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WHY I TRAIN LEADERS OF THE GLOBAL CHURCH

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Abstract

In the spring of 2019, the author utilized an email survey consisting of two questions to ascertain the opinions of eighteen indigenous leaders who had received equipping and resourcing from Western leaders sent through Spiritual Overseers Service (SOS) International. The recipients were invited to elaborate on the intrinsic and long-term value of equipping leaders within their spheres of influence. This article comes from three sources: these responses, the author's thirteen-year experience training indigenous ministry leaders as a full-time pastor, and his fifteen-year leadership of the global Christian equipping ministry known as Spiritual Overseers Service (SOS) International. The author is well-acquainted with each indigenous leader who responded to the survey and are cited in this writing.

INTRODUCTION

The short-term mission (STM) movement presents, perhaps, the biggest change in missions in America. The movement has grown in popularity

and status, with between two to four million STM participants per annum at an annual cost of over two billion dollars.¹ Americans spend as much on STMs as they do on long-term missionaries.² While the majority of these assignments are within the borders of the participants' countries, a significant percentage requires international travel. The majority of the participants are laypeople who invest time, resources, and talents to gain valuable cross-cultural experiences as they serve the global body of Christ.

The benefits and drawbacks of STMs are widely published and debated and will not be specifically addressed in this article. This writing will reveal the benefits that pastors, ministry leaders, churches, denominations and mission organizations receive when they place a high value on equipping and resourcing indigenous Christian leaders already well-positioned in their cultural contexts to lead their ministries to health, growth and fruitfulness. This commentary offers personal reasons why the writer has chosen to direct his missional energies and resources – and that of the organization he presides over – to equipping and resourcing existing leaders of indigenous ministries who, in turn, become better prepared to fulfill the ministries entrusted to them. Recommendations are provided at the conclusion of this article.

MY FIRST SHORT-TERM MISSION

My introduction to STMs was on a trip to Mexicali, Mexico, during my youth internship at a Baptist Church in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our team trained to prepare for this international encounter that, we hoped, would radically impact ourselves, our youth, and those who would be the focus of our mission – the Mexican people. We learned songs in Spanish, prepared crafts, wrote and practiced our testimonies, and prayed ourselves up. On the day of our departure, our church leaders came to give us a celebrative and prayerful send-off for our global endeavor.

1 Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact, Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis: STEM, 2003).

2 David A. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 14.

As I remember, all activities, messages, crafts, songs, and testimonies went very well. We even survived the “no showers for a week” regimen that most short-term “missionaries” are sentenced to endure. Our high school and college-aged young people, led by our courageous and resilient youth pastor, returned year after year to the same community to serve the Lord and those in the area.

I discovered, however, that I was not adequately prepared for small talk with the children. I recall walking through a dusty field with some children, wanting to learn their names, asking them, “*Como te amo?*” Their quizzical look indicated that something I said wasn’t quite right; so, being the inexperienced “missionary” that I was, I repeated the words more slowly and forcefully: “*Como te amo?*” Their discomfort grew the more I upped my interrogation.

For those of you who understand Spanish, you are already chuckling. See, in all sincerity, I thought I was asking them for their name, which, in Spanish, looks like this: “*Como te llama?*” What I was saying can be translated as “How much I love you,” or “As I love you.”

I was earnest but hindered by my ignorance. Thankfully, I discovered my *faux pas*, corrected my imposing lingo, and thereafter was able to learn the names of several children. They were unquestionably more at ease around me. I want to turn your attention to how we, as leaders in the Western Church, can utilize our resources for STMs to:

- Maximize our potential to develop healthy churches globally and, therefore accelerate world evangelism and disciple making;
- Expand our influence geographically;
- Extend our impact generationally;
- Deliver to the Global Church what they are asking for and needing;
- Partner with our indigenous coworkers for the building up of the Body of Christ.

UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING OUR GLOBAL FAMILY

To fulfill these objectives, we have to realize that the world has changed. One glaring reality is that the church in the Majority World continues to grow beyond our wildest expectations. It is estimated that between 100,000 to 178,000 people come to Christ every day.³ Also, “3,500 new churches are opening every week worldwide.”⁴ New pastors are sensing the call and receiving the vision to shepherd their people and reach the lost.

Eighty years ago, seventy percent of the world’s Christian population resided in North America, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. Today, seventy-five percent of the Christians live in other regions. The profile of the average Christian today is no longer a conservative evangelical white man living in the U.S. or Europe. The face of global Christianity is more like a dark-skinned woman who attends a Pentecostal church in South America, Asia, or Africa.⁵

Mission work has become multi-directional. Until sixty years ago, the majority of missionaries were sent from Western countries to reach the rest of the world. Today, while U.S. Churches and mission agencies have more missionaries on the field than any other country (32,000), nearly every country that has believers in Jesus also has domestic and international missionaries serving in cross-cultural settings. For example, COMIBAM, a Spanish/Portuguese mission coalition in South America, has 9,000 missionaries on the field that they support. The Korean churches have about 13,000 long-term cross-cultural missionaries. The Indian Mission Association has 40,000, most serving domestically. More than 50 percent of the missionaries serving in the world today are from non-Western countries.⁶ A little-known fact is the U.S. has received tens of thousands of Christian missionaries from other countries. The Redeemed Christian

3 Ibid., 35.

4 See “State of the World: Growth of the Church,” accessed October 15, 2019, <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/growth-of-the-church>.

5 Tom Steffen, *The Facilitator Era: Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 25.

6 Ibid., 26-27.

Church of God of Nigeria alone has 720 churches in North America.⁷

Our missional predecessors dedicated their lives and livelihoods to reach the unreached in foreign lands. They answered the call of God to go “to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8) to bear witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of people of all nations.⁸ Many regions continue to receive pioneer missionaries to evangelize unreached people, though many of them do not originate from the West. These realities are changing the face of missions. For North Americans to be effectively involved in the Majority World church, we must undergo a reorientation and transformation of our thinking, priorities, and strategies when it comes to short-term missions.

HOW SHALL WE THEN MISSIONIZE?

This shift in the makeup and growth of the global church begs the following questions:

- How do we in the West fulfill our mandate to reach and make disciples of all nations in light of these global realities?
- Is there a complementary or alternative short-term missional paradigm that would maximize existing STM resources and catapult the church in the West to multiply our impact for generations to come?

To answer these questions, we must accept there is an untapped and underdeveloped resource that is perhaps being discounted in our mission-minded quest to reach and plant churches among all people groups. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous pastors and ministry leaders are already doing the work of ministry as best they can in their own cultural

7 “This African Church Hopes to Spread across America ‘Like Starbucks,’” accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-02-12/african-church-hopes-spread-across-america-starbucks>.

8 All Scripture references in this article, except those in quotations from other authors, come from the NASB.

contexts. They are eager. They are passionate for the gospel. They are evangelizing and growing churches often made up of thousands of new believers.

Their sincerity and zeal, however, are nearly evenly matched and challenged by a huge deficit; they lack training in the essential tasks of the ministry and the fundamental knowledge of the Scriptures and Christian leadership. Ninety-five percent of these global church pastors and ministry leaders have very little, if any, training to do the vital work they are called to perform.⁹ As a result, as I am reminded by my African colleagues that the church in the Majority World is the proverbial “mile wide and an inch deep.” This situation exists because the pastors and leaders who shepherd these churches are only an inch and a quarter deep. The “Law of the Lid”¹⁰ that determines a leader’s level of effectiveness is in full effect.

THE RATIONALE AND FORMAT

In 2006, after 30 years of pastoral ministry in local churches, I took on the task of leading an international ministry that has, since 1979, trained hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian workers in more than ninety countries. By God’s grace, I have interacted with, learned from, lived with, and equipped tens of thousands of Christian leaders on more than eighty short-term training assignments. In addition, our ministry has sent hundreds of trained equippers to prepare ministry leaders of other countries to do the work of ministry. I do not assume to know it all, but I am grateful that I have gained some wisdom since my first mission assignment in the Mexican desert. In this article, I want to ask and answer the following questions:

- Why is equipping indigenous Christian leaders during short-term mission events an effective strategy for fulfilling our global evangelistic and Great Commission objectives?

9 Lausanne Movement, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.lausanne.org/best-of-lausanne/95-pastors-untrained>.

10 John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1.

- Why should you consider it as a legitimate addition to your short-term mission strategy?
- How could we, as Christian pastors, professors, and church consultants maximize our collective education, training, and resources to accelerate world evangelism and disciple-making by equipping and encouraging existing ministry leaders around the world?

To gain better insight and to substantiate my answers to these questions, I invited several indigenous leaders who are the ministry partners of Spiritual Overseers Service International to provide their reasons why equipping leaders is vital to the health and expansion of the church in their spheres of influence. I will give my rationale for equipping indigenous Christian leaders and then, where appropriate, cite the testimonies and wisdom of those experienced in this genre of STM.

WHY I EQUIP INDIGENOUS LEADERS IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH

I equip indigenous leaders because it fulfills a Biblical mandate. In Paul's instructions to the Ephesian Church (Eph 4:11-12), he calls gifted leaders of the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." In any and every context, the leadership corps of the church has as one of its chief assignments to equip (καταρτιξω, to prepare or repair) believers to carry out the work of the ministry. Of this, there is no debate. The relevant issue is whether the gifted leaders within local congregations have a responsibility to equip outside their geographical and denominational context.

To answer this, we must ask how big the Body of Christ is. The astute believer will acknowledge that the church – the Body of Christ – exists on a *global* platform. Given that global platform, the leaders of the Body of Christ are gifted and appointed to equip the saints for the work of ministry wherever the Body of Christ exists. Local pastors, professors, and ministry leaders have the calling, gifting, and responsibility to equip in the broader

context of the global church, though they get to spend most of their time fulfilling local obligations.

Benjamin Oforinyame is the co-founder and president of ONIM Ministerial and Leadership College in Accra, Ghana. He affirms this biblical foundation of training leaders:

Jesus gave us a worldwide assignment in Matthew 28:18-20, to make disciples of all nations. Discipling can be viewed in the context of training men and . . . focus on training (discipling) leaders to be able to train others and lead others in their local communities. In Matthew 5:19, we also see the admonition to teach others (thus train others) His commandments.

Also, we see Paul encourage the training of leaders in scriptures such as 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 4:7-8. This is seen vividly when we look at the life of Paul since he traveled around the world to train up leaders and wrote letters to churches and leaders he did not have the liberty of going to.

Paul was telling Timothy that an essential part of faithful gospel ministry is this investment in the next generation, which involves training of leaders, not just in his local area, but also other leaders from different parts of the world. This is seen not to be some optional add-on.¹¹

Though we are called to invest most of our time and impart most of our knowledge and experience with our local churches and institutions, our larger responsibility is to the Global Body of Christ.

I equip indigenous Christian leaders because it meets one of the greatest needs in the global Body of Christ. Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2). The answer to this prayer is perhaps needed more now than at any other time in Church history. The unprecedented growth of the Majority World church

11 Benjamin Oforinyame, response to email survey.

has created a leadership vacuum. It is estimated that it would require seven thousand new church leaders every day to care for the growing global Church.¹²

The Christian leaders who are leading God's people long to become more skilled communicators of the love of God and more capable shepherds for the flock of God. Whenever I am overseas and share with indigenous leaders that ninety-five percent of Christian leaders have very little training, I am typically corrected with a higher number. These Christian leaders are leading churches, often of thousands of people, yet the training they have is minimal, if not non-existent. They are eager to receive training that focuses both on information (theology, history, principles) and practical leadership skills (leadership, vision, character, competence, teamwork, discipling, evangelism).

Attending a Bible college or seminary is out of the question for the vast majority of Christian leaders. They do not have the resources, prerequisites, or time to invest in such pursuits. Imagine with me the natural consequence of this shortfall.

Our coworkers unveiled the fallout of this lack of preparation. John Lewis of Grenada Institute for Theological Education tells us the following: "Many Pastors and Leaders do not have any formal Theological training; our churches suffer as a result."¹³ Mike Mukasa of Believing Ministries of Nairobi and Bungoma, Kenya states, "Training is an urgently felt need. The scandals, the gross misrepresentation of Christ and His Word are pointers to the dire need for equipped servant leadership."¹⁴ Atul Aghamkar of the National Center for Urban Transformation, a ministry of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), declares:

The depth and growth of the church depends on the quality of leadership she has. Most leaders around the world and especially in the global south, are either ill-equipped or marginally equipped. This is particularly true with Africa and some parts of Asia where lack of resources, lack of trained and committed leaders

12 Livermore, 42.

13 John Lewis, response to email survey.

14 Mike Mukasa, response to email survey.

is evident. Providing proper resources, and conducting ongoing training programs for equipping leaders is crucial for balanced growth of the church.

Providing both formal and non-formal leadership training to those who normally do not have access to such resources and training centers is to be prioritized, otherwise the danger of lopsided and syncretistic teaching is evident. They misrepresent Christ and the word of God.¹⁵

The Global Alliance of Church Multiplication raised a serious concern in October 2013. While they envisioned the planting of five million churches by 2020, they estimated “an astounding fail-rate of up to 70 percent within the first year.”¹⁶ One of the primary reasons for church planting failure is inadequately trained and prepared church planters. The Herculean effort and expense invested in church planting will largely be lost due to this foundational lack of training. David Livermore, citing The World Evangelical Alliance Report, “Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology,” states: “Leaders from every non-Western region say their number one need is leadership training.”¹⁷

I equip indigenous Christian leaders because they are asking for it. The needs of Christian leaders around the world are innumerable and diverse. The immensity of the task leads us to ask how a pastor, professor, mission committee, or mission board could ever discover what the vital needs of the global church are. How would we know how to invest our STM account? The answer is really quite simple. Just ask the indigenous leaders.

As stated earlier, the number one need of the global church is the training of Christian leaders. They are asking for it. They are hungry for it. They are not even expecting outsiders to cover all the expenses to deliver it. They have conferences you could come to as a resource person and pass on

15 Atul Aghamkar, response to email survey.

16 Ramesh Richard Evangelism and Church Health (REACH), accessed October 15, 2019, <https://reach.org/portfolio-items/four-global-realities>.

17 Livermore, 43.

what God has put on deposit with you. Leaders from every non-Western region say their number one need is leadership training.¹⁸

Subhash Dongardive of India has summarized the response we receive from many leaders of indigenous ministries: “The churches in America have had an important role to play in the history of Christian Mission in India. But the impact that they can have **now** can be much greater than ever before. The most needed area for help we have is the building up of native leadership so they are equipped to accomplish the task the Lord has given to them.”¹⁹

Daniel Borg, a retired pastor and international leadership trainer, has equipped leaders of nine West African countries and Grenada. He shares from his experiences: “It is a privilege to teach students who are so eager to learn. Many of them travel great distances and stay in very humble lodging during the time of their study.”²⁰ Garry Zeek, the lead pastor of Grace Church in Kelseyville, California, who has also trained leaders of West African churches, adds his wisdom: “I have never taught a more spiritually hungry and passionate group of believers. My own congregation thanked me for leading by example.”²¹

Leaders in the global church are brothers and sisters, not beggars. They are fellow-laborers in the harvest. They are intelligent. They have vision. They are extremely committed and suffer greatly at times. They want to become better leaders and know they need further training. Going to a good Bible school or seminary is a worthy ambition, but enrollment at these institutions is too far out of reach for the vast majority of them.

Atul Aghamkar provides some insights into this topic: “We must recognize the fact that only a small number of leaders can avail themselves such training at Seminary and college levels. So, the need for ongoing, online, non-formal ways of training must be developed and used in such a way that it would train a large number of leaders who are already serving in different fields of ministry.”²²

18 This training has been the strategy of SOS International since 1979 (www.sosinternational.us).

19 Subhash Dongardive, response to email survey.

20 Daniel Borg, response to email survey.

21 Garry Zeek, response to email survey.

22 Atul Aghamkar, response to email survey.

Once we have established that a group of leaders needs and wants training to become better shepherds of God's flock, a further question needs to be asked: If you were to receive training, what topics do you consider of most importance for those in your spheres of influence? What are you unable to accomplish because you lack a skill set, mindset, or knowledge set? Then listen. You will gain further insight into their vision for their lives and ministries that will help you cater your teaching to their actual needs.

Asking them for their input into the training leaves them in the place of authority and honors them for their leadership in their churches. It also gives you the target topic you will focus on when you train in their circle of leaders. Michael Attafua of Restoration Ministries in Ghana, who has trained hundreds of leaders of West African countries, states, "We are able to respond to the exact or real training needs of the leaders at their own level which will also help them to minister to their people effectively."

Training indigenous leaders to fulfill their ministries is the most effective way to multiply the number of equipped leaders that will impact a greater number of churches and ministries. If, indeed, the global church needs 7,000 new Christian leaders every day,²³ as David Livermore has projected, filling that need will not happen merely through addition. We need no less than the multiplication of trained Christian leaders to fill the church's need for competent and credible shepherds.

Referencing a popular saying, we know it is not enough to give a man a fish that only feeds him for a day and makes him dependent. It is not even enough to teach a man to fish, for, his capacity to feed others is limited in both scale and longevity. But if one can teach a man to teach another man – or several people – to fish effectively with the knowledge and skills they would not receive otherwise, a multitude of people get fed – not only in this generation but also in generations to come.

When people invest their time, experience, and resources in the lives of indigenous Christian leaders, both they and their church's or institution's spiritual and professional investment will reproduce. The information, encouragement, and inspiration poured into the leaders is so highly valued by them that they are zealous to share it with others in their ministry network. The 2 Timothy 2:2 strategy is at work: "The things which you

23 Livermore, 42.

have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The simple and powerful response of Michael Attafuah of Restoration Ministries in Ghana is clear: “My training has resulted in the training of thousands of indigenous leaders.”²⁴

Pastor Michael and I were finishing lunch in a restaurant in Sunyani, Ghana, when a young man came and introduced himself to Michael. After they exchanged a greeting, the young man, Solomon, told Michael that he was not able to attend the training we did the previous year, but that his pastor, who did attend the conference, was discipling him using the workbooks we provided. Solomon wanted to meet Michael and thank him for his investment in his pastor. As Solomon walked away, Michael and I looked at each other and exclaimed, “It’s working!”

Daniel Borg has invested his resources and leadership capital in the indigenous leaders of several countries. He was pleased to hear how equipping and teaching indigenous leaders has extended his influence exponentially:

I train leaders around the world because it is the best way to multiply effectiveness. If you train a group, you get a group that’s been trained. If you train a leader and that leader trains others, you get multiple groups that have been trained. A few months after teaching a New Testament survey course to a group of students in Ghana, I received an email from one of those students. He was a Bible teacher from Burkina Faso. He informed me that my curriculum had been taught to 200 students in Burkina Faso. He will teach this same course every other year for decades to come.²⁵

Jim Gleason served with SOS International and Faith Comes By Hearing as a missionary, mentor, and facilitator of ministries in Nepal for several years. Here is his take on the multiplication factor: “Training Church leaders to reach their nations for Christ is a God-given model that has proven effective. It is transforming the lives of individuals and through

24 Michael Attafuah, response to email survey.

25 Daniel Borg, response to email survey.

them, transforming nations. In just two years of equipping and training Nepali leaders, often in remote areas, 200 house churches were planted and 2,000 people received Christ.”²⁶ John Lewis of GITE also testifies: “We are seeing the multiplication of leaders as a direct result to these trainings.”

We are all responsible for the resources we spend in the work of the ministry. To invest in something that *adds* to our spiritual portfolio is good and commendable. Investing in that which will *multiply* several times over is even better and worthy of even more celebration. The fruit of the work is in the fruit of the work.

Allow me to draw an analogy: The fruit of an orange tree is not (merely) an orange, but another orange tree. A whole orchard of orange trees producing an endless supply of oranges can be grown from the seeds from one orange tree.

So, too, the fruit of a leader is not (merely) a follower, but another leader. A whole generation of leaders can be developed when a leader decides he or she is a better leader when more leaders are around him or her, not merely when there are followers. People who equip ministry leaders for the work of ministry will reap much more than they sow.

I equip indigenous leaders because we, in the West, already possess the resources the growing global church needs to become and remain healthy. We have the unprecedented opportunity and obligation, at such a time as this, to deliver not only the training these indigenous ministry leaders need but also the resources that will help them to keep learning long after we’ve returned home.

Would you agree that we in the West have an abundance of spiritual and ministry resources from which Christian leaders in the rest of the world would greatly benefit? We are saturated with seminars, conferences, libraries, programs, software, electronics and computers, online classes, and training institutions. Our coworkers who are leading growing churches in the rest of the world are starving for them. Receiving just one-tenth of the books in our libraries would be like having a hundred Christmases to a pastor in the Third World.

Aghamkar again provides some insight: “The non-Western Christian leaders are in dire need of leadership training as the church in the global

26 Jim Gleason, response to email survey.

south is growing rapidly. It is obvious that the Global South Church is resource-starved compared to what the Western Church has. Some of the basic and advanced leadership training that is so crucial for the non-western leaders is either non-accessible or non-affordable.”²⁷

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). We who have unprecedented resources have a responsibility to deliver resources so leaders in the Body of Christ can be “adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17).

The health of the church begins with the health of the leader, and the health of the leader begins with his or her preparation and training. Samuel Olayoriju of Christ Love World Outreach Ministries in Lagos, Nigeria, states:

The Bible passage that states “strike the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7) indicates the important role of a leader. On the other hand, empower the shepherd and the sheep shall be built. This implies that the study materials I have received have been of tremendous blessing to me. They have increased my capacity and also positively affected my influence on my hearers. The training my coworkers and church members or friends in my circle have received over the years has helped to grow them mentally so they could effectively carry out their ministry.²⁸

Neal Kloster, the pastor of Our Saviour’s Baptist Church in Elkhorn, Nebraska, trained youth leaders in Grenada. He shares his sense of responsibility to tell others what God has put on deposit with him.

I equip Christian leaders around the world because it opens my eyes to the Church, allowing me to see what God is doing around the world. It moves me past my own ethnocentrism as I am exposed to the power of God at work in and through people in global contexts. I also recognize that I’ve had opportunities through ministry experience and formal education others have not

27 Aghamkar, response to email survey.

28 Samuel Olayoriju, response to email survey.

had. With that comes an obligation, for to whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48).²⁹

The Apostle Paul presents a timeless principle that speaks of reciprocity and equality of resources. He appealed to the Corinthian church to share out of their abundance with the church in Jerusalem that was experiencing deep poverty. The wealth of the Corinthian believers was given as an offering to provide for the church in Judea so that there might be equality (2 Cor 8:13-15). I would suggest that we apply this same principle to the training and resources extant in the Western church and absent in the Majority World church.

The training we have received is meant to be passed on. Our coworkers around the world are those who need it most. In addition, the resources at our disposal that often lie dormant in our offices or in boxes would be treasured tools in the hands of our coworkers overseas.

I equip indigenous ministry leaders on short-term ministry assignments because it is effective and efficient stewardship of Kingdom resources. The founders of our ministry, Henry E. (Hank) and Marjorie Jones, believed “training the national leader gives the most bang for the missional buck.” I believe that, too.

Do the math. Compare the ROKI (Return on Kingdom Investment) of sending typical STM participants (stereotypically young adults with little to no experience performing the duties they are assigned for the STM) to wherever they go to do whatever they are capable of doing with sending your highly trained pastor, staff member, or gifted teacher to equip fifty to three hundred leaders in a ministry skill or knowledge-set they have the desire to develop. The cost of the flight and accommodations are the same. The time out of country is the same.

What do you come up with? Which would you calculate was a wiser investment of your missional investment? If mission dollars are limited (and they are), I’m confident you would prefer to multiply the impact of your missional outlay through investing in the lives and ministries of indigenous leaders who will apply and pass on what you entrust to them.

Patrick Johnstone, a global Christianity expert, stated, “The limitations

29 Neal Kloster, response to email survey.

and costs of short-term missions need to be watched, and all short-term programs evaluated for their value-added contribution to the overall goal of world evangelization.”³⁰

Many STMs are primarily designed to benefit the participant. Though this is a worthy objective, it should not be the primary one. In a seminar that I lead about STMs, I ask attendees to verbalize the benefits of their experiences. Inevitably the comments about benefits to the “missionaries” far outnumber those about the people we intended to serve. When this is realized, there is a corporate *“Aha”* moment that challenges their mindset and motivations. One missionary statesman quipped, “This is the first time in mission history that the focus of our mission is on the one going.”³¹

Suggesting that those who want to be further trained should, somehow, find their way to an institution of higher learning either in their own country or in others, is unrealistic. Dave Hazle of Jamaica states: “[Training ministry leaders in their regions] is good stewardship. Rather than spending great sums of money for the many leaders, especially from poorer developing countries to come to the more developed countries that have more trainers and training institutions, it is more cost effective for fewer trainers, who are able, to go to them.”³²

Every church has to decide where its mission resources will be invested. Granted, deference should be given to those who are on the field long-term and who are serving with diligence and vision. Not all STMs are created equal. Nor do they produce an equal amount of fruit. Priority should be given to short-term assignments that will maximize and multiply a church’s limited resources to provide a good return on mission investment. Adding a short-term training assignment to the church’s mission budget to benefit indigenous leaders will not only expand the church’s impact geographically but also extend it generationally as well.

30 Patrick Johnstone, “The Next Forty Years for Global Mission,” in *Global Passion*, ed. David Greenlee (Cumbria, UK: Authentic Publishing, 2003), 189.

31 Response to email survey.

32 Dave Hazle, response to email survey.

SUMMARY AND INVITATION

Many pastors, professors, and ministry leaders long to employ their influence in the global church but resist taking part in the typical STM because most STMs with which they are familiar underutilize their training and experience. Pastors end up being grossly underemployed.

Sending pastors and professors on a short-term training mission that fully employs their skills, knowledge, and experience will stimulate them to convert their teaching and equipping resources into languages and formats that will communicate from a biblical platform. Training missions will also trigger their church to expand its influence geographically and extend it generationally.

Since this journal is produced predominantly for the members of the Great Commission Research Network (to which I belong), which is made up of professional consultants, professors, and influential leaders of the American church, allow me to humbly invite you to include a training mission on your ministry bucket list to lend your knowledge and experience to a group of leaders outside your culture. We in North America are saturated with knowledge about the systems, strategies, best practices, and biblical tenets of church growth and health. Our colleagues overseas, however, are starving for what we have in abundance. Delivering what God has put on deposit with you to our eager coworkers will feel as refreshing as hauling water to the desert to slake the thirst of parched friends. They will be thoroughly rejuvenated by your presence and presentation and grateful for your investment in their lives and ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYING EQUIPPING STMs

Since most readers are of the professional strata of the Western church, I would like to offer a few suggestions that may find their way into your STM conversations with your mission committee members, denominational leaders, and fellow pastors. I hope you will see the value of solving this leadership crisis in the church in the Majority World through your personal involvement and the investments of those in your spheres of

influence. Please accept these recommendations toward that end.

1. Get your passport updated. Find out what shots you will need and get them. Prepare yourself and pray to influence your foreign coworkers in the Body of Christ.
2. Before you send anyone or any team out on an STM, count the cost and realistically consider the ROKI (Return on Kingdom Investment). If the primary benefit of the STM is to give the participants a positive experience, you may want to reconsider it.
3. Ensure the STM participants personally contribute at least one-half of the funds needed to go. They should have some “skin in the game” and not expect others to foot the bill completely. They will likely get more out of the experience as their heart will follow their treasure.
4. Introduce your mission committee or global outreach team to the growing number of articles and books being written about the stated and realistic results of STMs. Keep your minds and hearts open and have open discussions about your ministry’s future utilization of and investment in STMs.
5. Consider how your STMs could be an element of your long-term discipleship program.
6. Identify “Equipping Leaders in the Global Body of Christ” as one of your biblical mandates and prioritize it as one of your top missional objectives (Eph 4:11-12; 2 Tim 2:2; Matt 28:19-20). This mandate may mean you will only take a few qualified people instead of a “team,” knowing much will be accomplished as you entrust to faithful men and women what God has entrusted to the few of you.
7. Ask your denominational leaders where you might fit into their missional outreach and training agenda. They may not be aware of the fruit-bearing potential of this genus of STM. If they are not aware, send them this article.
8. Have conversations with your mission partners in foreign fields. Ask them about the possibility of equipping the pastors

and ministry leaders with whom they (and you) are already connected.

9. Include in your mission budget the funds to send a few of your pastors at least once a year to equip indigenous leaders.
10. Consider any linguistic issues related to the written or oral translation of your teaching. Be aware of homonyms (I, eye) and idioms that will not transfer to other languages and cultures.
11. Deconstruct out of your teaching materials that which is primarily or exclusively Western in thought or practice. Then reconstruct from biblical kernels the lessons that will speak to all cultures. Make yourself aware of the cultural and educational background of those you will be training.
12. If you do not have a link to any organizations that have opportunities for you to equip indigenous leaders:
 - a. Ask your denominational mission leaders where leaders in the field need training.
 - b. Ask your ministry colleagues about training opportunities they have fulfilled. Invite yourself to join them on their next adventure.
 - c. Contact any number of ministries like SOS International to see where your expertise and experience will benefit the indigenous church. (www.sosinternational.us)

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About the Author

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