

# A Global Network

ENVISIONING  
OF MISSION STRUCTURES

## Will Tokyo 2010 Launch New Global Partnerships to Finish the Task?

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**T**oday, there are over 4,000 known evangelical mission agencies sending out 250,000 missionaries from over 200 countries. This is up from 1,800 known mission agencies and 70,000 missionaries in 1980. It is remarkable progress, and a powerful demonstration of global vitality and vision in the evangelical movement.

At the same time, less than 10% of these missionary resources are focused on the world's 2.7 billion living among the world's unreached peoples. The result of this imbalance is that over 3,000 unreached people groups remain without any missionary presence. Additionally, hundreds of large unreached people groups are still woefully under-engaged, leaving vast population-segments without any significant missionary activity. Since almost all of these same groups and population-segments were unreached and unengaged 30 years ago, it is safe to say that an entire generation of millions was left without any indigenous witness of the gospel.

Today, we have less excuse for not fulfilling the Great Commission than at any other time in history. We know who these 3,000 unreached and unengaged peoples are, where they are, their latest population and demographics, what languages they speak and where the closest believers are in

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neighboring peoples. There's no mystery in it. There's just one thing missing: agents of the Kingdom seeking to do something about it!

Is this an unacceptable reality? Those mission leaders who will be gathering at Tokyo 2010 will be there precisely because they believe another generation should not pass and these groups remain unreached. These leaders will represent well over 150,000 missionaries on the field. And perhaps more importantly, they will be responsible for deploying an additional 50,000 workers over the next ten years.

So the exciting potential is there: if mission agencies work together, we could see for the first time in history all peoples *fully* engaged with evangelism, church-planting, and disciple-

making efforts. This is the vision behind the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS), which was launched in its conceptual form in 2005 by a representative group of mission leaders from major international sending agencies. The principle behind the Global Network is basic: How can we take the gospel from where it is to where it needs to go in the most effective way possible? And more specifically: what is the unique role of mission agencies in facilitating a global movement within the Church to finish the task?

The global presence of followers of Jesus has opened up incredible possibilities for accelerating the full engagement of all peoples, perhaps even in the next decade. Equally, the global diaspora of peoples (both unreached peoples coming to live among reached peoples, and hundreds of thousands of evangelicals being sent by their companies to work in areas

	In 1980	Today
Known Evangelical Mission Agencies	1,800	4,000
Missionaries	70,000	250,000

such as the 10/40 Window), give unprecedented opportunities for equipping the entire Body of Christ to participate in reaching the final frontiers of the Great Commission.

At the same time, the gradual and steady breakdown of cultural and linguistic barriers between peoples is allowing new opportunities for the gospel to spread. In a recent case in South Asia, an American believer saw a movement to Christ among a totally unreached Muslim group by simply discipling two seekers, using only English and a translator. Ten years later there are now over 100 fellowships of Muslim-background believers.

In many areas of the world new paradigms such as this are resulting in incredible harvest. The traditional role of the missionary as a church-planter who spends years to learn the language and culture is giving way to the role of a catalyst who trains and disciples local believers to initiate house-church, lay-led movements among extended families and social networks. To be sure, such new paradigms are fraught with many challenges and risks! But at the same time they also hold great promise, and the potential for equipping millions of believers to act as such catalysts for Kingdom movements is growing with every new successful engagement.

American agencies now send out over 2,000 “tentmakers,” but obviously much more could be done, not just in the United States but around the world. We are only equipping a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of evangelicals who have already been sent overseas by multi-national corporations and companies. For this reason, one of the strategic purposes of the GNMS is to encourage the development of new mission networks and communities that will concentrate on recruiting, training and mentoring of previously untapped missionary potential such as this.

For example, might the next wave of new agencies and missionary orders specialize in equipping entrepreneurs for mission work in frontier regions? Imagine an agency that primarily recruits and facilitates Christian businessmen to start new companies overseas in the 10/40 Window. As has been proven in many cases, these companies can themselves become communities of faith when a spiritual breakthrough happens among them. In one such case, a businessman started a factory which began employing hundreds of people in the city that no one else would employ. Soon many came to faith in Christ, and a church was started right in the factory itself. And though technically no new churches could be legally established in this city, the

community was so impressed by this company that hired the unwanted, they honored the effort instead of shutting it down. Though a new paradigm for some, such developments are actually very close to how the early Church reached the Roman Empire in the first century. In those beginning years, *ekklesias* were not only spiritual communities, but economic communities as well.

Besides sharing and developing new paradigms and strategies for missionary deployment, there are many other needs that a Global Network can and should help address. Some that are being looked at presently are the following:

1. As the result of missionary work over the last hundred years, thousands of evangelical denominations have emerged in Asia, Africa and Latin America, many of which have thousands of local churches. But less than 80% of these groups have functioning mission sending departments. The Presbyterian Church in Mexico, for example, has 5,000 local churches and two million members, but no mission sending agency. Thus a huge part of the Body of Christ is not being tapped for global mission as it could be. In Korea, the 10,000-plus Presbyterian missionaries sent out from this nation might never have been sent had it not been for the dozens of pro-active Presbyterian agencies that recruited, trained and deployed them. Could these Korean Presbyterians be of help in assisting Presbyterian denominations around the world in developing their own mission sending programs?
2. Although we have excellent mission associations, such as CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange in the United States, there are no field counterparts of these entities. These groups bring together the directors of sending agencies to discuss issues primarily related to a home-base sending perspective. However, there is no forum on the receiving or incoming end for bringing together regional and national field leaders to discuss matters of field concern. Additionally, there is no forum for international directors of large mission agencies to come together to discuss issues related to global mission sending strategy, as well as the challenges faced by multi-national mission team efforts.
3. Africa and Latin America have only three national missions associations between them, and no regional-level mission association, unlike Asia, which has had one for years. A Global Network could serve as a forum for bringing together the leaders of mission associations around the world to help strengthen one another and cooperatively launch new associations where they do not exist.

Of course, these are just a few of the many areas that could be addressed by a Global Network of Mission Structures. But perhaps the most important and strategic area is the potential for seeing a concerted global movement of mission sending agencies to give every community of every people group access to the gospel in our generation. This is the hopeful vision of Tokyo 2010 and the many missions associations and agencies which are sponsoring it. f