

POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers



Classic Postings Issue | by D & B Martin

Security-Sensitive Partnerships

**Yes, Western churches
can participate effectively!**

Can churches in the West participate in reaching areas with the gospel where it is difficult or impossible for Westerners to go? Since personal contact with the ministry is a high priority for churches and a key way to establish and maintain their vision and involvement, how do we address this dilemma?

Cross-Cultural Partnerships for Asia (CCPA), described here by the Martins, models one solution.

A NEW WAY TO REACH THE UNREACHED

Under CCPA, (1) indigenous church-planting teams, (2) indigenous mission agencies, (3) Western

churches, and (4) Western mission agencies are working together to ignite church-planting movements among 14 yet-to-be-reached, primarily M*slim, people groups in one geographic region of Southeast Asia. Many of these groups are located in places where Western missionaries are not welcome, where it is unsafe or extremely difficult for a Westerner to visit, where doing so could endanger the ministry and lives of indigenous church planters, and where Western blueprints for church planting are no longer effective. CCPA provides a practical strategy for Western partners to be highly integrated into the work and to deploy their resources cooperatively.

Today, 23 North American churches have a personal relationship and partnership with indigenous teams in 13 of these unreached groups. Most of the initiative

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on the indigenous side has come from sending agencies rather than local churches. We are working to encourage greater participation and ownership on the part of the indigenous churches.

CCPA is not a sending agency or an organization. It is a collaborative strategy and a tool for connecting partners with one another. All agreements and collaboration efforts are transacted among the parties themselves, not with CCPA. Relationships do not require formal or written agreements unless the partners choose to develop one.

FACILITATING THE PARTNERSHIPS

After seven years of field experience as church planters, we became the US-based advocates and facilitators for CCPA tasked with recruiting Western church partners and integrating their involvement with the frontline teams. We present the opportunities; match interested churches with indigenous church planters; coordinate communication, especially in the initial stages; and organize on-field partnership gatherings and three regional CCPA days in the US.

PRESENTING THE OPPORTUNITIES

In our role as CCPA facilitators, we travel and speak in churches, presenting the needs of these unreached peoples and introducing the concept of church-planting movements. We challenge churches to “adopt” a people group in order to learn together, focus their prayer, share the excitement of how God is at work among this people, and help to address the needs of church planters in this specific group. CCPA resources include videos, people group maps, and literature. Part of our task is helping churches understand the security issues and communications guidelines.

Once a church expresses interest in the possibility of partnering, we develop a proposal specifically for them. We first contact the indigenous mission agencies to discover which indigenous team is closest to being ready for deployment and has the greatest financial needs.

Then we develop something similar to a business proposal that presents the potential team, the expectations, opportunities, and benefits. We also outline the costs which usually run about \$5,000 per year, roughly half of which covers sending one representative to the on-field conference.

We also encourage the church to leave room in their budget for specific projects for their frontline team.

Many commit additional funds to be invested in projects requested by their indigenous partners—things like water purification systems, oral translation and scripture distribution projects, scholarships for students and disaster relief efforts.

A KEY TO SUCCESS—

THE ANNUAL ON-FIELD CONFERENCE

Bi-annually CCPA holds a “All CCPA Gathering” in the country but outside the ministry area, a location where there are few if any security concerns. Western partner churches are encouraged to send one or more representatives. Each of the indigenous church-planting teams attends. The indigenous sending agency and the indigenous sending churches are also encouraged to send representatives.

The travel and accommodation expenses for the indigenous workers are supplied by the Western churches. They pay their own airfare, in-country costs as well as the (roughly) \$150 per person needed to cover the cost for the indigenous workers.

The primary purpose of the three-day gathering is to develop and support relationships, so there is extended time for the Western church partners to meet with their indigenous church-planting team. A guide is provided which helps the groups to get to know each other better and to establish goals for their partnership for the coming year. Many of the indigenous partners speak English, but translators are provided wherever needed.

This gathering also provides spiritual nourishment. For the church-planting teams, this is a much-needed opportunity to be outside their people group and in an environment where they are encouraged and refreshed. Each team has an opportunity to share progress and challenges with the entire group and receive encouragement and prayer.

The results of this three-day, relationship-building time are incredible. The church planters are renewed

to return to their difficult and spiritually dark locations. The Western church reps are encouraged by the faith and testimony of their frontline partners who are putting their lives on the line every day. They return to their churches with a fresh burden to engage prayer for their team and creatively support them.

A number of churches have sent representatives to the conference before committing to join CCPA, sort of a

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vision trip to see partnerships in action. The experience has always been an important factor in their decision to participate.

MOBILIZING PRAYER

We encourage the indigenous team members to communicate with their partner churches via (secure) social-media platforms, email, or phone. At first the information tends to flow through us, and we pass it to their respective Western church partners. Over time, we have watched the cross-cultural partners begin to communicate directly with one another without our help. Depending on the location of the teams, this communication may be by email on a secure server, snail mail, text platforms, phone calls, or through the intermediary of an indigenous mission agency. One advantage in our location is that most of our church planters are fluent in English.

As bicultural facilitators, we produce a regular communiqué that is available to all CCPA partner

churches as well as many individuals who also support teams in CCPA. This newsletter provides information for prayer from all 13 of the CCPA frontline teams.

SHARING FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

Financial support is an important contribution of the Western churches, but they are strongly advised not to commit more than 50% of a church-planting team's support in order to prevent creating dependency. Frontline missionaries are encouraged to establish their own support network of churches in their own country. Just \$100 to \$300 a month from the West goes far in helping to keep a team on the front lines because many of the workers are bivocational. Since the financial threshold is so low, even small churches can adopt and support a team. One church asks each of its small groups to "fast" for a week each month from something (such as soft drinks or lattes), and the money saved is given towards the support of their workers.

Western churches also have contributed resources such as leadership and devotional books, laptop computers, DVD towers, water purification knowledge, and other aspects of development projects that have greatly benefited frontline teams' work and community connections. One year some Westerners attending the CCPA Gathering brought 120 solar-powered tape players provided by another US ministry.

Ideas for larger projects are also incubated at the gathering. One of the American church pastors is in dialog with the indigenous agencies about launching a new training center in the vicinity of the teams, making it possible for them to get additional Bible and ministry preparation on an ongoing basis.

Most Western partner churches make one-year support commitments. During the CCPA Gathering,

partners assess the goals, progress, and needs of the ministry. As a result, the Western church can make an informed decision about ongoing support. Again, CCPA does not govern partnerships but exists to establish and enhance them. Decisions about support are made between the churches, mission agencies, and teams.

GROWING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships is a third and invaluable fruit of CCPA. Personal, cross-cultural relationships spur on and encourage the frontline teams which serve in dangerous and lonely situations.

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A CCPA Partner Church

A few of the church planters supported by the western churches in CCPA are Muslim-background believers who have never experienced church in the traditional sense and cannot visit churches in their country because exposure could jeopardize their ministry. Partnership through CCPA becomes a lifeline of encouragement and support. One of these workers declared that he considers himself a member of his supporting church in the US because that is the only congregation with which he has regular contact and feels a sense of belonging.

SECURITY ISSUES

Part of our job as CCPA facilitators is to make sure that security guidelines are followed. Once they understand the potential dangers, churches are usually very sensitive to security concerns. They don't want to jeopardize the work of the partners they have come to love and admire.

The church planters are renewed, and the Western church reps return with a fresh burden to pray and creatively support them.

NETWORKS OF CHURCHES

Most of our Western church partners support one of the church-planting teams (which vary in size from one to seven units). A group of congregations in the St. Louis area, "Michiana" (Indiana and Michigan) and the mid-Atlantic have formed CCPA networks. These churches work together to support a team in a specific people group. The pastor of one of the CCPA network churches serves as a communication hub for that network, regularly bringing the churches together for prayer and ministry updates from the frontline team.

Each November, the three regional networks gather for a one-day CCPA conference. Designed to raise awareness and involvement of area churches, this program includes a demographic picture of the yet-to-be-reached people groups, a traditional meal of the country where our church planters serve, and reports from the local churches on their specific partnership.

CHURCHES' PERSPECTIVES

Pastor **Clint Hamilton** of Hope Church in St. Louis, MO, attended the first in-country gathering way back in 2005. "Meeting the team members was so important," he says. "Talking with them solidified our relationship. Attending the CCPA Gathering provides networking, knitting of hearts, and accountability.

"We see this as a true partnership. We aren't the great American church coming to save the world. When we realize that they [the frontline teams] suffer and sacrifice, it helps us not to be so arrogant with the resources we have. We learn from them."

Regarding the CCPA Gathering, one pastor said, "Overcoming the American mindset that you have to go there and physically do something is the most challenging aspect. The common question from potential partners is, 'What will I be doing there?' They tend to feel they are useless if they aren't doing a project.

"We try to explain that they can make a significant contribution by just going and interfacing with the frontline teams. The first thing, the last thing, and frequently in between our indigenous partners ask, 'Please pray for us.' Prayer and a modest amount of financial support mean a lot to them."

Retired Pastor of Outreach Greg Carter from Liberty Bible Church in Chesterton, IN, helped coordinate the "Michiana" CCPA network of churches. "We wanted to make sure that we did not overshadow the efforts of the indigenous church to take the gospel to others in their own country, so we developed a partnership agreement with the indigenous denomination under which our frontline team serves.

"One aspect of this agreement is a policy that we provide financial support on a matching-fund basis because we believe that these workers should be supported by their own churches. Initially we

provide half of whatever amount they are lacking and that amount is matched by new support that the agency solicits from churches there. As the amount of support coming from the denomination's churches increases, our support will drop back, allowing us to take on the support of a new team.

"Another reason we work through the denomination is to avoid driving a wedge between the indigenous team and their normal supervision in the denomination. Our presence in the equation automatically adds tensions, and we want to minimize them.

The churches in our network here range in size from about 1,500 to 175. To make it equitable, each of us contributes toward the needed support on a per-capita basis. In addition, each church identifies another way in which they can be supportive of the team. For example, one church is assisting with the development of a clean, predictable water supply for the team. Our congregation is investigating what could be done in the area of business development to strengthen the overall economy, although we are not yet very far along on that effort.

"The Martins have been a critical ingredient to make this a broader effort. We all would like to see a natural evolution to indigenous leadership with the strongest indigenous players sharing responsibility. Perhaps some day a stateside

facilitator will not be necessary, but not yet. You must have someone helping you to interpret the critical cultural clues so you understand why your indigenous partners are responding or not responding in a certain way.

"The most important element on this side is the identification of a champion within the local church—someone who is passionate, knowledgeable, and influential. It can be a lay person or pastor, but without one, you aren't going to go very far. Successful partnering also needs leadership from among the pastoral staff, especially the senior pastor.

"In this type of partnership, you have to be flexible and to be willing to be disappointed regularly. For Americans, it is easier to do it ourselves, but we can't, so we need to come to grips with new methods like what (CCPA) facilitates."



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For more information, watch:

- [CCPA Introduction](#)
- [A Pastor's View of CCPA](#)

Or contact ccpafamily@gmail.com

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