

PART I**GLOBALIZING MISSIONS: PARTNERING & AFRICAN CULTURE, A BMB
EVANGELIST & ASSESSING AN INSIDER APPROACH TO MINISTRY**VIEWING OUR PARTNERSHIPS
THROUGH OUR PARTNERS' EYES

by Keith Fraser-Smith, former Director of Globalization

Introduction

During the last seven years seven new Partnerships have been approved by AWM's International Council. In the same period one Partnership was amicably dissolved at the request of the Partner. Six of these new Partnerships have been made outside Continental Europe and four are from the New Sending Regions of the world; Latin and South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

In the same period the number of missionaries from our International Partners has almost doubled from 28 to 54 adults, representing 14.9% of our current membership. Through the Department of Globalization (formerly called the Department of Global Mobilization) our Partners now contribute around 25% of new mission members annually.

In recently approved agreements the following clause has been included, 'The cooperative process will be evaluated annually.' This article sets out to give the reader an overview of this process at work and is based on responses from our Partners to a list of open questions (See Endnote).¹ The responses were either submitted in writing or written-up from personal conversations on Skype or face-to-face. They have been edited to fit the article and actual quotations are indicated with quotation marks. Rather than referring to the title of the contributor I have used the agency's name (See the full names of our Partner agencies in this endnote).²

Finally, being aware of the different cultural ways of expressing opinions and the sensitivities of the potential readers who might recognise actual situations, especially in the challenges section, I have been as diplomatic in my wording as possible without evading the important point being made.

Perceived Benefits of Partnership

Through the eyes of our Partners we begin by looking at the perceived advantages of partnership. From a Christian perspective, working with and



through a partner is 'a fundamental principle of operation' for DMG.

Partnership between mission agencies increases the potential of additional field opportunities, especially for those organizations that do not have a presence in the Arab world or in countries where AWM has significant diaspora ministry. SMG sums it up when they write, 'We can place workers in the Muslim world.'

Our Italian Partner IM says that the partnership gives 'greater exposure to the needs of the Arab world and access to a mission opportunity for Italians.' SIM (East Asia) writes that through our partnership with AWM we are 'entering into the Arab speaking countries where SIM is not active.'

LAMM describes our partnership as, 'Having opened the door of the Arab world to Mexico.' In their context, they say that 'the partnership with AWM gives their mission credibility within the context of the worldwide missions community.' A twofold result of this improved standing has been a significant increase in the number of candidates applying to their mission and the number of missionaries being sent cross-culturally from Mexico. LAMM also appreciates the way the Department of Globalization staff work alongside them in mobilization. LAMM is co-directed by a husband and wife team and they have valued attending (separately) AWM's International Orientation (IO) programme and Interface (mission-wide conference in 2008) where they could get a first-hand experience of our organization.

For several of our Partners, partnership provides resources and empowers missionaries to fulfil God's calling in the Arab world. CAPRO writes that they appreciate AWM's 'IT services and information sharing on service opportunities in the Arab world.' Satisfaction was voiced in the way missionaries are orientated to AWM, assigned, integrated into teams, receive fellowship, and provided with member care. DMG said that, 'In the context of team life the missionary's potential is released through the complementarity of member gifting.' A 'lone or detached' missionary would lack the accountability that is provided by the partner. The VDM comment was that, 'The missionaries are integrated into a team and identify with AWM's ministry and work.'

PIOZ commented that they had 'confidence that seconded PI workers are working with like-minded AWM workers. For them this is particularly relevant where there are no PI teams.' PIOZ also emphasized that 'The privilege of working with AWM teams rather than duplicating existing ministries' is a benefit of partnering.

As part of the global family of God, partnerships foster relationships between personnel at every level, from agency leadership to field missionary, bringing fresh insights. Today the globalization of missions is a movement of God that cannot be ignored. One agency spoke of their reliance on the strategic leadership

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and pastoral care of AWM. The PIOZ contributor spoke of the 'accurate information about the Arab world.'

Where applicable, several of our Partners mentioned that they had benefited from our financial assistance in the areas of publicity, hospitality and Partnership Fund bursaries for missionaries to attend International Orientation and to study Arabic. Finally, there is the blessing of sharing in what God is doing through AWM.

But there are problems and challenges in being partners and to this subject the article now turns.

Challenges in the Partnerships

The main frustration experienced by our Partners is that the flow of communication has not always been regular, especially from the Field. SIM (East Asia) illustrates this by writing, 'More frequent dialogue and communication about the workers and their issues will be helpful.' IM expresses a felt need shared by some other Partners for more general information, 'As a partner organization we would benefit from more user-friendly resources being made available. Multimedia presentations, literature and events should be developed with multi-lingual, multi-cultural users in mind.' The correspondent continued, 'Communication is also an area where the relationship could develop. We could do with receiving a specific news/ministry update where opportunities, news items and needs are highlighted. Something brief that might be able to be circulated in our country.'

Another area of concern is that AWM's strategy development has not been communicated frequently enough to the Partners. It is not sufficient to assume that the seconded missionaries will update their missions with AWM's developments. One agency, DMG, stressed the need for strategic level information about AWM as they help provide a bridge between the missionary and the sending churches. Unless the Partner understands the 'broad vision' as well as the 'team visions' it is hard for them to meet the expectations of the sending churches. The Partner's role is to come alongside the sending churches and to help them understand what the missionaries are doing. This interactive process becomes a training opportunity for the local church. It helps sending churches to grow in their missiological understanding.

There is a request for streamlining the application process. PINZ puts it this way, 'Past investigations have revealed accessing AWM field information on behalf of enquirers to be more difficult than from our agency's teams, e.g. the practice of requiring enquirers to complete pre-application forms before information can be obtained. In this day and age it can deter many enquirers.' LAMM has found that for Latinos the whole process is complicated and that taking them through the procedure takes time. This is partly due to the necessity to work in English. CAPRO voices a related issue when they write, 'The initial understanding and workings of the partnership agreement (were a challenge).'



The English language requirement for candidates is also a challenge to SIM (S Korea) and to IM. SIM, in both South Korea and East Asia, adds that the financial support package for missionaries seconded to AWM is high compared with other S Korean and East Asian mission agencies, especially when both AWM and SIM's administrative fees are taken into consideration. SMG and IM also mentioned the cost of sending missionaries through the Partnership. SMG said that 'The AWM conference which is compulsory³ has also been a problem in the past because it is very expensive.' Another financial concern is mentioned by CAPRO: 'A common problem among all (our mission workers) relates to lack of clarification on the financial policies of AWM, e.g., the Field Administration Fund.'

SIM (S Korea) also points out that denominationalism is very strong in S Korea and that international missions compete with denominational missions for candidates. Denominations are reticent to release their mission candidates to other organizations and they want to set the agenda for their missionaries if they do. Both SIM (East Asia) and SIM (S Korea) refer to the cultural barriers when serving alongside Western workers.

The foundation of effective partnership is personal interaction between leaders that builds trust and confidence. It was agreed that the busy schedules of leaders often militates against this essential process. IM writes, '(There is) difficulty in assigning quality time and creative input to develop the partnership further. One of the challenges we face is how to recruit Italians and how best to potentially use AWM teams/personnel.'

Another comment from IM relating to a Short-Term placement highlights the challenge of working in a multi-cultural team, 'The one short-term missionary generally enjoyed her time with AWM but two major areas of concern emerged. One relates to the issue of team dynamics (leadership, roles, conflict management) that is probably linked to the context of a multi-cultural team. The second area relates to precise information and job descriptions. Not all missionaries are self-starters and a more structured use of time might have been an option to be better developed.' IM further expressed concern about how full-time missionaries in diaspora contexts allocate their time.

This is a constant challenge.

Finally, PIOZ noted an issue distinctive to their situation where there may be a PI team in the same country as a PI missionary is seconded to AWM, 'Who is the PI worker directly accountable to, PI leaders in the area/region or AWM leaders or both?'

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Resolving personnel problems

The partners were asked to suggest how some of the personnel problems their people have encountered within AWM could be resolved or overcome. It is acknowledged by all the Partners that handling personnel issues is very complex as it involves personality, cultural, and team dynamics. There have been occasions when the process of resolving personnel issues has not been handled in the best manner and there is always room for improvement. One mission suggested that we need to build into the process opportunities for feedback and debriefing with the missionaries and the Partner agency leadership.

PIOZ wrote, 'That problems can be overcome by ensuring that expectations and protocols are clearly defined before new workers depart (from their home country).' SIM (East Asia) invites, 'AWM to relax the rules somehow if there is a situation where English can be effective in reaching out to the people (in the Arab world).'

Factors limiting international partnerships in general

Several agencies responded to this question by pointing out that financial constraint, physical distance and the work loads of mission leaders limits the necessary face-to-face contact that is the building block of trust and an effective working relationship.

Two Partners used almost the same words (combined here in one quote) to describe the limitations on effective partnering: 'Differences in ministry focus, organizational culture and ethos, practice, policy, and cultural nuances.' PIOZ noted that 'leadership style may also be a determining (limiting) factor.' CAPRO mentioned three areas: '(1) Lack of trust and mutual respect, (2) lack of clear agreement on financial and operational issues and (3) lack of recognition and acceptance of uniqueness of partnering agencies.'

Other Helpful Comments

'Partnership is the key to the future', said DMG. However, the correspondent added that the future is for 'flexible' partnerships. VDM wrote, 'We would like to say that we appreciate the partnership with AWM very much and our experience over the years has been of cooperation and goodwill between AWM and VDM. The current system of 'seconding' missionaries to work with partners is running well.'

IM writes, 'I believe partnership to be the way forward in missions. Maximizing of expertise and energy is essential. Sharing resources is the most appropriate way ahead. In a new globalized world, globalized partnerships must develop.' IM adds that 'It tends to go in waves and be reactive. When a potential recruit comes forward then the partnership becomes more relevant. At that time areas of need and opportunity are detailed and some creative, strategic thinking goes on as to how to develop the partnership further.'



SIM (East Asia) writes, 'As a whole, SIM EA is happy with partnership with AWM. We are pleased to have the entry into countries that we are not experienced in.'

CAPRO writes that the resolution of challenges has been achieved, 'through patience, open communications and mutual respect between the leadership of both missions and their missionaries' and also writes, 'I must say that we as CAPRO have enjoyed the partnership between us and particularly appreciate the support, understanding and encouragement from the leadership of AWM.'

Conclusions

The overall health of our partnerships appears to be reasonably good but there is room for improvement. Trust between partners is essential and this is developed by personal contact between members of the agencies, especially those in leadership, a transparent information flow and the effective implementation of promised services.

The request for information is high on our Partners' agendas. Currently, all the English-speaking National Offices are asked to send their regular publications to all our Partners at the expense of the Department of Globalization. However, this appears not to be sufficient or else something may have gone wrong with the procedure. (A recent check with our three English-speaking National Offices suggests that we can do better.) The current agreements encourage Partners to customize the materials that we produce but this is not often pursued. In some instances AWM has contributed financially to such projects. There is a limit to the human and financial resources within our organization to provide more advanced and sophisticated resources.

I was expecting issues of culture to dominate the interaction but agency ethos, which has a strong cultural dimension, is the prevailing determinant in the effectiveness of the partnership relationship. An agency's ethos determines the expectations of the partnership, the process of placement and the ongoing accountability for their missionaries, including pastoral care. As the main conduit of information for our partners and their members, especially during the placement phase, our Personnel Department has been required to be flexible. Mature missionaries with field experience coming through CAPRO can be very different from Latin Americans who are coming to the Arab world for the first time and applying with limited English-language ability. There are those agencies like SIM (East Asia) that have very similar procedures to our own and other agencies with whom we have mutually adapted the application process.

The area where culture often plays a role is in the financial sphere. Agencies have different policies and guarding the integrity of both parties is not always easy. For example, from a Western, individualistic perspective, currently the dominant perspective in AWM, we do not want any of our members to suffer financial hardship on the field that could lead to suffering, economic disparity

and potential discomfort in a multi-cultural team. From collectivist cultures, especially those of sub-Sahara and Latin America, financial hardship is naturally shared between team members and 'living by faith' is the immediate response.

Our current International Orientation (IO) for new mission members is a strong feature of our partnership programme and is appreciated by all the Partners. Further, the Partnership Fund has enabled those coming from countries with weaker economies to participate in International Orientation (IO) and cover Arabic learning fees for up to two years. The first facilitates bonding to AWM and the latter provides life-long language tools for ministry.

It ought not to be a surprise that where we have not engaged physically in mobilization, i.e., mobilisers alongside partners, we have, in general, seen very few candidates. The exception to the rule would be CAPRO. Our European partners (DMG, SMG and VDM) do not have the mechanisms for co-mobilization and rely on the recommendations of serving missionaries in AWM or good report from others. Our Pioneers partners in Australia requested mid-term missionaries from the field, who could contribute to their three-week mobilizing programmes. In spite of the promise of all expenses paid tentmakers could not be found who would commit this length of time, especially with the addition of a period with our other Pioneers Partner in New Zealand. Who could blame them when they may only have a four-week annual vacation and have to fit in deputation too?

Those who have participated in an AWM event, like IO or a conference, are probably better informed about the ethos of the organization than others. Inviting Partner CEOs to participate in AWMI Leaders and/or IC meetings helps but as there may be three years between invitations this may not be frequent enough. In addition, generally only those with serving missionaries have been invited and the focus has been on the New Sending Countries.

Finally, several financial issues have been highlighted in the article, especially the additional cost of participating in a Partnership and the necessity for transparent policies.

Action Points

It is evident from the responses of some agencies that we are not providing them with enough information. For example, one Chief Executive Officer said that he would like to receive copies of the biannual Area and Media Reports and Dr David Lundy's executive summaries of AWMI Leadership and IC meetings.

One agency would like to receive press releases and articles written for the public domain that, if necessary, could be translated and circulated. As noted above, other multi-media productions would be helpful too. Recent AWM staff appointments in the area of Communications could make some of this possible but much of the local customization will remain the responsibility of the Partners.



There are a number of further action points that arise from the research for this article:

1. There needs to be a review of how the financial policies are communicated to Partners as well as the policies.
2. We need to create more opportunities for our Partners' CEOs and their delegates to attend AWM events.
3. We need to keep under review the way we mutually exercise debriefing, especially where there have been misunderstandings and/or a perceived failure to meet expectations on the part of either organization.
4. In some instances we may need to be prepared to make more mobilizing visits at the request of our Partners.
5. Finally, it is going to be necessary that in order to provide greater mobilization assistance to our Partners that more AWM mission staff will need to participate in the globalization process.

I want to close by saying what a privilege it is to be at the heart of a network of mission leaders who partner with AWM to reach Muslims of the Arab world and, through God's grace, plant churches of believers. My prayer is that as AWM merges with Pioneers that the lessons that we have learnt together would be put into practice in the new relationship.

1 The questions asked:

1. Name of Partner
2. Length of official partnership with AWM
3. Current number of adult missionaries placed with AWM (excluding short-termers)
4. What benefits have your organization received from the partnership?
5. What benefits have your missionaries placed with AWM received?
6. What problems and/or challenges have your organization encountered / come across?
7. How have these problems and/or challenges been overcome / resolved?
8. What problems and/or challenges have your missionaries placed with AWM encountered / come across?
9. How have these problems and/or challenges been overcome / resolved?
10. How could the relationship be enhanced / grown / developed from the perspectives of the organization and the missionaries?
11. What factors limit international partnerships?
12. Any other comments.

2 AWM Partner Agencies:

PIOZ – Pioneers Australia
 PINZ – Pioneers New Zealand
 DMG – Germany: Deutsche Missionsgemeinschaft
 VDM – Germany: Vereinigte Deutsche Missionshilfe
 SMG – Switzerland: Schweizerische Missions-Gemeinschaft
 CAPRO – Nigeria: Calvary Ministries
 LAMM – Mexico: Latinoamérica al Mundo Mexico

IM – Italy: Italian Ministries

SIM (East Asia) – Singapore

SIM (South Korea) – South Korea

- 3 **Clarification** – AWM conferences are 'strongly encouraged' but not compulsory. We encourage all missionaries to make provision for conferences in their budgets. Some missionaries coming from the Majority World have had partial bursaries to help cover the expenses of these events

SOME COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS ON AFRICAN CULTURE: A COMPILATION OF PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICAN BROTHERS & SISTERS

Compiled & Edited in November 2009 by Brother Keith (Fraser-Smith)

Introduction

This paper is a commentary on sub-Saharan African culture that is *collective* for both practical and cultural reasons. It needs to be practical as all the contributors are very actively engaged in local ministry and also cultural because the roots of African culture are collectivist rather than individualist and our working together makes manifest this fact. To avoid being accused of stereotyping the beliefs, values and behaviour that are the cultural 'software of the mind'⁴ we have deliberately called the article '*Some collective thoughts on African culture*'. There are four main reasons for not attempting to be more definitive in this assertion.

Firstly, every one of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries is different and within every country there exist many subgroups. Wikipedia estimates that over 2,000 languages are spoken in Africa, underscoring the diversity of this huge continent.

Secondly, the spectrum of traditional to post-modern behaviour is very broad and many of the contributing correspondents wrote about the rapid changes that are happening within sub-Saharan African culture. European colonialism has had a lot of influence on African culture. Among the professional, political and business elites tradition is being supplanted by Western attitudes and behaviour. The general thinking is that to be civilized is to be westernized.

Thirdly, the contributors only represent about 5% of the African countries.

Fourthly, the transformation that Christ brings in the African believer's life cannot be underestimated. One contributor wrote this: 'When I saw your questions I was taken aback because now that I am a new creature in Christ I

