



Mobilizing the Filipino Diaspora for Effective Missions

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Can we finally fulfill the Great Commission in our generation? As we face the post-pandemic “age of artificial intelligence” for the next 10 years, can we look forward to better mobilization for more effective missions? More than a few of us are targeting “no people left undisciplined” by 2033, the 2,000th anniversary of Easter.

In the past 22 years, a significant segment of the Filipino church (mostly migrant laborers and immigrants) has been mobilizing our diaspora as tentmakers to fulfill our role in the Great Commission. The Philippine Missions Association’s (PMA) flagship program has aimed to raise the largest and hopefully the most effective Evangelical mission force among the nations from 2001 until now.¹

¹ At the Lausanne Forum at Pattaya in September 2004, the Filipino delegation publicly declared their commitment to deploy 200,000 missionaries (mostly OFWs as tentmakers) into the 10/40 Window by 2010, and in 2009 PMA extended it to 1,000,000 (that’s 10% of OFWs) by 2020.

What we have learned after having tried to equip a million tentmakers, largely consisting of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) by 2020 is to catalyze Kingdom Movements (KMs) through Disciple Making Movements (DMMs) among the Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in the world.² We estimate that at least 650,000 OFWs have been trained to use our basic tool called “Company 3” to do DMMs wherever they go to live and work.³

Further, in the last four years since Lausanne’s Global Workplace Forum was held in Manila from June 26–29, 2019, Lausanne Philippines Partnership built on

² On the history of PMA and its tentmaker mobilization, see Lim, D. 2013, October “History and Ministry of Philippine Missions Association: Leading the Global Shift to Tentmaker Missions,” *Asian Missions Advance* 41, 2–6.

³ Company 3 uses the oral Bible sharing format to learn from 30 chronological Bible stories. They can also download *The Jesus Movie* and film clips from www.jesusfilminternational.org, and discuss the clip’s relevance to their daily lives. Not many details can be shared due to security reasons.

this mission mobilization program and expanded it to two slogans: “Every Filipino a blessing disciple-maker,” and “Every Filipino church an Acts 1:8 church.”⁴ Along with our PMA mission catalysts, we are mainly counting on others from the Star Grass Coalition (the Phil. house church movement) and Micah Philippines (the alliance of Christian development organizations). We are praying and working together to mobilize the whole Filipino church to effectively share the whole Gospel with the whole world through our flagship program called Cooperatives as Mission.

Our Effective Missions

We have been holding mission training modules (called Kairos, a shortened Perspectives course) as our main tool to recruit more harvesters and mission mobilizers who can effectively catalyze KMs among the UPGs in the cities and villages of Asia and beyond. We believe that only KMs can realistically enable the Christian population to have better growth rates than their local population.

⁴ The Philippines is 92% Christian, with 82% Roman Catholics; and 88% of Roman Catholics and 94% of non-Catholic Christians (averaging 90% of the Christian population) consider themselves as those with “charismatic experiences.” Matheny, P. 2011, October. “Ferment at the Margins: Philippine Ecclesiology under Stress,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:4, 206.

With Filipino Christian presence in almost all countries of the world today, we need to send mobilization teams that are experts in discipling and empowering local Jesus-followers (persons of peace or POP) to multiply disciples in their communities and workplaces, just like what Paul did from Ephesus in two years: All in Asia (Minor), both Jews and Greeks heard the Word of God (Acts 19:8–10). Each KM will have multiplied to at least four generations of disciples making their own disciples (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

Our Kingdom Vision

And what’s the outcome we aim to be the result of this effective mission strategy? Those who are in persecuted contexts like China have the advantage of already-mobilized believers who are actually multiplying disciple-makers underground in their localities, perhaps still out of necessity rather than strategy. We need some mobilizers to train and empower them to do incarnational (1 Cor. 9:19–23)



and build non-extractive KMs (1 Cor. 7:17–20) intentionally for the conversion and discipling of whole families, communities, tribes, and nations.

We aim at “kingdomization,” where the socio-cultural and religious structures of each community are transformed into Christ-centered institutions and Christ-ward traditions that glorify God.

These resulting Jesus-following communities will be contextualized and look more like sects of their dominant religion, like the Jewish background believers of “the Way” (Acts 24:14) and Gentile believers called “Christians” (Acts 11:19–21) were in the early Church. These local disciple-makers will manifest kindness, honesty, and diligence as well as expertise or entrepreneurship—valuable assets in any culture—and rise to become servant-leaders in their communities and professions with no need to build their own religious structures. In fact, we aim at “kingdomization,” where the socio-cultural and religious structures of each community are transformed into Christ-centered institutions and Christ-ward traditions that glorify God.

Our Strategic Plan

Thus, we use a three-pronged strategic plan. First, just like Jesus trained His disciples to go from village to village, our field teams were told to stay long enough to find and disciple local POPs who can lead the KM in their region or people group (Luke 10:1–17). To disciple is to model, assist, watch, and leave (M.A.W.L.). As these new local Jesus-followers become leaders of DMMs in their neighborhoods and workplaces, they will naturally rise to become elders of their communities and networks. At the same time, out of their networks will rise natural leaders with organizing and managerial talents to get the households, villages, and cities transformed into Christ-centered sustainable communities (preferably in the form of cooperatives or communes, where Isaiah 65:21–23 and Acts 4:32–35 are institutionalized) from the bottom up.

Second, to spread DMMs cross-culturally, our KM catalysts enroll in a graduate program, work

at an expatriate job, or start a business in a foreign context (with a student, work, or business visa)—opportunities which will continue to abound in our globalized world. If faithfully implemented, they will have accomplished their goal of equipping a local team of POPs who will rise to become elders of the local, regional, or national KMs.

Third, there are already many diaspora Filipino Christians in the cities of many non-Christian majority populations, especially in Muslim, Communist, and Buddhist nations. Their second generations are bilingual and bicultural (they’re McGavran’s “bridges of God”). As our mobilizers train them to be cross-cultural disciple-makers among the locals, we can easily add thousands of new disciple-makers among the unevangelized peoples in the world today, and at zero-overhead missionary-sending cost.

Our Mobilization Challenge

The harvest is still plentiful, yet the workers are still few; so we must pray and work to send out more workers into God’s harvest (Matt. 9:37–38). We need to mobilize more KM catalysts to places where Christ is not yet known (cf. Rom. 15:18–20)!⁵ Even today about 86% of non-Christians still do not have Christian friends. Our challenge is to mobilize as many Jesus-followers as possible to do cross-cultural friendship evangelism to as many acquaintances as possible, and then to disciple their converts to become a POP to evangelize and disciple their circles of influence.

Even before the pandemic, many more opportunities arose for us to increase our mobilization efforts by just working from home. We have been building relationships online globally through group chats on social media, like Facebook Messenger, Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc. As a result, many of us have formed new friendships with potential mobilizers globally and have become best friends as we personally disciple them online to do DMM and mentoring them as they work with their converts toward becoming POPs and elders of communities or networks in their people groups and beyond.

⁵ We’re keenly aware that in mid-2022, the 24:14 movement estimated that there were only about 8,000 KMs out of the 40,000 that are needed to reach all the UPGs.

We've raised the standard high. We've insisted that we should not send harvesters who will slow down God's work anywhere. We already have the training programs in place for those who want to be equipped to become effective KM catalysts and mission mobilizers. Many of us have been doing this with huge success. My humble mission agency has sent more than a hundred DMM practitioners to China. Our best mobilizer recruited professional teachers to train ordinary college graduates (from various professions) to go as educational tentmakers (salaried by the universities) in the gateway cities of China.

Recently a Korean mobilizer we previously trained told me that his two underground training centers in China went online in 2018 and almost all the students and alumni have seen exponential growth in their respective house-church networks during the pandemic.

Using the internet and their smartphones, younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials) are more interested in doing mission from where they are, rather than traveling somewhere else. They can still be mobilized for DMM (albeit differently than when traveling far), as they can build friendships online with those of other cultures and become cross-cultural ambassadors of Christ, perhaps even more effectively and more speedily.

May the global mission family learn from our paradigm of mission mobilization. Let's focus on recruiting and training as many KM catalysts as possible, who can train as many Jesus-followers to gain expertise in making new friends with people of other faiths, one person at a time, to become persons of peace. Then, as a person of peace, they too disciple their friends and relatives in their communities and workplaces of their people group and beyond. Let them multiply organically. After all, DMMs start new DMMs.⁶

⁶ Coles, David. 2023 "Great News: Movements are Starting New Movements," *Mission Frontiers* 45:1, 4-5.



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Finally, we also have learned that this paradigm of effective missions looks so radically simple and different for those who have been used to traditional mission mobilization. We know it is hard to make paradigm shifts. I plead for patience and understanding that we avoid criticism and conflict with each other, allowing both approaches to grow—at least for the next 10 years. Let us bless each other's efforts to maximize whatever we believe God has called us to do. May God find us faithful and effective in accomplishing the Great Commission for His glory. *Maranatha.* MF