

AFRIGO

Encouraging the African Church in world mission

GRIEF, SCORPIONS,
AND HEALING

BURDENED BEYOND MEASURE

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TRAUMA AND MEMBER CARE
HELP FOR OUR HURTING
MISSIONARIES

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BURDENED BEYOND MEASURE

BY CHINEDU ORANYE

Just finished a long phone call with a brother who serves in a pioneering mission context. He was utterly traumatized by what his leader was doing to him. He felt rejected, abandoned, stigmatized, completely lost, and worst of all – alone. He couldn't place why his leader treated him with such antagonism. Rather than providing comfort and guidance, his leader seemed set to make life more difficult for him. He was battered outside and inside. He needed comfort. He needed a listening ear. He needed to be understood. He needed counselling. He needed prayer.

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:8).

People do not realize the weight and trauma that many pioneer missionaries face as they seek to execute the Great Commission mandate. Paul said they were "burdened beyond measure, above strength." This great apostle reports that they "despaired even of life." Imagine Paul, with all his anointing and grace, despairing of life! And it was not him alone, but his entire team with him. Incredible.

Pioneering is dangerous work because not only do we face territorial spirits who seek to keep us out of their domain, but we also face many personal, internal, team, and family crises that, put together, aim to cripple us from within. Trauma is that pain that crowds out God's promises for us, swallows up our internal peace, distorts our perspective, and leaves us feeling desperate and unstable.

As missionaries persevere through their emotional and other struggles, the Church and their sending communities of friends need to be there for them. They need persons of peace with whom they can share their hearts and struggles without fear or judgement. Unfortunately, too many pioneers do not receive this care, and they grow ineffective in their calling because of the flood of internal turmoil they carry

within their bosoms. Team issues, marriage issues, self-worth issues, and failure issues – all roll up together to battle against their sanity and calling.

But they need not fight these battles alone. In God's strategic plan, each member of the body plays a crucial role in keeping the body healthy. Within the fold, God has planted men and women who are pastoral at heart – those who know how to listen, to touch, to heal, and to comfort. In verse 4, Paul says that we are comforted so that "we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble." The best member care practitioners are people who have survived trauma, have healed, and are now able to comfort others. God is redeeming His people by raising up a tribe of comforters who had been bruised by Satan, and having been healed, are now becoming God's agents of consolation to others in the missions movement who suffer trauma. Let us learn to be comforters! Healing is possible!

In this edition of AfriGO, meet James Thiga, a passionate missionary who struggled emotionally on the mission field but later received help. In our perspective article, Jeremy and Anastasia explain trauma and member care and why missionaries need people to help them cope and overcome. For our training pages, we have compiled articles from member care professionals on how to offer practical help to missionaries. Finally, Mule's* story demonstrates that traumatic experiences need not keep missionaries off the field for good; healing and restoration are possible. Enjoy this edition of AfriGO, and share with others!

**People do not
realize the weight
and trauma that
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missionaries face.**

Dr. Chinedu Oranye is a Nigerian Bible teacher, author, leadership mentor, and pastor. His ministry has taken him to over 30 countries, sharing and communicating Christ's Gospel of love, redemption, and faith to the lost and the Church. He serves with Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Haggai International. He is married to Taiwo and they have three children. chinedu.oranye@gmail.com

GRIEF, SCORPIONS, AND HEALING



Representational photo: AIM Stories

CALLED: JAMES THIGA

AS TOLD TO MERCY KAMBURA

I was struggling. Like frying popcorn in an open pot, my unexpressed emotions flew everywhere. I seethed silently in resentment and stewed in my depressive thoughts.

My relationship with fellow missionaries teetered on irreparable damages. Naturally introverted, I avoided sharing my opinions in team meetings; I felt they weren't valued.

Our team worked among a hostile people group. Several times while collecting wood with community members, they threatened to beat me up just because they could. This was no bluff; I had seen others beaten. Consequently, I was overly friendly and politically correct around them.

We also lived in perpetual fear of vipers and scorpions, both for ourselves and our kids. Children have been known to die from stings or bites. One day, like Job of old, what I feared came – a scorpion stung me! I was swollen for days, almost unable to swallow food.

Despite the stresses and turmoil, I endeavored to keep the vision alive. I loved spreading the Gospel. I still do. From the moment I was born again, I told anyone about Christ. Those sitting next to me on a bus would be preached to. I had given myself to missions and had registered years of fruitful ministry. Why, then, was I struggling so much?

We decided to move to a new field to ease our mental and emotional burdens. We even transported our belongings to the new site ahead of our move, but before arriving, someone broke into our storage unit and stole our things.

I was stretched to my elastic limit. Taking a break was imperative. We left the field to recharge, re-strategize, and ask God if we had heard Him rightly.

Detour to the past

During this break, we heard about Ellet Ministries. They focused on inner healing and restoration from past experiences, present struggles, and future expectations. Ellet

provided us a safe place and people to talk with honestly about our experiences. Here, I came face-to-face with ... myself. We processed traumatic experiences from both the recent mission field and from our distant pasts. I saw the effect of trauma on my emotions, mind, and spirit.

My struggles stemmed from unhealed heartaches, the greatest being unresolved grief. Years before, I lost my elder sister in a tragic road accident. She was my best friend and closest family member.

I never got to mourn her. We just laid her to rest, and I returned to university. Once a straight-A student, my grades plummeted. Only by my mother's prayers did I complete my degree in engineering.

I felt abandoned. Why was my closest confidante plucked away from me, yet everyone's life went on? The sun still rose and the earth orbited the sun with no care that my life had been upended.

The broken man became a broken missionary; the Christian who reached out passionately, mourned internally. I was bleeding on those around me, leaving a trail of hurting hearts. I became aloof and I fit into the team like an elephant in a hummingbird's nest.

But I began to see how my reactions were sinful. I had grown fearful, judgemental, isolated, and resentful. I owned up to my part, and God bound up my brokenness.

Now, we work with Ellet Ministries, helping others find healing like we did.

No one is exempt from traumatic experiences. Missionary preparation should include facing past trauma. If you go to the field still broken from the past, you may struggle in the ministry and your walk. You may be tempted to quietly move to a different field, ministry, or type of service. It is better to seek help. Holistic healing is possible from God—a healed missionary can minister effectively to the unreached!

A healed
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INSTRUMENTS OF CARE

BY JEREMY & ANASTASIA THOMAS

All Christians, even missionaries, are not super-human. We're broken people who experience hardships. Political unrests, trembling economies, and the global pandemic paint a picture of losses, and often traumatic experiences. Our God is immeasurably caring and faithful (Ps. 23). But how does God practically care for us? Through His hands and feet – His people. Just as God calls people to be part of His mission to the least-reached, so He calls others to care for them.

Member care

Ronald L. Koteskey describes member care with such words as: encouragement, friendship, communicating, help, affirmation, fellowship, counselling, visiting, debriefing, guiding, and comforting.

In addition to the Holy Spirit given as a comforter to all Christians (Jn. 14-16), God often uses other people – pastors, counsellors, and friends – to help us. Among missionaries, having someone come alongside to offer help is “member care.” This may be a routinely scheduled visit from a pastor asking, “How are you doing?” Or it may be a psychologist attending to a missionary for trauma debriefing to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (For help, visit missionarycare.com/member-care.html).

Trauma

People experience trauma when they respond with intense fear, helplessness, or horror to something that involves the threat of death or serious injury to themselves or others (such as accident, assault, rape, violent conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics, etc.). Although nearly everyone living through such events has symptoms for a week or two, some have

longer-lasting ones. Those experiencing extended periods of severe trauma and stress without access to trauma debriefing and counselling might develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which necessitates professional help.

When we get hurt physically, it is normal to seek a doctor's help. When we feel spiritually unwell, it is normal to call on a pastor or spiritual leader. But too often, missionaries who don't feel well mentally and emotionally either don't want to ask for help or don't know whom to turn to. Asking for help is perceived as a weakness or lack of spirituality. We would like to see this perspective changed. Asking for help and professional support should be a sign of positive self-awareness, strength of character, and resilience.

A cross-cultural missionary family lost a child some years ago. Their senders provided a trauma debriefing, furlough for proper rest, and ample recovery time. Though the loss was tremendous, so was the senders' outpouring of care. Now, they are back in ministry, blessing those they serve among.

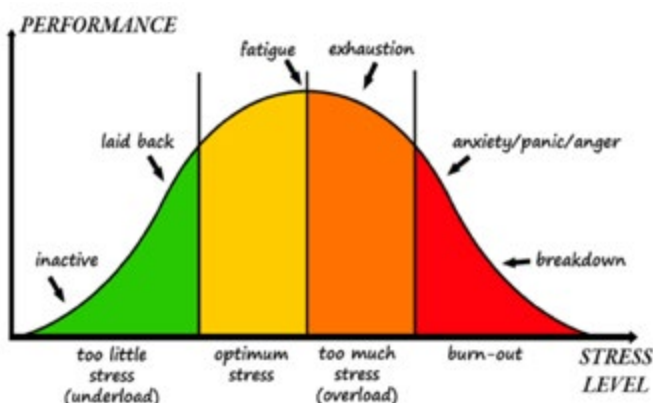
A missionary team serving in a remote Ugandan village learned that war had broken out in their home country. Concern for their families and limited internet access made it difficult to focus on ministry. Their mission agency sent a member care person to debrief and counsel them. This helped some to decide to return to their families enduring the war. Others chose to stay, knowing they had access to a counsellor for help to process their personal trauma as they continued to serve in Uganda.

In traumatic situations on the mission field, both staying and leaving are right choices. But processing both options with a member care practitioner makes a big difference in the capacity of a missionary to serve and bear a good testimony in the long-term.

All senders may not have the necessary resources to provide their missionaries with professional support. The good news is that Global Member Care Network and Africa Member Care Network platforms (on Facebook) are available where any sender can ask for help. We highly recommend that senders be more intentional to invest in member care providers by equipping them with basic care skills.

Member care resources, such as the Light-bearer's Manual for Member Caring, Encouraging & Linking are available on <https://daybreak-academy.org/resources/>, along with several member care opportunities in the Africa Member Care Network bi-monthly newsletter (subscribe here: <https://bit.ly/45sNU81>).

Jeremy and Anastasia are a Mauritian-Ukrainian couple passionate about caring for Christians, especially people in ministry and missions. They both have cross-cultural mission experience and now serve with Daybreak Academy focused on Member Caring and Christian Networking. They are certified counsellors and facilitators of inner healing and ethnic reconciliation.



Graph: Ivelin Radkov



Photo: Rod Waddington

BEHIND THE WALLS OF CRUSHING TRAUMA

BY KATE AZUMAH

After Mule* hung up the phone, he felt like someone had turned him upside down. He knew intimately what was at stake. He felt betrayed, maligned, and crushed, but the impact was only beginning. “I was preparing for an exam that week. Everything I had studied vanished from my mind as if I had learned nothing.” How could they take such a dire decision without him?

Mule and his family have a history of 11 years in the mission field. Four of them were spent serving the unreached Mursi people in southwestern Ethiopia. The community mistrusted foreigners and city folks; so the missionaries worked hard to build friendships and earn their trust over the years. Mule was in charge of a mission project the community regarded as the apple of their eye. It was their only source of health, education, and good farming methods. Suddenly, Mule had to tell them the project was closing.

Worse, he didn’t know the reason. Others had decided, and he had become a mere messenger.

A sudden end

Days following the grave news, Mule ran several errands; sometimes walking long distances to deliver documents at government offices to finalize the closure. The harder part was how to inform the community. Missionaries who had served there advised him to invite the community’s Christian elders and relay the news to them.

Mule reveals, “It was a terrifying moment. Even though these were Christians, in their tradition, they are a proud people. They carried rifles and could shoot without batting an eye, especially if it involved the threat of losing something dear to them.” After he announced the closure, Mule saw something he had never seen before—a dignified Mursi man deflated like a balloon. “Why, what did we do?

Did our children steal something? Why are you closing the project?” they asked. None of them could believe it. They thought they were to blame.

“We finished all the paperwork and invited co-missionaries for handing-over formalities. Then we bought a bull and killed it. In Mursi culture, a matter is sealed by the slaughtering of an ox. That was when the community realized, sadly, that the mission project was indeed over.”

Mourning and comfort

“As a family, we had prayed the night we first heard the news, but it was very hard. We felt betrayed by our leaders. My wife avoided seeing our director altogether because she didn’t want to get emotional and say something bad to him. Unfortunately, the guesthouse where we stayed back in the city also hosted our organization’s office, so we had to see him every day.” Mule laughs about that now, seven years later.

“For a whole year, we lost our joy. There was something we had to forgive, but our hearts were too wounded to do it. It was like a cancer eating up our insides. We were no longer involved in ministry and had no financial support.

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Once, all we had was 20 Ethiopian birr – less than a dollar – for our family with three children. It was difficult and painful, but God provided for us somehow. He even made us a blessing to other people in need sometimes.

Mule says that during this period, they were sustained by the prayers, fellowship, and listening ears of trusted friends who encouraged them to focus on Christ. Other well-meaning comforters, however, only stoked the fires of their frustration and anger with prescriptions of what should have been done and not done. “That did not help us. In such situations, you need the right people to share your struggles with; the wrong people will make things worse.”

The Lord's way

Following their experience, Mule and his wife decided to quit as missionaries. “We were well-educated, so we wanted to look for good jobs and support missionaries instead. But God said, ‘No, I’m not finished with you. I want you to continue with the organization, and I want you to forgive.’”

A leader in Mule’s organization got to know, a year later, that their decision had caused harm. He heard about it from other workers and invited Mule and his wife to talk about what happened. “We were able to explain what was on our hearts. We also discovered we couldn’t blame him. He had assumed we were well informed. With organizational hierarchies, sometimes information dissemination doesn’t go as desired.”

Their leader asked for forgiveness, and Mule and his wife also did. “We felt like a huge burden was lifted off us. The



The church in Mule's Mursi village

head of our organization also visited us in our country and listened to our story. He gave us a book; *Persecuted by Christians*, which encouraged us greatly.”

“Our experience helped me to understand how Jesus passed through Gethsemane and was betrayed by His own disciple. One of the most difficult situations we can face is persecution from other believers. I learned humility and forgiveness. When we decide to follow Jesus, we don’t receive blessings only; we also suffer, sometimes at the hands of our Christian brothers and sisters.”

Professional help

Mule did not receive professional help for his traumatic experience, but he shares this: “In Africa, trauma and suffering are part of our culture and our life. You will face one and move on to the next bigger one. I think our blood and our skins are very hard compared to others, because for us life is always about survival. We should rather ask what we can learn from our difficult experiences, so we don’t repeat them.”

“Professional help is good, but it should be sensitive to the African context, and provided by Africans. Professional help that is Western doesn’t always help. I heard about a missionary family that experienced trauma in the field. For them, the incident was part of life, but the more painful experience was the professional help they received. Some of the questions asked were more traumatizing than the situation itself.”

A listening Church

How can the Church better serve hurting and traumatized missionaries?

To this, Mule responds, “Provide a platform for them to share what they are going through and just listen. Listen carefully without judging or questioning. Allow them to express their challenges. They are the ones in the field relating to their neighbours, having problems with the community, etc. Don’t assume you know all about it. Then find ways to best minister to the missionary after listening. That would be helpful. Missionaries need help.”

Mule and his family were healed and restored. They returned to their organization and served among another unreached people group for four years. Currently, they are serving in their third station, still with the same organization.

“Now, we are okay,” Mule says. “We may not know who is coming with a good intention or a bad one, but our hearts are open to everyone and we are at peace.”

Traumatic experiences may be inevitable in the mission field, but they need not have the last word. God’s healing and restoration are possible! Since missionaries are almost always sent from a local church, it is good for the Church to know how to serve their hurting and traumatized missionaries.

PRAY FOR:

- Missionaries experiencing trauma to receive the needed help.
- The Church to be more supportive of hurting missionaries.
- God’s grace and provision for member care providers.



Mule's daughter and a Mursi child



Photo: AIM Stories

CARING FOR MISSIONARIES:

A HOLISTIC AND PRACTICAL APPROACH

By Monica Miako
Founder, Great Commission Support

Thomas* had been serving as a missionary for over 10 years. Due to some conflict and misunderstanding, he was confronted and dismissed without a hearing. Shortly afterwards, he became hypertensive. His wife also began having sleepless nights. Three years later, they came across a member care provider.

The Global Member Care Network defines member care as “doing whatever it takes, within reason, to ensure that our workers feel cared for and supported by their agency and church; that they have the resources they need to work effectively, and to care well for themselves and their families. It is comprehensive – the ongoing preparation, equipping and empowering of missionaries for effective and sustainable life, ministry, and work.”¹

Missionary member care takes place throughout a missionary’s lifetime from the point of selection to retirement. Its importance cannot be understated as it helps the missionary to make cross-cultural adjustments and find support easily. This normalizes the missionary’s response to the numerous transitions in the field and minimizes anxieties. Missionary care should be offered by the sending church or agency. Collaboration is imperative as no one organization has all the resources to provide care as required.

Great Commission Support or GCS is a pioneer missionary care organization in Kenya, founded after observing a gap in care which not only caused missionaries to leave the field prematurely, but also hindered the work significantly. Against this backdrop of lost enthusiasm for the work, stress, and burnout, GCS saw to it that missionaries are restored to fulfill their calling with joy and to finish well.

GCS comes alongside missionaries by providing a network of social support around them. These relationships are formed through field visits and they become the foundation for identifying and meeting needs.

The holistic care approach includes food packages, hosting, prayer, field visits, debriefing retreats, care conferences, and networking with professionals (e.g. medical doctors and psychologists) and financial support partners.

Regular field visits: Missionaries feel special and honoured when efforts are made to visit them in the field. This builds trust, shows empathy, and encourages the missionary.

Informal and formal debriefing: During field visits, informal debriefing can take place. This entails giving room for missionaries to share their experiences and listening as they do. This helps to detect and address needs requiring specialized interventions.

On request by sending agencies or when a need is identified, a group of missionaries may come to a central location for formal debriefing. Debriefing unpacks and processes the burdens of the heart in light of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Missionaries are in the business of dislodging the hold of the kingdom of darkness upon a community. This makes them targets for the enemy. Member care can be a channel of raising prayer support or connecting missionaries with prayer groups.

Hosting: Missionaries desire a place away from the field where they can rest and be refreshed physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This demonstrates that they are loved and valued, and affirms their calling.

Re-entry support: Missionaries returning home after serving for a period need support as they deal with reverse culture shock. Their adaptations in the field mean they are not the same individuals who left home. Care includes listening to their stories and unresolved field issues, and any other support to make life back home less turbulent.

Psychological counselling: Missionaries with deeper psychological needs are referred for specialized care.

Thomas and his wife shed tears as they shared their story with the member care provider. The shame and loss were constant stressors. They both lost sleep and were unable to concentrate on daily tasks.

After identifying the need as a mental health challenge, the member care provider referred them to a counselling psychologist. They later recovered well, and Thomas gave thanks for normalized sleep patterns and a restored life.

¹ Global Member Care Network <https://globalmembercare.com/definitions/>

COUNSELLING: BARRIERS AND BENEFITS

By Ronel Geldenhuys, Ellel Ministries Africa

The life of a cross-cultural missionary is fraught with stressors not typically experienced by those who reside in their own countries or culture. Traumas on the field can range from unexpected disappointments to compounded tragedies that bring faith to a grinding halt. These, together with expectations of the church, supporters, and themselves, may drive missionaries to dismiss the realities of their trauma in order to survive and continue with ministry.

Receiving counselling is perhaps misunderstood in some African contexts, especially when expressing emotions is seen as a weakness or sin. Post-traumatic symptoms such as fear, nightmares, flashbacks, and panic attacks may be perceived as 'un-Christian' by other believers, who may advise with a caring heart to "pray, read the Word and have more faith."

A missionary may feel uncomfortable about sharing their

cross-cultural struggles with a professional who is only familiar with the host culture. Others who recognize their need for help may not know a safe place to go for counselling or cannot afford the cost. Sometimes available services are not equipped to handle the depth of healing required.

Coping mechanisms such as unhealthy emotional connections, compulsive ministry engagements, secret addictions, etc. are other barriers that prevent God's life from caring for the wounded heart.

Benefits of counselling

On the cross, Jesus made a way to heal even the most traumatized person (Is. 61:1-3; Lk. 4:18). Jesus wants to bind up the shattered pieces

caused by trauma and restore our lives back to His purposes (Is. 61:1-3).

Receiving counselling teaches humility. Sometimes one needs to repent of using fleshly means to care for the broken heart.

Counselling and prayer ministry also restore a more intimate relationship with Jesus. Many who are restored have gone back to the field to serve in more powerful ways. I love the invitation in Psalm 27:8 NLT: "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'"

For more information visit www.ellel.org.za.

The following books are available from Ellel:

Healing from Accidents and Trauma and *Healing through Creativity*. Link to the full article: <https://bit.ly/3OUYLrm>



TRAUMA HEALING NETWORK

The Trauma Healing Network (THN) launched in September 2012 as a Bible-engagement project of the Bible Society of Namibia. People in Namibia often do not receive effective trauma help because support services are not readily available or affordable for everyone. The most important goal of THN is to cultivate communities which are not only able to handle their own trauma effectively, but can also form a mutual support base. THN's team of facilitators in Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi aim to bring healing to traumatized people and equip them with skills and knowledge in dealing with trauma.

Trauma interrupts our ability to function in our daily lives and disconnects us from engaging in deep personal relationships. THN's Programme Coordinator, Fatima Mwange says, "Our work is life-saving because we target root causes of trauma that are often contributors to social,

spiritual, and personal issues. We share information on trauma and the new possibilities offered by biblical hope and healing with schools, churches, organizations, and workplaces."



Photo: AIM Stories

Online Training for Facilitators

The training equips participants with practical skills to teach and facilitate healing retreats and healing groups. During the training, they learn how to identify and understand trauma and what methods to follow when helping a traumatized person.

Duration: The training program is once a week for six weeks. Meetings are held via Zoom for two hours in the evenings. The session dates and times can be altered to suit the schedule of participants.

Fees: The training fee is USD 45.00 and includes training materials.

Evaluation: A three-month assignment and mentoring period must be completed before a certificate is issued.

The next online course begins soon. Contact us to register:

Facebook: Trauma Healing Network

Email: colourme2@thnnam.org.na

GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILIZING CHURCH

IGNITE CONFERENCE 2023

Global Link Afrika held its every-three-years Ignite Missions Conference in Kampala, Uganda, from May 1-5, 2023. With a focus on those engaged in indigenous African missions, it drew over 200 attendees. Most hailed from Uganda but others came from Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and South

Sudan. Global Link Afrika (GLA) is a Ugandan founded and run mission organization that identifies, equips, links, and partners with the Church to send Christians into missions.

Some topics discussed were: "Issues and trends affecting missions today", "Mobilizing indigenous resources

for missions", "Missional heritage of Uganda", "When the Church prays for global mission", and others. Following the conference, the unit leader for Africa Inland Mission (AIM), Sam Opolot, organized a continuing dialogue to bring together local partners in Uganda for further action.

MOBILIZATION CONSULTATION

A consultation on African missions mobilization took place in June 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa, hosted by SIM. For six days, more than 50 attendees from 14 countries met to discuss strategies for releasing African workers and African resources for the work to which God has called them.

The increase in African missionaries comes with the need for better financial strategies and providing member care. Representatives were from mission agencies such as African-founded Global Link Afrika, SIM, The Kingdom Projects, and AIM, as well as business leaders and representatives from large African churches. The group discussed how to work more effectively with churches and how to see what some consider weaknesses as strengths instead.

Dr. Joshua Bogunjoko, SIM international director, reminded the group, "God never commands what His people cannot deliver by His spirit, His power, His provision, and His wisdom." The attendees also spent time in prayer and group discussions to consider ways of better collaboration locally and across the continent.



BOOK REVIEW

New Funding Models for Global Mission: Learning from the Majority World, By Tim Welch

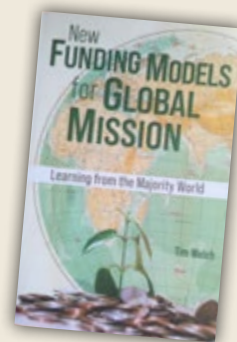
Three phrases made me want to read Tim Welch's book: "funding models", "global mission" and "Majority World." As someone familiar with the financial challenges experienced by Africans in missions, I was eager to discover ideas and 'formulas' that would be game-changers in mission financing for Africa in particular. I came away with more than I expected.

Beyond offering practical ideas and success stories backed by findings from the author's research, I found the book well-stocked with scriptural expositions, and relevant analyses of the Majority World's economic realities. My key observation, however, was that adopting the models suggested will lead to a greater mission participation by the whole Church.

The author provides simple and effective ways for the Body of Christ to share in the funding demands, thereby affording more missionaries to be sent from the Majority World. Welch's book is relevant not only to all those already involved in mission; ordinary believers, irrespective of their occupational or economic standing, will find its contents an informative and helpful guide to contributing meaningfully to God's global mission.

I wish the book's research had also covered a study on the state of mission needs that are uniquely challenging to funding the Majority World. Nevertheless, I unreservedly recommend Welch's book as a timely resource for pastors, mission leaders, missionaries, and every believer.

-Kate Azumah, Managing Editor for AfriGO



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PHASE MINISTRY:

Missionary Delegates at a PHASE conference in Nakuru, Kenya.

A REFUGE FOR MISSIONARIES

BY KATE AZUMAH

For someone with a sheltered profession in the field of finance, *Matthew's transition was drastic and unexpected. It started with a strong conviction that the Lord wanted him on precarious frontlines with missionaries and pastors serving in volatile regions. Ten years on, that conviction has evolved into Pastors' Health Awareness Support and Empowerment or PHASE, a ministry offering God's balm of healing, deliverance, and restoration to hurting missionaries and church leaders.

"Between 2012 and 2014, we hosted conferences in South Africa to raise awareness on ministry hazards resulting in early ministry exit. However, the conferences proved to be too academic in nature. We were persuaded by the more urgent need to reach the most vulnerable Christian ministers in Africa."

"I met with various people across Kenya who verified that their country was facing a growing enemy in extremism. The Church was on the frontlines assisting affected communities, but the leaders championing this help were left traumatized and without adequate care." The outcome of *Matthew's observation was the PHASE Missions Assistance Programme (P-MAP).

PHASE partnered with Great Commission Support, a member care organization in Kenya. They organized a team of speakers and care-givers from South Africa, and invited 100 to 200 missionaries for debriefing and healing ministry in Nairobi in 2023. "We use a combination of member care principles, but we also expect God Himself to heal and answer their questions. Some of their trauma cannot be handled in a short time, so we look to God as the primary care-giver." *Matthew affirms that God has been faithful, and they have witnessed testimonies of physical and emotional healing, deliverance, and miracles by the Holy Spirit's ministry. Some

on the brink of leaving the field were helped and restored. PHASE also provides a safe house where missionaries go to recover when they need longer-term interventions or short periods of required rest.

"After emotional brokenness, the greatest needs in the mission field are a lack of both adequate financial support and the most basic need for belonging. Many indigenous missionaries are not recognized as legitimate full-time church workers. Even in cases where they are sent by a local church, they are expected to financially and spiritually fend for themselves and their families. Many churches can afford to support them but don't see it as their direct mandate. Some churches have within their radius abandoned missionaries, but will not help them with food or basic care."

*Matthew explains PHASE's motivation: "We believe this is an area that hurts God's heart as a Father. He is the one wanting to reach them through us. Healing presses the 'reset' button in people's ministries. We still have so many to reach."

PHASE provides services free of charge, and caters transportation for the missionaries to travel from various locations to access them. "We want to be a blessing, not a burden," *Matthew shares. "We have a few committed donors who support what we do. We provide regular reports as well as consistent verbal updates to major sponsors. It is important that they see and hear the results. We also believe in integrating our financial supporters into our intercession or planning teams. It's prayer first where we need the greater sacrifice, and then finance."

*Matthew's sentiments should spur local churches to rise up in support of missionaries. He concludes, "It will be a great symbol of a maturing Body of Christ in Africa."

Visit PHASE Ministry at www.phase.org.za.

Some on the
brink of leaving
the field were
restored.



Photo credit: Joni Byker

PEOPLE GROUP: FULANI

The Fulani, who call themselves the Fulɓe, are also known as the Fula, Fulani or Fulɓe. They are a diverse people group spread across about 20 countries of West and Central Africa, from Senegal to Ethiopia. Up to 47 clans and sub-clans are considered Fulani, totaling 50 million people. The largest number lives in Nigeria, followed by Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. Additionally, Fulani diaspora are living on other continents beyond Africa.

Their origins are uncertain; the Middle East or North Africa are possibilities. They mixed with local people and grew to established empires in the region. The Fulani were some of the earliest converts to Islam in sub-Saharan Africa, and spread it across the region through various means including holy wars, which also gained them more grazing lands. Powerful caliphates were founded in various parts of West Africa. To this day the vast majority of Fulani are Muslim.

The Fulani people follow a common cultural code called *Pulaaku*, but are diverse in their cultural practices and lifestyle. They are the world's largest nomadic group. Semi-nomadic

Fulani also raise livestock, but their grazing range is limited to the area where they have become farmers. Settled Fulani reside in towns.

Seasonal conflicts between Fulani herders and people groups who are agriculturalists have increased over the past 10 years, mainly in Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Violent attacks between some Fulani and farmers have devastated communities. These attacks are due to population pressure, changes in land use and access to resources, growing social inequalities, climate change, and a rise in radical Islamist ideology. The situation only grows more complicated when politics and armed conflicts overlap with small unresolved community issues. Religious differences further inflame circumstances.

Like most nomadic groups worldwide, the Fulani have not yet been effectively reached with the Good News. Missionaries and Fulani believers are reaching out to them in various countries. Negative stereotypes about them persist, due to real events as well as perpetuated misunderstandings.

AT A GLANCE

- Folk Islam is commonly practiced, with the use of amulets and witchcraft to protect and to treat illnesses.
- It is difficult for a Fulani to convert to Christianity, since to be Fulani is to be Muslim.
- It is reported that over 500,000 Fulani Christians live in Nigeria, many worshipping in secret.

PRAY FOR

- A movement of Christ leading to a decrease in violent attacks and mistrust, and the spread of peace.
- For Fulani believers to make multiplying disciples among their people.
- A breaking of spiritual strongholds through the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of God's people.

Music produced by Fulani believers: <https://www.youtube.com/@jamtan6415> • Video to pray for the Fulani: <https://youtu.be/z6yAe8zotPY>
Sources: Boureima Diallo, boureima@fulaniministries.org • SIM ministry working with the Fulani
<https://africacenter.org/publication/growing-complexity-farmer-herder-conflict-west-central-africa/> • Joshua Project



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