



MANI 2011

Abuja, Nigeria

A Continental Commitment to World Evangelization



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Mission from the Rest

In 1981, Ralph D Winter predicted in his article *Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions* that the third Era of Protestant missions would be dominated by mission sending from the former mission fields of the non-Western world. The Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI) Continental Consultation held in Abuja, Nigeria September 5-9, 2011 was one more evidence that his foresight has become a vital reality. The consistent focus and zeal for world evangelization displayed in the plenary sessions hearkened back to the heyday of the unreached peoples focus seen in the Urbana student mission conferences in the 1970s and early 1980s. Unlike Urbana, MANI goes beyond motivating and connecting believers for involvement in frontier mission; it brings together key church and mission leaders to strategically plan and collaborate for the evangelization of all the remaining peoples within their respective countries. The movement also helps participants envision the role they could play in the greater task of world evangelization beyond their borders.

The Nigerian Church welcomed and hosted participants in this second MANI consultation, following on from the African Millennial Consultation in Jerusalem (2001) and the first MANI Continental Consultation in Nairobi (2006). Through worship, devotions, drama, testimonies, presentations, group meetings and informal



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conversations, they explored the blessings, challenges and opportunities in mission facing the African church.

About 525 participants from 45 African countries were joined by 89 global delegates. Most of the presentations were in English or French, but there were delegations from Portuguese, Spanish, Amharic and Arabic speaking countries as well.

The Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI)

As far back as 1974, the Ghana Evangelization Commission started a thorough survey of their country with the goal of establishing a nationwide vision for comprehensive "saturation church planting." Other countries like Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Kenya followed with similar efforts. In the 1990s, the AD 2000 Movement fanned the flames of emerging national mission movements. By the year 2000, African national initiatives were becoming the norm throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Niyi Gbade, representing FinTask Nigeria, told how their '87 survey revealed 520 people groups in Nigeria. By the year 2000, 400 of those peoples were adopted by 94 denominations. Today 140 of those people groups are engaged with ongoing evangelism and church planting efforts. The many case studies and reports showed that national initiatives follow a common and logical sequence: vision > research > mobilization > training > sending > church planting.

It became obvious by the end of the second day that while the African Church faces many issues and challenges, they have been leaders in strategic research for nearly three decades. The Country Assessment Process, which is verifying and updating the Joshua Project list of peoples on a country-by-country basis,



puts Africa at the forefront in terms of a comprehensive, continent-wide assessment of the task in term of peoples (see www.joshuaproject.net). Dan Scribner of Joshua Project told Willie Botha of South Africa, who is coordinating the Country Assessment Process, “I know of no other attempt to coordinate this type of survey for a whole continent.”

According to Botha, the current total for Africa is 3,768 people groups, 996 of which remain unreached. The country and regional breakout sessions discussed either how to finish the assessment process or how to work in partnership to act on the information already before them.

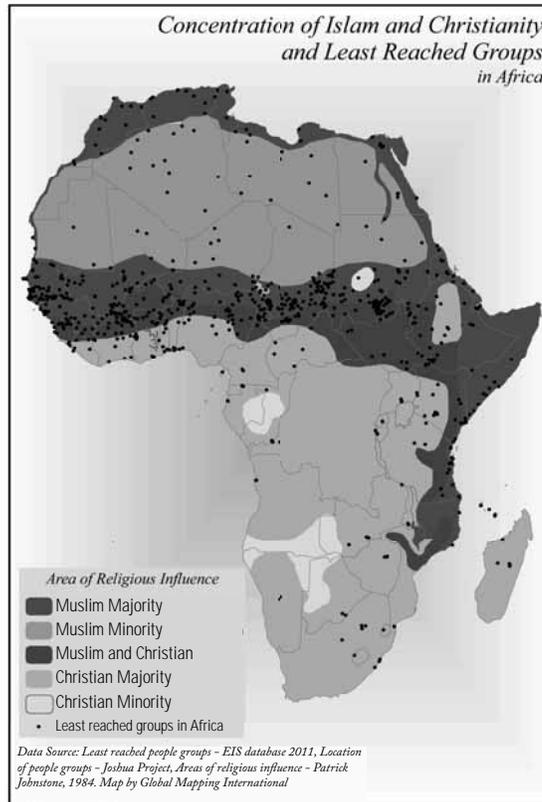
Global Partnerships

The spirit of the MANI movement is one of healthy partnership and mutual respect. The most notable was the time spent every evening honoring those who had made a significant impact on the growth of the Church in Africa. This included representatives of agencies with a long history in Africa like AIM, SIM, etc. It also included honoring those who had grown up as missionary children in Africa and had chosen to stay and serve throughout their adult lives. Also recognized were representatives of newer agencies like OC Int’l, Wycliffe, and the USCWM’s Joshua Project that have partnered with the national mission movements in ways that have been appreciated.

One of the topics that is unavoidable in any discussion of international partnerships is that of dependency. Foreign funding has both the power to achieve shared goals or diminish dignity and weaken local initiative. Instead of focusing on the problems caused by dependency, delegates were reminded how much God had blessed the African continent. In order to play a greater role in world evangelization, they were challenged to commit to the biblical ideals of generosity and stewardship.

Casting Mission Vision Within and Beyond

The challenge of increasingly aggressive forms of Islam in Africa was mentioned frequently. This is particularly a concern to the countries that straddle the contested belt between the Muslim-dominated North and the Chris-



tian-dominated South. It is this contested middle belt that contains the majority of the remaining least reached peoples, be they animistic or Muslim. (See map)

Because of the dominance of Christianity in the southern half of Africa, the catchphrase for casting vision is not surprisingly, “Go North!” The challenge Sub-Saharan Africans see when they look to the North is not only the Arab countries of North Africa, they see beyond the Mediterranean to a post-Christian Europe. Both of these contexts are quite different culturally from the “heart of Africa.” If Africans are going to be effective in evangelism and church planting as they send to the North, they will certainly have to learn how to do things differently from the methods they have used closer to home. But if the most important ingredient in opening the eyes of

the lost is seeing the faith lived out in good soil of lives filled with His Spirit, Africa has a lot to offer.

Africa’s Place in Mission History

Only three of the seven continents can reflect on their place in biblical history and the history of the church before the colonial era. The devotional messages were filled with insights about Africa’s place in the great story of the spread of biblical faith. Those educated only in a Western view of Church history have much to learn about the faith present on the African continent for more than two thousand years, particularly in the Horn of Africa.

The whole idea of unreached peoples may be falling out of vogue in many countries in the West, but it is alive and well in Africa, and for good reason. Ask someone in the U.S.A. what “people” they belong to and you will almost certainly get a blank stare. Ask most Africans, and they will name their mother tongue or tribe without hesitation. The vision of reaching every tribe, tongue, people and nation is a natural concept for Africans, and their commitment to the biblical mandate to “make disciples of all nations” is exemplary. The African “nations” are playing a greater role in God’s plan for “all nations” than ever before.†

To read the official summary of MANI 2011, download the MANI 2011 Declaration at www.maniafrica.com.