

Copyright Policy

Please note *Seedbed's* copyright policy as set out below:

- ♦ To reprint an article that has been previously published elsewhere and so acknowledged in *Seedbed*, contact the original publisher and the author for permission.
- ♦ To use any other article from *Seedbed*, ask permission of the editor. The text must not be altered and an acknowledgment must be made of both the author and *Seedbed*.

The above procedures apply whether you wish to publish the material as hardcopy or post them online.

A Perspective on Globalization

by KMF-S

There is one thing of which we can all be certain in today's world and that is change. Globalization is one of those areas in which change is rapid. In the introduction to his 2006 edition of *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas Friedman writes, 'Why go through all the trouble of writing an expanded and updated version of *The World is Flat* only a year after the book was first published? I can offer a very brief answer: because I could and because I must.'¹

When we think of globalization, we primarily think of two things: the McDonaldisation of the world and the new age of IT connectivity. But what is globalization as it relates to mission? It is the expansion of cross-cultural missions due to the exponential growth of the church in the Majority World, greatly improved access to information, increased human mobility, and enhanced economic resources.

But globalization brings with it challenges. There is no question that multi-cultural teams require new management skills. Misunderstandings are multiplied when additional nationalities are introduced into Western teams that may already face cultural and communication difficulties between Europeans and North Americans (USA and Canada). Even when the international partners are European, there can be differences of corporate culture with some allowing for greater individual choice than others.

Sending and receiving agencies may have similar doctrinal statements and manual policies, but there are always subtle nuances that can result in tension. The greatest frustrations can come with financial expectations as Western individualism encounters the Southern Cone's collectivism. Many Western mission personnel expect their Majority World counterparts to be financially self-sufficient so that when their team members' home support falters, cutting into an already pared-down salary, or when illness strikes their colleague who has minimal health insurance, they are confused by the cultural assumption that they will contribute.

This article seeks to put these challenges into context in order to demonstrate that the additional human and material resources required in missional globalization are worth the sacrifice in order to deliver a more effective witness in the Arab world. At all times our primary motive should be to bring glory to God and to enable the new sending countries to do the same.

Living in a new world

God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, is doing a new thing. He is raising up Christian men and women from everywhere to go everywhere with the Christian message of salvation.

No longer is the centre of missions the Western world of North America and Europe. Today that centre has

shifted east to Asia and China and south to Africa and Latin and South America.

Patrick Johnstone, the editor of the book *Operation World*, has written,

It is only in the last century that this has been reversed. In 1960 there were 672 million [Western] Christians and only 370 million non-Western Christians. By 2000 this had become 810 million and 1172 million, respectively (59%). By 2040, if the decline in the West and increase in non-West continues, this would become respectively 657 million and 1917 million (75%).²

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

Revelation 9:7a (NIV)

Countries that once received Christian workers are now sending mission workers to other countries. We call these nations the New Sending Countries, the Two-Thirds World or the Majority World (preferred description).

Christian workers are crossing African borders to take the Gospel from Nigeria to the UAE, from the Philippines to Morocco, from Brazil to Jordan. In the Arab world, Christian Arabs are going from Egypt to Yemen and from Jordan to Morocco. Mainland Chinese are going to the Middle East.

AWM and globalization – a brief historic overview

During the last fifty years, our mission has experienced three distinct stages of globalization though the archives reveal that even before World War II the mission

included the occasional non-British worker. The first stage resulted from the exposure of American GIs to Europe and North Africa during World War II. The missionary vision of returning Christian soldiers was broadened and challenged. NAM³ mobilising offices were established in North America. Beginning in 1948, Harold Fife revived work in the USA which Dr. Francis Steele then so successfully developed. Fife also established an Auxiliary Council in Canada.⁴

The second stage was precipitated in the 1950s and 1960s with the end of colonialism in North Africa. NAM's media work relocated from Algeria and Tunisia to Marseille, France in 1964. The Field Director and the International Secretary moved to southern France from Morocco in the last half of the 1960s. (The International Secretary was expelled from Morocco in 1967.) The French office of the mission was registered as MENA in 1982. Other Europeans showed interest, including the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. It was in this period that an International Development Fund levy was introduced to help the General Director to travel, including visiting our European partners.

The third stage began in the mid 1990s with the adoption of a pro-globalization policy and the appointment of a full-time Director of International Development (now called the Director of Global Mobilisation). This policy has been reaffirmed in the current five-year plan as one of the six visions. There are agreements with ten official international part-

ners as well as placement agreements with denominations and churches for other mission workers. Over ten percent of the mission's membership comes from non-company entities.

AWM and globalization – six contributing factors

The following six factors are associated with globalization. Some of the reasons are peculiar to AWM and to the Arab world. Hopefully, those reading this article from a different context will find a helpful comment or insight that will be relevant to their particular context.

Firstly, globalization is a value held by AWM.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2:28 (NIV)

There are currently over thirty nationalities in the mission, embracing citizens from the USA to Australia, from Syria to Brazil and from the UK to Singapore. The variety of nationalities and their numbers increase every year. Over half the appointees at this year's (2006) International Orientation were from agencies with which AWM has a Partnership or Placement Agreement.⁶

Secondly, globalization is responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:21 (NIV)

There is a movement of the Spirit of God worldwide that is convicting men and women that they must share the Christian message beyond their own

national borders. This movement is driven by the physical growth of the church in the Majority World, a greater access to information – especially through the Internet, increased mobility and global economic growth.

OM has been an international mission since its beginning in the 1960s but in the last ten years there has been a rapid expansion in the number of other international mission agencies establishing mobilising and sending bases in countries where they planted churches or had significant input into the life of the church.⁷ But more specifically, there has been a particular emphasis on mission workers from the Majority World.

The most recent reignited initiative⁸ has come from the mainland Chinese churches, registered and unregistered, and is generically known as the Back to Jerusalem Movement. The story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun, told in *The Heavenly Man*⁹ and promoted through Brother Yun's international speaking engagements, has galvanised the Christian public. Chinese house church leaders fleshed out the vision in *Back to Jerusalem*¹⁰ though many of the high expectations have now been tempered with realism.

Thirdly, globalization models the world-wide church.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:20-21 (NIV)

International teams reflect the nature of the worldwide church, providing a glimpse of heaven where **‘every tribe and language and people and nation’**¹¹ will be gathered to worship around the throne of God. Though not replacing the local church, an international team will reflect characteristics of God’s *koinonia* people that include holiness and harmony achieved through sanctification and the peaceful resolution of conflict. When frustrated with the challenges of a multicultural team, defaulting to the glorious vision of heaven can be a great antidote and encouragement to persevere in love.

In Genesis the sign and symbol of the rainbow is that of God’s steadfast love and grace.¹² As our international rainbow teams proclaim Christ and reflect Him, so we are reminded that the end of mission is worship, for God desires to be glorified in the nations through the nations.¹³

Samuel Escobar writes:

Training often has to include correcting attitudes, prejudices, feelings of superiority, and spiritual pride within the community of disciples. Information and formation are thus combined for a constant transformation into the pattern of ‘a perfect humanity that is shaped to the full stature of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13). This process never takes place in a ‘solo’ way. It always happens in community – in small groups around God’s word, taking time to pray, to listen to the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit through the varied insights of the community and the ups and downs of efforts of obedience.¹⁴

International teams provide a unique environment for nurturing Christian ma-

turity. For example, leadership and follower styles vary from culture to culture and one undertaking that Seedbed has already begun is to print articles written by nationals explaining their cultural shape.¹⁵ In his study on cultures and organisations,¹⁶ Geert Hofstede identifies a dimension that he calls, *power distance*. For example, leadership in some cultures is more directive than in other societies in which it is more consultative.

For the sake of our new Majority World personnel, we are learning through careful consultation which countries have racial prejudices and where stereotypes make obtaining visas for language learning a challenge. For example, it is hard for some (like Filipinos) to obtain student visas for language study in the Gulf because of the high percentage of immigrant workers from their country already there. North Africa and the Middle East have a tendency to be negative towards sub-Saharan Africans while the southern countries of the Arabian Peninsula are more positive towards them because of their own proximity to East Africa. Similarly, North Africa is also negative towards Africans, except for Mauritania, due to its proximity to West Africa. The location of the *Banque Africaine de Développement* (African Development Bank) in Tunisia is hopefully making a contribution to racial tolerance.

In spite of these challenges, international teams always bring a fresh and creative dimension to their witness to Christ.

Fourthly, globalization brings new ministry dimensions to a team.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NIV)

Martin Thomas writes:

Christians from Africa, Asia, Latin and South America do not have 'miracle answers', but they bring valuable experiences, gifts, skills, new insights, which can empower new forms of mission.¹⁷

Some sub-Saharan Africans, Latinos and Asians have faced persecution and suffering. Others may have experienced poverty. Many Latin Americans are expected to plant a church before graduating from Bible college or seminary. Christian Africans are familiar with folk religion and the spiritual warfare that is indicative of shamanism and other forms of spirit possession. When the members of international teams esteem one another, they can effectively complement, enrich and complete each other through their varied backgrounds.

Fifthly, globalization brings cultural benefits.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem,

and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Acts 11:19-23 (NIV)

Barnabas was a Greek Cypriot who could relate to the Greeks of Antioch more effectively than Jews from Jerusalem. So it is today. The cultures of some nationalities resonate better than others with the culture of the Arab world. For example, Latino culture is closer to the Arab world than European culture. They are from *collective* cultures that emphasise the importance of the extended family and the community. Western culture is much more individualistic. Collective cultures understand honour and shame. People from Western cultures are often unaware of these subtle nuances. Collective cultures demonstrate generous hospitality, stress the importance of appearance and expect reciprocal relations¹⁸ in contrast to *individualistic* societies that value moderation, reserve and independence. It is said perceptively that the West has watches but the Arab world has time. The event is more important than time and status is more important than achievement.¹⁹

Dr Howard Norrish wrote this description of the new Majority World mission workers:

- ♦ They are not seen as imperialists; with no history of colonialism, they arouse little suspicion.
- ♦ They know several languages and learn languages easily.
- ♦ Two-thirds world cultures are group-conscious rather than individualistic.

- ♦ They understand spiritual warfare; many come from backgrounds steeped in the 'spirit world'.
- ♦ Most are from newly-planted churches and have a good understanding of church-planting.
- ♦ To Muslims they don't look 'Christian'. This arouses curiosity and makes evangelism easier.²⁰

Sixthly, globalization responds to world politics.

When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

Acts 16:35-38 (NIV)

In this passage Paul uses his citizenship in order to obtain his legal rights. Nationality counts in the eyes of Arab-world authorities and since 9/11 and Western intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and, most recently, the Israeli/Hezbollah war, both American and British citizens are currently not the most popular nationalities in the Middle East. This is illustrated by some American citizens in an Arab-world country recently referring to themselves as 'coming from the country south of Canada' when asked by local people.

Arab-world people don't expect the Gospel to come via sub-Saharan Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans – though the imprudent high profile of the Back to Jeru-

salem Movement has forewarned many authorities in the Arab world to watch out for Chinese mission workers. Fortunately, the growth of the Chinese economy is necessitating increasing cooperation between the hydrocarbon-rich states of the Arabian Peninsula, Algeria and Libya with China. Hopefully, this will cause the Arab world to be less suspicious.

Conclusion

Globalization requires a commitment to the vision, a concerted effort and an investment in resources. These include:

- ♦ cooperating with the new sending agencies in agreeing mutually acceptable standards and procedures,
- ♦ committing human and material resources to partners to contribute to mobilising mission candidates,
- ♦ training and coaching multi-national teams,
- ♦ providing the appropriate economic means that foster relational interdependency rather than institutional dependency,
- ♦ providing appropriate pastoral care.

There will be some agencies for which the cost of increasing multi-culturalism will be too great and there will be Majority World agencies for which the monocultural approach will be more expedient based on their mission's beliefs, values and behaviour.

Whatever the future of missions, may global partnerships continue at all levels.

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord
God Almighty. Just and true are your ways,
King of the ages.

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring
glory to your name? For you alone are holy.

All nations will come and worship before
you, for your righteous acts have been
revealed.

Revelation 15:3-4 (NIV)

ENDNOTES

- 1 Thomas L Friedman, *The World is Flat – The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* (Penguin Books, 2006).
- 2 P Johnstone's article in Greenlee, David. ed. *Global Passion: Marking George Verwer's Contribution to World Mission* (Waynesboro: Authentic Lifestyle 2003), 181.
- 3 North Africa Mission. The name of the mission was changed in 1987 to Arab World Ministries (AWM).
- 4 Francis R Steele, *Not in Vain – The Story of North Africa Mission* (William Carey Library, 1981), 84.
- 5 Ibid. 107, 108.
- 6 An agency having a Partnership Agreement with AWM fulfils all the functions of a National Office. An agency having a Placement Agreement with AWM fulfils only those functions necessary for sending an approved missionary unit.
- 7 Examples would include SIM, OMF, Pioneers and Interserve.
- 8 The Back to Jerusalem vision pre-dates the establishment of the People's Republic of China.
- 9 Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man: The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun* (Monarch, 2002).
- 10 Paul Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Piquant, 2003)..
- 11 Revelation 5:9 (NIV).
- 12 Genesis 9:12-17 (NIV).
- 13 John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (IVP, 1993, 2003).
- 14 Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides – Latin America & World Mission Today* (Orbis Books, June 2002).
- 15 Juan Carlos Parodi, 'Improving Intercultural Awareness', *Seedbed* 2006, Vol. 20, No. 1.
- 16 Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 1991).
- 17 M Thomas, *Global Connections* (CMS, December 2003).
- 18 Christine Mallouhi, *Miniskirts, Mothers & Muslims* (Monarch Books, 2004), chapter 10.
- 19 S G Lingenfelter and M K Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (Baker Book House, 1986).
- 20 Dr. Howard Norrish's article in *Global Passion – Marking George Verwer's Contribution to World Mission* (Waynesboro: Authentic Lifestyle, 2003), 133, 134.