

Mission Leaders Critique “the World Christian Global ACTION Plan”



**Steve Richardson,
U.S. Director, Pioneers**

Helps to crystallize thinking and channel efforts

I believe that initiatives like the “World Global Christian Action Plan” help to crystallize the thinking of the global Christian community with regard to the unfinished task and serve to channel our combined efforts for maximum effect. Furthermore, practitioners in the field benefit greatly from global perspectives and plans generated by mission leaders and strategists.



**Frank Severn, General
Director, SEND International**

Concurs with much, but a cluster of concerns

While I cannot endorse the WCGAP because of its inclusive nature, and its commitment to reassign missionaries working in nominal Christian lands, I always rejoice to see plans to reach the great bloc of people living in lands where non-Christian religions dominate. I am specifically concerned about the way in which very important doctrinal differences are glossed over for the sake of unity. I am also concerned with the breadth of activities which are considered legitimate and necessary missionary activities such as liberation and conscientization.

Perhaps my greatest concern is the classification of Europe and Russia as reached (i.e., traditional Christian). One only has to work in these areas to realize that the vast majority of people have no idea of the gospel. Many have rejected all forms of Christianity, while others remain notional Christians without a clue regarding justification by faith alone, through grace alone. These areas need missionary activity.

I can concur with the majority of the goals set forth in the plan. I also concur with the great need for those of like faith to work together. We need to be working for Christ's Kingdom, not our own.



**Jim Montgomery, Founder
and Chairman,
Dawn Ministries**

Eight world evangelization goals on a coat hanger without a hook

Since goal-setting is an essential part of the DNA of Dawn Ministries and, I believe, a crucial component of any plan to complete the Great Commission in our time, I'm pleased to see this element included in “A World Christian Global Action Plan” as presented in *World Christian Trends*.

While all eight goals are vital in this majestic enterprise, I'm surprised that the one goal that would make all the others work has been left out. The glue that holds all the pieces together, the capstone that secures the arch, is, in my opinion, missing.

Again drawing on our experience in mobilizing the Church in scores of nations for a DAWN (Discipling A Whole Nation) strategy, we observe that a goal for the number of churches or congregations to be planted is the engine that drives all the other goals. Focusing on the multiplication of churches is the primary activity that produces the maximum number of new Christians rather than the other way around.

Time and time again we have seen goals for new converts fall short. The basic problem is that the goal is set for the number of people to be born again rather than the activity that will lead most directly and most significantly to reaching a goal for new converts.

Peter Wagner's oft-repeated statement that “church planting is the most powerful evangelistic tool under heaven” is not just a cute slogan but a reality backed by a growing mountain of evidence. The most direct way to reach the goals of a world that is 40% Christian and 20% Great Commission Christian, then, is to work towards a goal of a certain number of churches to be planted in the world, and a specific number for every “continent, region, country, province, city, district, town, denomination” and smaller sub-units.

This approach, in our experience, should be applied to the unreached peoples as well. I assume that when goal 7 targets “a church for every people,” it refers to a viable church that can reproduce itself within its culture. But this is way too indefinite.

For example, at the Amsterdam Conference in 2000, Indian delegations spoke of the unreached Ahir people. This segment of the Indian population numbers something like 57 million people scattered in 14 states with maybe 2,000 or more believers. To plant “a church” – even a viable, reproducing, multiplying church – would be almost insignificant in terms of the vastness of the task.

But a goal of, say, 57,000 churches for the Ahir, is the “specific, measurable, quantifiable, realistic, attainable and yet challenging” goal that would lead most directly to the Ahir becoming 40% Christian and 20% Great Commission Christian.

Furthermore, such a goal becomes the integrating factor for three other goals set in the WCGAP. It specifies what the one cross-cultural missionary sent by the 2,000 is going to do when he gets to the Ahir: he’s going to search out the approach that will be optimum in the multiplication of churches towards the 57,000.

And what will be the most strategic use of the 3% of Christian income that is targeted? The primary outcome of contributing to the multiplication of churches that will produce the number of Christians. Why do we need scriptures available in every language? Certainly for evangelism, but more importantly for the disciplining process of those new converts within the context of local churches.

My experience tells me that the eight really excellent goals are like eight objects strung from a coat hanger without a hook. A goal at every level for the number of churches to be planted is the hook that integrates and makes viable all the other goals.



Bob Blincoe, U.S. Director, Frontiers

Reinventing the “axle” envisioned?

American mission agencies have begun to develop, independently from one another, plans to accelerate their efforts to evangelize this or that part of the unreached peoples mosaic. Now comes a proposal from the editors of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* for a breathtaking cooperative effort to finish the task of world evangelization. (This should sound familiar to the readers of *Mission Frontiers*. The U.S. Center for World Mission has long advocated the completion of the task of church-planting among unreached peoples through collaborative efforts.) If we failed before, it was a failure of nerve; it takes more courage to cooperate than we had in decades before the year 2000. Let’s have no more sentimental prose about the need to cooperate. Let’s meet, and let’s keep the end in mind, and let’s move ahead the world evangelization agenda.

I think Barrett and Johnson are right: the task remaining will need an axle to run on. That axle is the neutral, crucial “large organization requiring substantial resources” that they propose. Hmmm. That sounds like the U.S. Center for World Mission movement, doesn’t it? If we invented a neutral, crucial “large organization” such as the one the Barrett and Johnson envision, doesn’t it sound like

a fully-staffed version of what we already have in Pasadena?

Barrett and Johnson’s plan to line up all the wheels of the mission industry, “a plan built on facts” that the *World Christian Encyclopedia* has magnificently assembled, is our best chance to complete the measurable tasks remaining in obedience to the Great Commission.



Robert Sayer, U.S. Director, Arab World Ministries

Appreciate the efforts, but cannot support

I want to make it clear that my comments regarding the WCGAP are my own, as a mission leader, and they

do not reflect the opinions of other leaders within Arab World Ministries (AWM). While I am supportive of the WCGAP’s overarching goal of world evangelization, I have several reservations about the plan and its implementation.

Obviously, it’s good to set goals, and the “8 global goals” are surely “faith” goals! I affirm these goals enthusiastically with the caveat of withholding my affirmation of goals #1-3 until I would receive a satisfactory clarification on what the WCGAP defines as a “Christian” and what is meant by being “evangelized.” Such clarification on the definition of key terms is critical to my assessment of the WCGAP goals. Furthermore, I want to make clear that while I support the goals of the WCGAP, I do not affirm its implementation plans.

Goal-setting and strategic planning are valid and well-advised. Our agency has a 5-year strategic plan for raising up, resourcing and servicing new workers among Arab-world Muslims both abroad and in the U.S. When considering a worldwide evangelistic goal, I think that a longer time frame can be appropriate. I would want such a plan to be an encouraging catalyst rather than an imposing directive.

It is regarding the recommended action steps for mis-



sion agencies that I have the greatest concern about the WCGAP. My concerns focus on two areas with regard to implementation: the WCGAP's comprehensive centralization and its ecumenical posture.

I think there is great value in having a worldwide tracking system of missionaries, missions work and the task remaining as specified, for instance, in the number of remaining unreached people groups. However, I also think that centralizing the analysis and strategic planning of worldwide evangelization is potentially dangerous. Such a comprehensive effort is a lofty goal, but it could yield an ecumenical, overbearing and unwieldy structure that ends up wasting resources. I would not be comfortable with providing the resources and personnel required of this structure and of participation in the WCGAP. Nor would I agree to the stipulations for requisite cooperation in the promotion of the WCGAP and its goals.

Enhanced effectiveness is not necessarily a by-product of massive centralization. The history of missions is filled with wonderful examples of how God has used individuals and independent mission organizations to accomplish incredible evangelistic and church-planting advances. AWM has participated in networking alliances and strategic partnerships for decades. Our current international recruitment model centers around partnering with indigenous and other international agencies, rather than around establishing new AWM "sending" bases in multiple countries. So I am not opposed to working in cooperation with others. But the WCGAP model, unless I am misinterpreting it, appears to have the intention of usurping the goals, plans, personnel and resources of other organizations for its own vision of world evangelization and the definitions and strategies entailed therein.

In addition, I am concerned about the inclusion of Roman Catholic, Orthodox and liberal/neo-evangelical groups in the WCGAP's vision of partnership for world evangelization. I would not support association or cooperation with non-evangelical groups such as these in evangelistic programs or projects. Furthermore, I do not agree that evangelism includes "conscientization"

or "liberation," and while I am supportive of holistic ministries that include relief and development initiatives as incorporated within gospel proclamation (meeting both spiritual and physical needs), I fear that inclusion of "social agendas" in the WCGAP's definition of evangelism sounds more like the agenda of the World Council of Churches than a truly evangelical body.

In conclusion, I want to say that I appreciate the efforts of those who put together the WCGAP; however, I cannot affirm the plan in its current form, nor do I wish to support it.



Colin Stott, U.S. Director, Gospel Recordings

Valuable to link goals to dates

I think the "8 Global Goals" are worthy goals to set. I feel that we should be setting the bar higher in increasing participation by the Body of Christ in the Great Commission, but these goals as stated are realistic and show growth on all fronts.

From my perspective, having worked with Gospel Recordings for 28 years, I would expand goal #8 to include audio versions of scripture as well as evangelism and discipleship teaching. It may be an unrealistic goal to translate and print scriptures in every language, bearing in mind that thousands of languages are spoken in the world and a significant percentage of them are unwritten languages. The audio emphasis for those with an oral tradition makes the good news in every language more of a realistic possibility.

As to the value of goal-setting related to AD 2025 or other dates, I think that linking goals to dates usually helps us to accomplish more than we would have if we hadn't attached a time frame to it. And by setting three-year or five-year goals, we can break a large project into smaller, bite-sized pieces. However, we must be careful not to give the impression that the dates we use are set in cement or come from God. A case in point would be the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement: I don't believe we reached the goal of a church for every people by 2000, but I believe we are a lot closer to that goal than if the movement had not set any target date at all.

Our own mission has set a goal to have the good news available in 8000 languages and dialects by 2010. We are currently at the 5500 mark. We are considering a 2020 goal (2020 Vision!), perhaps to have the gospel in every language and dialect by then.

I think the WCGAP's recommended actions steps for mission agencies are good. I especially like #62 – that we publicize that our work is part of a larger whole. The more we can work together in partnership rather than in competition, the better.

