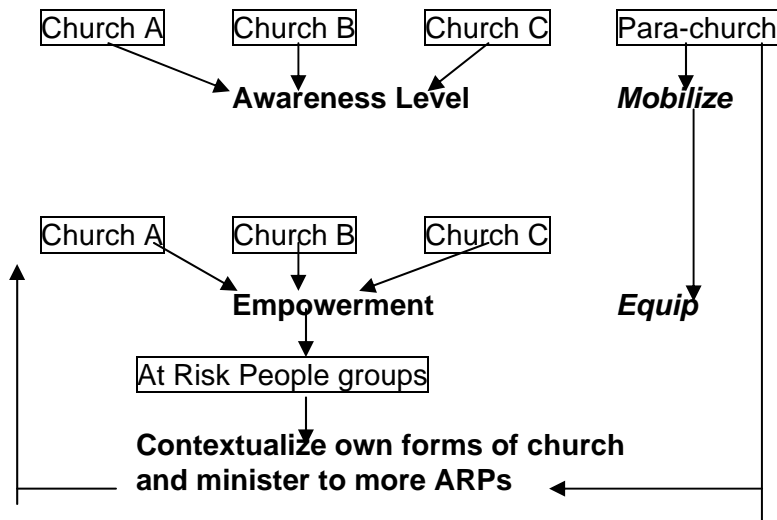
Starting a Community-Based Information Centre with indigenous people

The ministry is focussed on a group of the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, who make up only 0.5 % of the population. They tend to be highly marginalised both in terms of education and economic and social status. The state school system is not appropriate for learning given their cultural background and consequently, up to 60% children drop out of school. This makes it harder for them to adapt to the prevailing culture.

Change began when a group of young Christians from the community, who themselves had dropped out of school, began to question how things could be different. Malaysian Care (a Malaysian Christian social work organisation) worked with the youths in setting up a Community-Based Information Centre (CBIC) that they themselves would run. The CBIC allows access to written resources and the internet to support learning, provide access to information for socio-economic development and allow documentation and sharing of indigenous knowledge. Usage rates have been high.

The project has increased awareness and encouraged a number of urban churches and other parachurch organizations to initiate additional programmes in remedial education and computer literacy using the CBIC facilities. With support from Malaysian Care, these efforts are coordinated by the local youth group, who were the starting point. The role of the NGO, Malaysian Care, was to bring expertise in facilitating and supporting this project such that a range of churches stakeholders can be involved successfully.

Figure 7. **Diagram of how the church-parachurch relationship could work more effectively.**

Church A   Church B   Church C   Para-church

Awareness Level   *Mobilize*

Church A   Church B   Church C

Empowerment   *Equip*

At Risk People groups

**Contextualize own forms of church
and minister to more ARPs**

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