Critical Enabling Factors for Decolonisation in Christian Development Organisations

Toluwanimi Jaiyebo-Okoro

The rise of the "Black Lives Matter" movement in 2020 brought to the fore issues such as racism, oppression, and colonisation within international development practice. In spite of organisations citing commitments to decolonisation, day-to-day tools and ways of working are arguably not always fit for such purposes. Against this backdrop, this article outlines four critical enabling factors (CEFs) for decolonisation relevant for Christian Development Organisations (CDOs): lament, epistemic justice, diverse and inclusive representation, and the embrace of non-neutrality. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but represents a starting point for organisations that want to embark on the journey towards decolonising their practice.

Introduction

The rise of the "Black Lives Matter" movement in 2020 brought to the fore pre-existing issues of racism, oppression, and colonisation within international development practice (see, for example, Khan, Dickson and Sondarjee 2023). Still, in spite of organisations citing commitments to such goals as localisation, collaboration, and shifting the power,[1] day-to-day tools and ways of working are not always fit for such purposes. Funding is concentrated in the Global North, and concepts and theoretical frameworks developed in the Global North typically evidence a limited understanding of social norms and local realities on the ground. The widely used practice of "capacity building," for example, fosters the idea that the Global South is undeveloped, primitive, and lacking in skills and abilities. Meanwhile, the Global North is positioned as the possessor of knowledge, solutions, and expertise, and thus the capacity builder, reinforcing the idea that one group of people know something that the other does not know.

This article aims to outline critical and practical enabling factors for decolonisation relevant for Christian Development Organisations (CDOs). I will begin with a brief overview of my social and cultural location in order to clarify my own positionality. My professional career has been spent working in international development; four years in the Global South and four years in the Global North, which is where I am currently based. These experiences have given me insights into different sides of the power dynamics divide. I know what it is like to be powerless and dependent on instructions and funding from headquarters in the Global North, and, while working in the Global North, I have made decisions about who should be funded to do what, for how long, and on what conditions. I have had my capacities "built" when I was in the Global South, and I have provided "capacity building" to partners in the Global South from my position in the Global North.

On a personal note, I am from Nigeria, a country in the Global South, educated largely in the Global North, and currently undertaking PhD research on decolonisation within international development with an institution in the Global North. I am therefore acutely aware that, though a "Southerner" and a staunch advocate for decolonisation, I am, as Moosavei puts it, "privileged by coloniality and even implicated in its enduring structures of inequality" (2020, 333). Lastly, as a Christian studying colonisation, its ongoing effects, and how Christianity is intertwined with this history, I have been led on a journey of deconstructing my faith. For me, this involves questioning and examining the role (both past and ongoing) of Christianity in slavery, oppression, racism, and injustice.

These experiences have caused me to struggle with tensions around whether I have any right to decry the systems from which I have benefitted and continue to benefit. I have found some respite in the distinction that Grosfoguel (2007) makes between social location and

[1] See, for example, https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2021/10/mapping-for-the-shifting-of-power-a-system-change-approach/.

epistemic location in relation to decolonisation, which simply means that it is not about "where you reside but where you dwell" (Mignolo 2011, xiii). Dunford (2017, 388) explains this clearly, saying that thinking through a decolonial lens, or indeed a colonial lens

> ...relates not to where you happen to be, or where you are from, but to the perspective from which you think. As much as it is possible for someone residing in a marginalised community to adopt the worldview of the coloniser, it is possible for someone in a distant location to attempt to think from the geo-epistemic perspective of those threatened by global coloniality.

To be able to think through a decolonial lens, regardless of our social or cultural location, we must first address the role the institutions we are affiliated with played in relation to colonisation and coloniality, including the harm they caused, and then work actively to bring about redress, redistribution, and reconciliation. Ultimately, we need to be intentional about working together to realise our decolonial quest for justice and healing, and to dismantle systems of oppression. While we are not to blame for the past, the future is our responsibility.

I begin this discussion with a brief attempt to define decolonisation, before making a case for decolonising international development. This leads to arguments for four critical enabling factors (CEFs) that must be present in CDOs for them to experience meaningful decolonisation.

The first CEF is lament, because acknowledging and lamenting the harm Christianity has brought through colonisation and Christianity's ongoing role in coloniality is an integral first step towards decolonisation. Lament provides a redemptive framework that allows people not only to express their suffering, confront privilege, and mourn the pain of others, but ultimately to affirm their hope in God to bring justice. The second CEF is a focus on epistemic justice, which calls for CDOs to reflect on how they are replicating colonial legacies of epistemic injustice within their practice by considering questions such as "Whose knowledge counts?" and "Who is creating knowledge?" Diverse and ethical representation is the third CEF and includes not only diverse and inclusive representation within CDOs, but also ethical representation in how stories are told, including, for example, confronting the vocabulary of "rescue" that is rife among Christian organisations, especially anti-slavery CDOs. Last is the embrace of non-neutrality. Clinging to the idea of a perceived neutrality dissociates CDOs from the colonial legacy that they need to acknowledge through lament.

The CEFs discussed in this paper were drawn from existing literature and include examples of organisations putting them into practice. These CEFs are not intended to be exhaustive; they simply provide a starting point for CDOs that want to embark on a journey of decolonisation.

What is Decolonisation?

There is a lack of consensus on the definition of decolonisation despite its increasing use and popularity. Stein and de Andreotti (2016, 978) define decolonisation as "an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined process of colonisation and racialization." This includes "... finding out how you benefit from the history of colonisation and activating strategies that allow you to use your privilege to dismantle that..." (Sanchez 2019, referenced in Linh 2020). It also includes "unlearning and undoing the harms of colonization" (Asadullah 2021, 28), such as systematic racism (Mignolo 2017), appropriation of land and resources (Frankema 2010), enslavement (Chibuike Anyanwu and Johnmary Ani 2020), economic instability (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012), and within international development specifically, the system of white saviourism that measures former colonised people "against a standard of Northern whiteness and finds them incomplete, wanting, inferior or regressive" (Peace Direct 2021, 16).

Regardless of the lack of consensus on a common definition, what all approaches agree on is that decolonisation involves dismantling the monopoly in knowledge production, decentring power from the hegemony of the Global North, and undoing colonial ideologies that position Western thought and approaches as superior. It is about building "a participatory system where power and resources are redistributed, and a plurality of voices and interests are respected" (Lazzarino 2019, 2). It is essential that these principles become "embedded within every aspect of the organisation, as opposed to something that is considered a nice-to-have" (Linh 2020).

The Case for Decolonising International Development

Manji and O'Coill (2002, 568) argue that the field of international development has moved "from missionaries of empire to missionaries of development," from the civilising mission to the developing mission. Colonial labels such as "barbarians" or "animals" have been replaced by less overtly degrading phrases like "underdeveloped" or "Third World." yet are nonetheless "imbued with narratives of othering, backwardness or exoticization" (Kagal and Latchford 2020, 22; Khan et al. 2023, 15). The rhetoric around "development" suggests that progress is linear and that "developing" nations in the

Global South should strive for and achieve the "developed" status of many countries and cultures in the Global North (Shallwani and Dossa 2023, 67).

International development has been considered akin to the "White Saviour Industrial Complex" (Cole 2012a; Hanchey 2016; Khan et al. 2023). This occurs when "historically colonized countries and people are considered as having fewer capabilities, coupled with the impression of benevolence and altruism of Western agents" (Khan et al. 2023, 16). This colonial power matrix "elevates people of White European descent despite their role in exploiting and dispossessing people from the Global South" (Khan et al. 2023). Their "sense of obligation" (Heron 2007, 26) to save the Global South (considered as lacking the determination and intellect to do so on their own), is guided by a perception that they, development professionals from the Global North, are more capable, more intelligent, and thus more "developed" than people from the Global South, which of course maintains a "paradigm of coloniality" (Benhadjoudja 2023, 85).

This *White man's burden*, a term coined by British poet Rudyard Kipling in 1899 to encourage the colonisation of the Philippine Islands to save the Global South typically accompanies a failure to acknowledge the role of the colonisers in creating and maintaining the inequalities that have led to the "lack of development" (Khan et al. 2023). Indeed, international development has not been framed "in the language of emancipation or justice, but with the vocabulary of charity, technical expertise, neutrality, and a deep paternalism" (Manji and O'Coill 2002, 570).

Hanchey affirms these ideas when she posits that

> whether provided by governments or non-profits, aid perpetuates paternalistic relationships between providers and recipients by assuming a lack of agency on the part of those served and enabling a superiority complex in its purveyors. Structurally, developmental aid further reinforces the systems it purports to change (2020, 262).

This purported shift from colonialism to neocolonialism through international development is nevertheless nuanced. Uma Kothari, in *A Radical History of Development Studies*, provides perceptive insights on the link between colonisation and development, arguing that there are both points of continuity and divergence between colonialism and development. Using personal narratives of former colonial officers who went on to work within international development, Kothari aims to understand

> the varied articulations of the transition from 'colonialism' to 'development cooperation' and the ongoing relationship between colonial forms of rule and governance and the purpose and practice of development (2019, 118).

Continuities highlighted include the career movement of former colonial administration officers to international development consultants and teachers (Kothari 2006). Such movement may well blur the lines between the values and identities of the colonial legacy and those in the international development community (Pieterse and Parekh 1995). Other continuities include governmental and regulatory structures that control and limit distribution of resources and replicate colonial discourses of knowledge and power. Goldsmith argues that these are ultimately for the benefit of the Global North and come at the expense of the Global South, with the latter playing the primary role of supplying low-cost labour and raw materials (1997).

While most of the literature around colonisation and international development focuses on points of continuity, Kothari argues that there are also points of divergence that cannot be ignored. She argues that throughout the 1950s there was already a shift towards international development, with the colonial administration introducing and offering more development related activities (2006), such as health, education, and other social programmes (Midgley 2003). Another point of divergence between colonialism and international development is demonstrated in the increased diversity of actors involved in international development in relation to gender, ethnicity, and class (Kothari 2006) compared to those involved in the White male-dominated colonial administration. Despite this diversity, however, such workers continue to work within structures that were established during colonialism. Though there are no doubt additional points of divergence, I will continue to focus on the continuities in the discussion that follows.

Where Is the Response?

Among the strongest of continuities are decisions about development funding. In the earliest stages of deciding how funding is distributed, the legacy of colonialism is clearly present. Becker (2020) finds that Britain and France provide almost 10% more in aid to former colonies than they do to other countries. The proposal development stage of securing funding tends to be led by organisations in the Global North, with practitioners from the Global South invited to "participate." This is a consultative collaboration in which Southern practitioners act in the role of consultant to Northern practitioners, with the latter retaining authority (Biggs 1989). When funding is secured, control of the funds is retained in the hands of organisations in the North to "administer" for the developing world subjects. The Southern organisations

invited to participate in the response are those that fit into the hegemonic culture and speak the lingo.

Who Leads the Response?

As stated above, among the key questions raised around decolonization are "Whose knowledge counts?" and "Who is creating knowledge?," because whoever is producing knowledge becomes the "expert" and shapes the way the world is seen and known (Narayanaswamy 2019). In my experience in the world of international development, the Global North produces the knowledge and attempts to pass it down to the Global South through "capacity building." This widespread term within the sector reinforces the idea that one group of people knows something that the other does not know (de Bruin and James 2020). The associated wage difference between expat and local personnel further entrenches this inequality, resulting in the devaluation of the skills and expertise of Global South practitioners (Peace Direct 2021). Indeed, my colleagues in the Global South saw terms like "expatriate" as colonial adjacent/lite.

One consequence of White saviourism is that development workers are placed in positions of authority because of their race and/or proximity to whiteness, not due to their actual skills and knowledge. Furthermore, as Khan et al. note, "These narratives promote an alterity process between us and them and reinforce the idea that we can solve their problems" (Khan et al. 2023, 23). This applies equally to people from the Global South who due to their proximity to Whiteness, either through speaking the lingo, their education, or language have aligned "themselves with White norms, worldviews and approaches and have, therefore, often been complicit in reinforcing White supremacy and reproducing White Saviourism" (Shallwani and Dossa 2023, 59).

How Is the Response Documented?

It must also be acknowledged that the tools and ways of working within international development are determined by the Global North. Log frames, implementation plans, and reporting systems are often imposed by organizations from the Global North on those in the Global South, and typically without addressing local historical and cultural perspectives. Authorship of data is maintained by Northern partners who extract stories, publish them, and essentially speak for the South (Pinet and Leon-Himmelstine 2020). In addition to authorship, the access and management of data remains with Northern partners, with information rarely returning to participants and partners in the South.

Shallwani and Dossa (2023) argue that the monitoring and evaluation of international development projects by the Global North focuses on the White subject as the agent of change, the saviour, and the objective authority. As a result, the "feel good" aspect of White saviourism is reinforced (Ibid., 58). In the process, it promotes Whiteness as the standard, highlights weaknesses and issues in the lives of people in the Global South, and shows how solutions created and sponsored by the Global North are required and helpful.

Critical Enabling Factors and Good Practices

Given how the institutions of international development have been influenced by the power of the Global North, it has become essential for the international development community to decolonise. Though not all international development organisations and actors may have direct linear connections with colonialism, those involved in international development must "consider how they benefit from Global North power and privilege, including benefits derived from the legacies of colonialism" (GADNetwork 2022, 12). To do that well, international development organisations, and especially Christian development organisations, must cultivate CEFs if there is to be any reasonable hope of development that does not cause harm by perpetuating this system of power. As a reminder, the four CEFs I highlight here are lament, epistemic justice, diverse and ethical representation, and non-neutrality.

Lament

Theologian Amanda Kaminski sees lament as engaging the Divine in an honest struggle that demands justice and brings the praying person's brokenness to the redeeming God without sanitising the suffering that might have been engendered by one's confusion or anger about God's complicity or inaction. Further, prayer in this tradition goes beyond the spiritual and emotional dimension of praxis by redressing grievances, naming offences, and seeking to re-establish new social connections in the wake of the total wreckage experienced in trauma (Kaminski 2013, 4).

Kristin Hamilton, a theologian with a research interest in systems of lament, describes lament as "an expression of sorrow" that can take different forms including "confession, despair, and protest" (2019, 89). Biblical scripture is intertwined with such instances of lament, both corporately and individually (Muthiah 2021).[2] Examples include the corporate lament of confession in Daniel 9:5—"we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we

[2] All scripture citations come from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

have turned away from your commands and laws" (The Holy Bible, Daniel 9:5). An individual lament of repentance is seen in Psalm 25:11—"For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great" (The Holy Bible). Psalm 10:1 shows a lament of protest where the author cries out—"Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (The Holy Bible).

According to Hamilton, as CDOs and their staff

> identify their privilege and place within oppressive systems..., lament provides space and language to imagine and cling to God's faithfulness in the face of tragedy, suffering, and sin, whether it is one's own or someone else's (2019, 93).

For those who benefit from Global North privilege and power, "lament teaches us to place ourselves in the path of pain that is not our own." It allows for the mourning and protesting of the pain of others (Ibid., 94).

For those on the receiving end of the colonial matrix of power, lament offers a redemptive framework as people are led to turn, complain, ask, and trust" (Vroegop 2020). Lament encourages those who have been wounded by injustice to turn to God for healing. Through complaint, they can express their suffering honestly, and can demand the justice they yearn for. Through trust, they "can reaffirm their hope in the One [God] who judges justly (Ibid.).

For Christian and Christian-affiliated development organisations, the practice of lament as a first step before taking practical steps to decolonise, calls for sitting "with the discomfort and the pain that [they] have contributed to, not always necessarily as individuals, but part of a system" (Blair 2020). Corporate lament can help to bring to light areas of injustice that might otherwise remain hidden and allows for the community to "embrace the pain of the excluded" (Dickie 2021, 9) and stand in solidarity with those who have suffered and continue to suffer from ongoing legacies of coloniality. As Johnson-Barrett (2005, 335) says,

> The ability to sit with suffering, to recognize how painful it is, and simply to be there...is an enormous gift. The simple attention-filled presence of a listener is itself a form of comfort (quoted in Dickie 2021, 11).

Good Practice for Lament: The Church of England Report, From Lament to Action: Lament is a developing concept, often used in connection with racial justice (Vroegop 2020; Hamilton 2019; Muthiah 2021). Although not from the development sector, one good example is the report of the Church of England's Archbishops' anti-racism taskforce published in 2021 which provided recommendations to the Church of England for combating racism and promoting racial justice (Church of England 2021)

In this report, which provides 47 recommendations and an implementation action timetable, the taskforce acknowledges the harms that the Church has been complicit in committing:

> The Christian narrative of reconciliation offers us an invitation to confess the sin of racism, and to acknowledge our past and present complicity in various forms of ethnic discrimination and racial prejudice, so that we may truthfully and honestly work together to build the kingdom of God here and now (Church of England 2021, 8).

The taskforce acknowledges the regret and grief expressed by the Church about racial sin, but recognises that true repentance calls for more than just regret and is intentional in moving towards the next steps of commitment and action.

Epistemic Justice

The impact of colonisation on knowledge production has been the creation of an epistemic hierarchy and intellectual imperialism that "privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies..." (Grosfoguel 2007, 217). This has led to epistemic injustice through global epistemicide, which, as Meghji says, is the erasure of non-Eurocentric ways and forms of knowing and knowledge (Meghji 2020). Epistemic injustice occurs when the concepts and categories through which a people understand themselves and their world are either replaced or negatively affected by the categories and concepts of the colonisers (Bhargava 2013).

Thus, the second CEF, epistemic justice, calls for CDOs to consider questions such as: What resources or books are influencing our theology? What voices are dominant in our practice? Whose knowledge counts? Who is creating knowledge? As mentioned above, intellectual imperialism has resulted in Northern development workers being regarded as experts in places located in the Global South, because whoever is producing knowledge becomes the "expert" and shapes the way the world is seen and known (Narayanaswamy 2019). The parallel wage difference between "expat" and "local" personnel further entrenches this division, resulting in the devaluation of the skills and expertise of Global South practitioners (Peace Direct 2021).

As stated above, in the international development sector, knowledge is typically produced in the Global North or informed by patterns of thinking that originate in the Global North, and then passed to the Global South through activities such as "capacity building."

This widespread term within the sector reinforces the idea that one group of people knows something the other does not know (de Bruin and James 2020). Indeed, when Northern thinkers "go South," as Hountondji points out, they tend to be in

> search not of knowledge but only of materials that lead to knowledge and, if need be, to a testing ground for their findings. They do not go searching for paradigms or methodological and theoretical models; rather, they go hunting for information and new facts that are likely to enrich their paradigms (1997, 11).

This is made explicit in the common terms used in international development, like "fieldwork." Northern researchers, akin to laboratory technicians, go to the "field" for "samples," not to gain knowledge; after all, they are at the top in the epistemic hierarchy.

Epistemic justice calls for all organisations, especially those from the Global North, to reflect on how their practices enable and sustain intellectual imperialism and how they can work to dismantle the epistemic hierarchy and together construct a fairer and more just system of knowledge creation and management.

Good Practice for Epistemic Justice: Christian Aid, Decolonising Evaluation: The Global Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team at Christian Aid has been in the process of decolonising their evaluation practice, recognising that colonial history, systems, and conceptions of knowledge and power have had a significant impact on how they carry out evaluations. In conversations with colleagues and peers across fifteen countries, they discovered that rather than being locally planned and led, evaluations were largely externally-driven and created in response to donor needs or external criteria. They found that evaluations ended up undervaluing the knowledge of local practitioners. Additionally, they observed that Eurocentric ways of generating knowledge were given priority over indigenous methods of knowledge creation and dissemination (Backhouse 2022).

In response to these findings, Christian Aid put together some recommendations towards a decolonial approach to evaluation practice that any organisation looking to decentre power and bring about epistemic justice could use. Importantly, these include learning from Global South practitioners and organisations who have already developed decolonial approaches to the issues being addressed. Among some of these innovative decolonial methodologies are oral, pictorial, and video reporting, thus expanding our "understanding of expertise, proactively seeking evaluators with lived experience of the intervention context" (Backhouse 2022).

Diverse and Ethical Representation

Decolonisation cannot happen without a third CEF, visible diversity, inclusivity, and ethical representation. At present, there is a serious diversity deficit in international development organisations headquartered in the Global North. In a 2018 study of charities in the UK, Inclusive Boards found that 62% of top charities in the UK by income (including CDOs) had all White boards and out of 2,000 senior leadership teams, only 5.3% of their members were non-White (Inclusive Boards 2018, 4). Roxane Gay famously stated that "we assume whiteness is the default because whiteness, historically, has been the default. This is one of the many reasons diverse representation matters so much. We need to change the default" (quoted in Bereola 2017).

Organisations within the international development space need to consider "what is needed and who is best placed to meet that need?" (Morris and Gomez de la Torre 2020). This representation extends to the way stories are told. The international development sector is rife with controversy around the portrayal of the Global South; examples include #Kony2012, Band Aid, MSF, and Comic Relief to name a few (Whitehead 2023; Cole 2012; Drury 2017; Faloyin 2022; BBC News 2019; New African 2015). There is an extra layer when it concerns Christian organisations and their vocabulary of rescue, which involves telling emotive and extreme stories that appeal to White Western Christians as ultimate saviours who must rise up to save global innocents abroad. As Swartz writes: "Theological language of sin, evil, goodness, and redemption proliferates. Metaphors of light and darkness abound. Promotional materials draw sharp dichotomies between rescuer and trafficker" (2019, 99). This can lead to more harm than good as context, culture, and collaboration are often disregarded.

Good Practice for Representation: Ethical Storytelling by Freedom Story: Rachel Goble, co-founder of The Freedom Story, a child trafficking and exploitation prevention organisation, describes a wakeup call conversation with a young girl-turned-lady, Cat, who was featured in a documentary that inspired the founding of the organisation. They learnt that despite the fact that the story was powerful, helped people understand the issues, and raised money, Cat did not want to be remembered by the world in the light she had been cast, and felt that her story had not been stewarded well (Goble 2017). This led to the founding of Ethical Storytelling (www.ethicalstorytelling.com), a collaborative project offering resources such as templates, workshops, webinars, podcasts, and other platforms for

exchanging ideas and best practices for storytelling work in the international development sector. These include, but are not limited to, obtaining deep consent, using sunset clauses, acknowledging power dynamics, being trauma-informed, and telling stories that balance the need to raise much-needed funds with the need to humanise and respect those at the centre of the stories. The ethos of this ethical storytelling movement is to be an "open sourced, nuanced, constituent first, donor second collective seeking to change the way we tell and consume stories" (Goble 2017).

Non-neutrality

The final CEF is non-neutrality. Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality" (quoted in Younge 2009). Notwithstanding, international development actors and indeed CDOs typically operate with the principle of neutrality, which is taken to mean not favouring any sides. By portraying themselves as neutral they disassociate themselves from the colonial legacy, embracing an "apolitical stance, whereby [they strive] to meet community needs without addressing underlying political causes, [mirroring] the colonial powers' relief efforts" (Peace Direct 2021, 20). The implication here is that local practitioners are unable to assist those in need of help in their communities since they are not objective and lack the competencies required for project leadership. As the authors of Peace Direct point out,

> The perceived neutrality and expertise of White Westerners positions them as benevolent humanitarians instrumental to the 'advancement' of the contexts they are operating in, reinforcing the 'White saviour' mentality that is pervasive across the sector (Ibid., 17).

For Christian organizations, neutrality is not an option, because Scripture calls upon us at all times and places to stand up for justice in support of the poor and oppressed. Though doing this wisely and well is never easy, and though it can take a lot of courage, it is clear that neutrality is not in line with biblical principles. Consider the following well-known passages:

> "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (The Holy Bible, Revelation 3:15-16)

> "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve…" (The Holy Bible, Joshua 24:15)

Good Practice for Non-neutrality: Throughout history, there have been examples of churches, Christians, and Christian communities embracing non-neutrality; from support of the Catholic Church for labour movements in South America (Daudelin and Hewitt 1995; Mészáros 1991), to the Salvation Army advocating to raise the "age of consent"[3] in the UK (Davis 2009; Hazzard 1998), to the Church opposing apartheid in South Africa (Burns 1977; Cowell 1985). In the same vein, CDOs should refrain from remaining silent in the midst of difficult conversations, including those around coloniality, racism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation that arise when working within a sector that aims to do "good" for others.

Conclusion

The critical enabling factors suggested in this paper are by no means exhaustive, but nevertheless a good starting point for Christian organisations and communities working within development looking to decolonise their practice. There is no order as to which should be more of a priority, but I consider lament to be the most important first step from which other CEFs will flow. The practice of lament gives agency to those who suffer from ongoing effects of coloniality. Through having the opportunity to share their story, their pain can be acknowledged, and they can begin the process of healing (Dickie 2019, 3). From lament flows non-neutrality, as it causes the community to weep alongside those who are hurting, "resist injustice and stand in the gap for the abused and afflicted" (Dickie 2021, 9). From non-neutrality, the need for ethical representation and epistemic justice becomes clearer.

As I noted at the outset, thinking through a decolonial lens starts with acknowledging (and lamenting) the role that the institutions we are affiliated with have played and continue to play in replicating legacies of colonisation. Through this process, we can work together to realise our decolonial quest for justice and healing, and to dismantle systems of oppression. As stated above, while we are not to blame for the past, the future is our responsibility.

[3] The age of consent is the age at which young people can legally consent to participation in sexual activity.

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Toluwanimi Jaiyebo-Okoro is a PhD student at The University of Nottingham researching decolonisation within Christian Development Organisations. She has worked within the field of international development for over eight years, in Nigeria and England, and her current role focuses on supporting churches across the world to respond to modern slavery and human trafficking in their communities.

Author email: Toluwanimi.Jaiyebo@nottingham.ac.uk