

# BUILDING MOMENTUM...

## Report from the Global Network of Centers for World Mission

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Over thirty years ago it was proposed at a world-level meeting known as Edinburgh 1980 that a network and movement of centers for world mission be formed which would do the following: research the unreached peoples; assess the potential harvest force; establish a global registry of unreached people engagement; develop and share resources, ideas, approaches and models; mobilize agencies and churches for frontier mission; facilitate inter-mission cooperation; coordinate training for frontier missions; sponsor regional and national frontier mission meetings; and equip frontier mission intercessors.

Since that time what has become known as the Global Network of Centers for World Mission (GNCWM) has been formed to link national mission centers around the world. In general terms, Centers for World Mission can be thought of as missional think tanks. Their job is to look at the big picture of what is happening to finish the task, propose solutions to problems and gaps, and help facilitate action to address any critical issues which are identified. The latter objective, which is the “missional” or activist part, is the distinguishing mark of a center for world mission (CWM).

In December of 2011, the GNCWM held a three-day gathering for such centers in South Korea. The time was spent focused on discussing issues related to strategy, mobilization and training. One day was given to each of these important areas. Though the papers of this gathering will be published in an upcoming edition of the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, a brief summary of each day is given here for *Mission Frontiers* readers, along with some of the key insights that were shared.

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### Strategy

The area of strategy dealt with field realities and the state of cooperation to finish the task. In his opening remarks to the gathering, GNCWM's lead facilitator Chong Kim placed strategy front-and-center for the network's attention. He challenged the delegates:

As we meet here in Korea . . . I submit that our highest priority is no longer frontier mission mobilization but strategy. Generally speaking, the global missions enterprise continues to recognize the need to focus on the remaining UPGs. What we are not sure about is how to reach them most effectively.

Kang-San Tan delivered the opening strategy paper which wrestled with why Westernized Christianity has been ineffective among the world's major religions. Among many keen observations, Kang stirred the network with this reality:

“There are so few genuine models of partnership whereby the dominance of wealthy Western partners give way to non-Western interests. Would Christians in Europe be ready to receive leadership from non-Western partners beyond tokenism? Given the new equilibrium of Christianity from the majority world, more could be done in promoting diversity in mission leadership.”

Also during this session, a proposal was made to see 500 field-based centers for world mission established in strategic areas around the world. These field CWMs would function in a very similar way to the traditional concept of a CWM, but they would have a specific focus on a particular unreached area or people group. Their purpose would be to serve the entire mission effort in that field area, including expatriate, national and indigenous pioneering activities, towards the end of seeing fully disciplined peoples. Among other activities, these field-based CWMs might do one or more of the following:

1. Identify strategic population segments for missionary engagement.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the gospel is impacting various identified sub-groups.
3. Investigate reported breakthroughs.

4. Track the progress of the gospel among every community (towns, villages, city neighborhoods) among the people group(s).
5. Facilitate the reaching of nearby smaller unreached people groups.
6. Serve as a liaison between the outside mission force and the indigenous church.
7. Act as a communication hub for sharing news and updates with both intercessors around the world as well as the church and mission community.

A model for one field-based center was presented by Dwight Martin, founder of the Thai Christian Resource Center. Dwight and his team have researched the entire country of Thailand, and have identified the major church-planting priorities for the whole nation. They have collected every evangelistic and discipleship resource ever made in Thai and digitized them, making available a whole library of resources to every pastor who wants it. His group has also been a champion among the expatriate community for bringing Thai leaders to the table when discussing strategy issues.

### **Mobilization**

The second day of the gathering was focused on mobilization, which related to equipping the Church for fulfilling the Great Commission. Two unique presentations were given from the Philippine and Korean contexts, both of which called for the total mobilization of the entire Church. Dr. Rey Taniajura of the Philippine Missions Association asserted that “God is refocusing our attention from the task to the goal—from simply doing missions to preparing the Bride of Christ—a turning point. This is evidenced by the focus on transformation and discipling of nations.” In other words, as we become more effective in engaging every part of the Body of Christ in carrying out the Great Commission within our own culture, we will be mobilizing and preparing them for mission in other cultures. For example, lawyers and doctors that become awakened to their mission as Kingdom ambassadors in their field can become effective in impacting lawyers and doctors in other cultural contexts. The same could be said of believers in the business world, education sphere, etc. To put it simply, a healthy Church will lead to healthy and effective global mission.

Dr. Yong Cho gave a report on the mobilization goals and strategies of the Korean Mission movement, which is one of the most dynamic, organized and unified mission forces in the world. Their goal is to deploy over 100,000 missionaries in the next 20 years, of which 90% will be sent to unreached peoples and frontier mission fields. They also plan to see 200 unengaged, unreached peoples

adopted by local churches every five years, and over 50% of all local churches in Korea with a strong missions program by the year 2030.

### **Training**

The third and final day of the GNCWM gathering focused on preparing missionary candidates for engaging unreached peoples. Mike Adegbile of the Nigerian Evangelical Mission Association challenged the network to rethink the traditional approach to mission education that has become predominant around the world. He cautioned, “Local training ought to be geared to local needs. Currently, most of what goes on is “one size fits all.” Even where you have training going on locally, it is still the Western institutional model.”

As a challenge to the traditional model, Gavriel Gefen gave an impassioned plea for resurrecting personal, incarnational mentoring in mission training. He also gave a call for teaching innovation, and training students to think outside the box. He observed of Dr. Ralph Winter’s style of education that he “taught mission the way engineering is taught.” Gavriel noted,

Instead of simply indoctrinating his students in how mission is done, he confronted them with problems that needed solving. It drove some of the other professors mad. He had far too many ideas. They just wanted him to teach the students how mission is done. Winter’s response was to establish the USCWM as, among other things, a missions think tank. One of the things he was already onto was the value of training through collaborative problem-solving. One hindrance to implementing this kind of training is that too many mission educators are career institutionalists and methodologists who lack experience in innovative problem-solving.

This call for innovation in mentorship resonated well with the network participants. While the Great Commission calls us to make disciples of all nations, the reality is that many of the missionaries we are sending out have not been disciplined themselves, nor are they being effectively mentored once they are deployed.

### **What’s Next**

An effort is being made to identify the new centers which God is raising up around the world. The GNCWM is making plans to hold regional meetings in the years ahead to strengthen these emerging centers. Additionally, online tools are being developed to assist the network in sharing ideas, resources, plans and concerns. A global-level meeting is being planned for 2014. <sup>f</sup>

Those interested in participating in the network should contact the GNCWM lead facilitator, Chong Kim - chong.kim@uscwm.org.