

Habits of Highly Effective Global Partnerships

1. Learn About Current Mission Strategies And Community Development

“There’s a tendency to say, ‘This ain’t rocket science. People are hungry; feed them.’ Well, the deeper you get into relief and development, you realize it is rocket science, because you are dealing with all kinds of social, cultural, political, and religious landmines. What have you really accomplished if you haven’t gotten beneath the surface and started to wrestle with the root causes? World Vision made every mistake you could possibly make in international development three times before 1965. I urge megachurches to get that expertise on their teams—hire it, partner with it—so when you begin your development programs, you’re going to avoid many of those mistakes.” (Richard Sterns, President of World Vision, Christianity Today, October 2006). Connect with the missions agencies of your denomination – they have been involved with cross-cultural ministry and community development for decades. They have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, and are available for advice and assistance.

Recommended Reading:

- **Walking with the Poor**, by Bryant L. Myers © 1999 World Vision
- **Ministering Cross-Culturally**, by Sherwood Lingengelter and Marvin Mayers © 2003 Baker Academic
- **Serving with Eyes Wide Open**, by David Livermore © 2006 BakerBooks
- **Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life, Rethinking Ministry to the Poor**, by Robert D. Lupton © 2007 Regal Books

2. Partnerships are not for everyone

Partnerships require a servant attitude, long term commitment (3-10 years) and high human resource capacity. For congregations seeking to travel this road, a high level of commitment is required from the church’s leadership, as well as patience, flexibility and diligence on the part of the organizing group. Partnerships are not for those who just want to fund a ministry need or make an impact in another area of the world.

Recommended Reading:

- **Building Strategic Relationships**, by Daniel Rickett © 2003 Wine Press Publishing

3. Not about work groups: Partnerships are about relationships

Partnerships are for those who wish to build relationships with people from a different culture, meet ministry needs, and see their own local congregation changed through the experience. Its not about “fixing” problems, it is about walking a journey with others and together creating a vision for ministry.

Let local leaders be in their own driver’s seat. Each side can come alongside to support and encourage local efforts but must refrain from driving the bus. Plans can be co-created using the resources each brings to the table but the priorities must be those of the local church.

Use the skills and work professional experience of your lay people. I Peter 4:10: *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*

Make communication a priority. Someone from Nicaragua once asked, "How would you like it if you invited me to your house and I showed up with a paintbrush in my hand?" Westerners are typically problem-solvers, linear-thinkers, and results-focused, who want to do something today to alleviate poverty. National pastors and southern partners are telling us the time of colonial missions and the “we know better so let us do it for you” attitude is over.

Recommended Reading:

- **Foreign to Familiar**, by Sarah A. Lanier © 2000 McDougal Publishing Company

- **Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry**, by Duane Elmer © 1993 Intersity Press

4. Expect and look for mutual transformation

Cross cultural experiences open our eyes to areas where our own culture needs transformation. Assessing resources in both organizations is more than just financial, it also includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional and the like. Christians all over the globe – of every race and tribe and nation – are one body in Christ. Interdependence is the goal.

A back and forth flow, or reciprocity, is the core dynamic of healthy biblical partnerships. God made us for relationships, for community, for enjoying each other and sharing our gifts. These are the lines along which renewal runs. This is where we testify to each other of the deepest truths about ourselves - we are saved by grace alone, our lives are being restored, we value each other as fellow human beings, created, died for, reminding each other of love, hope, compassion, justice - these are foundational to our biblical world view and we witness to these realities powerfully in our relationships.

Recommended Viewing / Reading:

- **The Global Church**, by Oscar Muriu, Nairobi Chapel, Kenya at Urbana 2006.
View online: <http://www.urbana.org/u2006.mediaplayer.pop.cfm?clip=132>
Read transcript: http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=1169
DVD available from CRWRC or World Missions

5. Go with what is proven and what works

Don't go with the solutions in your head. People have lived for decades in a certain fashion. Find out the reasons.

Connect with Missions Agency Personnel who are in that country as there may already be ministry efforts directed to that community. They may also be helpful in giving a history of activities in the area and situations with local players that you should be aware of. Find and work with the local champions and proven organizations.

Wherever possible, connect with worshipping groups / churches in the partnering community. Include them in your discussion, as well as their denominational leaders.

6. Understand how finances can create unhealthy relationships and dependency

When financial resources are involved they should be utilized as matching funds. This reinforces the partnership concept of doing things together and the dignity of the local church raising the first dollars, knowing we are beside them raising funds here toward a common goal. The ratio can be 1:1, 2:1 or 3:1 since they will be providing most of the "sweat equity" as their share. Any work projects done together should mandate at least 2:1 local labor to outside labor.

Learn about how to give away money and how to receive money, and about transparency and accountability. Avoid giving money to a specific church as this can cause jealousy and breakdown relationships in the surrounding area. Instead, give funds to the classis or denomination for disbursement.

Establish and expect accountability, and to be held accountable. Do not make decisions based on bleeding heart.

Understand the charitable status implications and procedures for your church in funding overseas projects.

Recommended Viewing / Reading:

- **African Friends and Money Matters**, by David Maranz © 2001 SIL International
- **Receipting Donations: "Funnelled / Channeled" Through a Charity?** By David Johnson, © 2006 Canadian Council of Christian Charities. Available from CRWRC or World Missions.
- **When Charity Destroys Dignity**, by Glenn J. Schwartz © 2007 World Mission Book Service

7. Be a Global Christian

Focus not on getting people in the church but rather to engage the world. “A *Global Christian is one whose lifestyle and obedience are compatible, in cooperation, and in accord with what God is doing and wants to do in our world.*” – Paul Borthwick

- Expose – become educated about the global world
- Equip – learn about beneficial ways to respond to needs
- Experience – make a visit or listen to someone who has
- Engage – find ways to become meaningfully involved

Questions

1. What is our heart? What do we think God is telling or directing us?
2. How does the idea of partnering come about? Is there a sense of discontent in the congregation about our church’s current missions activities / programs?
3. What do our church’s vision and mission statements say? Does it give insight to a potential type of ministry, place or people group?
4. What skills, professions, experience, and resources do we have or can get access?
5. Is there some natural connections whether through language, culture, previous relationships?
6. Is someone, someplace, a church or community, calling us to come into partnership?
7. Are we hoping to make an impact by primarily funding a project or building relationships?
8. On what and where have our prayers been focused?

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