

Mission in a Globalized World

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Author: Karin Primuth, visionSynergy CEO | **Source:** Missio Nexus 2019 Mission Leaders Conference on Partnership, September 20 – 22, 2018.

"Partnership is the future of the global mission movement. I don't mean "partnership" in the sense of sponsorship or

financial support. I mean partnership as mutual cooperation – sharing information, sharing resources, and working on joint projects toward shared goals. Partnership is the key that minimizes the duplication of our efforts, maximizes our resources, and enables us as the Body of Christ to leverage our strengths to accomplish together what could never be done alone. Unity results in God's blessing! (Psalm 133)" – Karin Primuth, CEO visionSynergy

THE IMPACT OF THE PARTNERING MOVEMENT

Thirty years ago, there were very few field-based, inter-organizational mission partnerships. But over time, many mission leaders and field workers began to ask themselves: "If we really want to see a spiritual breakthrough in this area of ministry, is there anything we might do better together than if we continue to work separately?" As a result, hundreds of mission partnerships have been launched across the world.

In many places where ministries joined hands in partnership, there were tremendous spiritual breakthroughs among the unreached. For example, partnership work among the Kabyle people in North Africa resulted in one of the largest movements of Muslims to Christ. Partnerships in Central Asia resulted in national language churches in every country of the region and an annual consultation of 300+ leaders coordinating regional ministry. The Mongolia Partnership saw growth from a handful of known believers in the 80's to more than 75,000 believers.

Today there are hundreds of networks – including all kinds of partnerships, alliances, and other collaborations – in a variety of mission fields operating at local, national, regional, and global levels. Linking Global Voices (linkingglobalvoices.com), a website developed by Eldon Porter, Missio Nexus Consultant for Global Engagement, tracks over 600 mission networks that are uniting the church to be on mission together. Each network draws together dozens if not hundreds of individuals and organizations around areas of common interest such as geographic regions, people groups, and mission strategies.

These networks have become the best places for mission leaders from the North, South, East, and West to connect, build trust, define their different roles, and develop shared strategies that draw on the unique strengths of each ministry.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH

While many early partnerships were pioneered by Western ministries, that picture has dramatically changed as those places that were once the "harvest field" are now becoming the "harvest force". A hundred years ago, 60% of the world's Christians lived in Europe. Today, 60% of the world's Christians now live in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Half the top 20 mission sending countries are now in the Global South. Today's missionary is just as likely to be from Brazil, Nigeria, or India as from America. One movement in the Chinese church is mobilizing 20,000 Chinese missionaries to the unreached by 2030!

God is raising up the largest mission force in history from all corners of the world. Many of the unreached peoples of the world now have a near-culture church. This means that the future priority of North American

missions will be less about pioneering and more about partnering. While the role of North American missions and churches may be changing, we still have a crucial role to play, and our commitment to partnering is essential.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Agencies and churches that want to have a vital role in shaping the future strategies of global missions will be actively involved in networks and partnerships with a focus on their specific fields of ministry. Here are several action steps your ministry can take to get more intentionally involved in mission networks.

1. **Internally assess which of your mission priorities would most benefit from participation in a network.** Are you considering expansion into new fields and want to know who is there and what is needed? Do you have emerging issues that need the expertise of others? Besides knowing what you could get from a network, it's important to know what you can contribute. Identify your own areas of expertise you could share. Network participation is most valuable when you know what you can gain and what you can give.

2. **Externally assess what networks already exist and which ones might provide the greatest value for participation.** Not all networks have a clearly defined vision, effective leadership structures, and opportunities for participation. Talk to people about their own experience with networks operating in your fields of ministry. Many networks have annual or biennial consultations you can visit to explore possible involvement.

3. **Develop a collaboration-friendly culture that contributes to Kingdom impact by investing personnel and resources in networks.** Networks need committed leaders and sufficient resources to accomplish their shared goals and joint projects. The most fruitful networks have leaders who have permission to give significant time to the network, rather than juggling a full-time organizational role and a network role. If your ministry has a value for collaboration and chooses to participate in a network, then intentionally commit personnel and resources to the network for the greatest Kingdom contribution. Your ministry and many others will benefit from the shared outcomes that will often be much greater than what you could accomplish alone.

I pray that you will be listening to what the Lord is saying to you as a mission leader about your own commitment and calling to partnership. In a world increasingly divided, it is our love for one another, demonstrated in our ability to work together, that gives credibility to the Gospel and fulfills the prayer of Jesus: "May they be ONE … so that the world will believe" (John 17:21).

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