Model for Church-based Relief and Development

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Background

The following summarizes a model determined from literary research of Christian Medical Mission Events. This research is associated with Dissertation **"STRATEGIC USE OF MEDICAL MISSION EVENTS IN LONG-TERM LOCAL CHURCH OUTREACH: A CONSULTANT-STYLE FRAMEWORK FOR MEDICAL MISSION PRACTICIONERS IN THE ILOCOS REGION, PHILIPPINES."** The dissertation centers on grounded theory analysis of interviews. However, the "Double Vortex Model of Relief and Development" is drawn from creative compilation of a variety of literary sources covering medical missions and short-term missions. Although most of the sources center on medical mission work, the model appears to be appropriate for a wide variety of short-term ministries in a community.

Model

Figure 1 shows the model for doing medical missions based on sources listed in the Bibliography involved in medical missions or short-term missions.
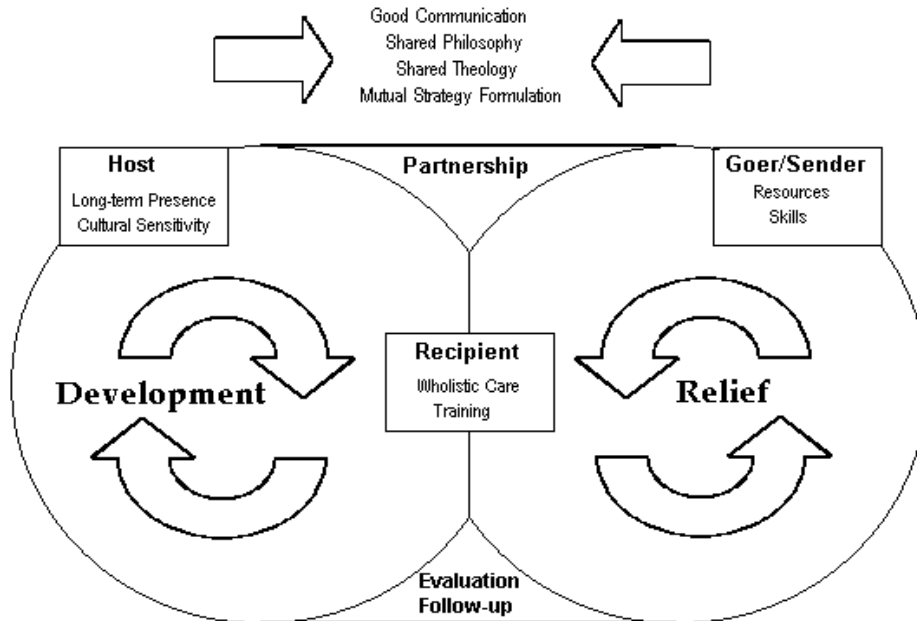

Figure 1. Double Vortex Model of Relief and Development

Ministry in a community involves two groups, hosts and outsiders, who provide care for a third group, the recipients. The hosts are people or groups in a community who are committed to serving God and the community. Outsiders are, not surprisingly, people from outside the community. They may be short-term

missionaries, financial supporters, mobilizers, and so forth. Recipients are people and groups in the community to be served.

Hosts provide at least two very important ingredients to the partnership for ministry:

- **Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity**
- **Long-term Presence**

Outsiders provide two ingredients as well:

- **Material/Financial Resources**
- **Special Skills**

Each group lacks the others' strengths. A failure of either group to provide these ingredients leads to a partnership that is one-sided, or ineffective.

The partnership between hosts and outsiders needs to be founded on common philosophy of ministry and common goals, maintained by transparent communication. With this foundation, the two groups must work together to develop a **mutual** strategy and plan. Any break-down or lopsidedness in this work will lead to problems in the planning and execution of the mission.

The ministry to the recipient should be wholistic. That is, it should focus on the total person and the total community. (Note: some people spell the word "holistic", but I prefer "wholistic" because it is reminds one of "whole" rather than "holy"). Individualistic missions will not transform a community. Focusing on only one area (physical, economic, spiritual, educational, etc.) will not transform a community. One model for describing wholism is from Luke 2:52. It describes Jesus growing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. This suggests mental, physical, spiritual, and social growth. There are other models for wholism, but this can suffice. If any area is ignored, there is a gaping hole in community transformation.

Post-ministry tasks must include evaluation of all aspects of the work, and planned follow-up. Seeds planted will not grow well unless they are properly tended. Follow-up work will not improve unless all parties learn from the past. Follow-up is normally the responsibility of the host, but evaluation is important for all.

The Relief Cycle as shown in the diagram shows the role of the outsider as one who may periodically come in to provide skills and resources and then leave. The Development Cycle as shown in the diagram shows the role of the Host, living in the community and continuing in the tending process of long-term ministry.

Early in ministry work, the greater emphasis may be on relief. However, with material and skills transfer, the necessity of the skills and resources of outsiders should reduce, and the emphasis should move towards the development cycle. Progress does not occur if ministry stays rooted mostly in the relief cycle. That is why training is so important. That being said, in any community it is good if both cycles always exist. Why? There are no perfectly self-sufficient communities. We all are interdependent. Everyone lacks something that someone else could help meet. And no one is so impoverished that they have nothing to offer another.

<u>**Summary**</u>

1. Partnership is critical, and this partnership must be built on mutuality. That is, it should be built on mutual respect, mutual strategizing and planning. All parties need to enter the partnership recognizing that they need to learn something from their partners.

2. Short-term work should be integrated into a long-term process or program. One shot work has little to no long-term impact.

3. Evaluation afterwards is also critical. If short-term work is to be part of a longer process, the short-term work should change as the community and the teams change. This requires evaluation and follow-up efforts.

4. Wholistic work is important… especially emphasizing training and resource transfer. This simply goes back to the old proverb about the fish. Give a fish toConclusi a man, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Short-term work that does not help the community help itself will not lead to community transformation.

5.   Over time, there should be a transition from emphasis on the relief cycle to emphasis on the development cycle. Since an impoverished community has little skills and resources to transform itself, it is more dependent on outsiders. But as the outsiders transfer resources and skills, they become less necessary.

6. Even though things move from relief cycle emphasis to development cycle emphasis, neither cycle should be entirely absent. The development cycle should always exist because even the most impoverished community has some capacity to help itself. Thus it should never entirely rely on outside resources. The relief cycle should always exist because no community is fully self-sufficient. Nether should it be The goal is not independence but mutual interdependence of communities.

Conclusion

There has often been the presumption that short-term mission work is hostile to, or in opposition to, long-term sustained mission work. In some cases, on the other hand, the presumption has been that short-term missions is a good thing regardless of how it is done. However, the truth lies between these two points. Short-term mission work has the potential to be integrated positively into long-term community ministry. The biggest obstacle appears to be the building of healthy mutual partnership between community members and outside organizations. At its worst, short-term missions can hinder long-term work and create dependencies. At its best, it can open the door to greater work for community transformation.

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Robert Munson is adjunct faculty with Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, teaching missions classes. He also is involved, with his wife, and coworkers in Bukal Life Care & Counseling Center… a wholistic ministry based in Baguio City, Philipinnes (www.bukallife.wordpress.com). He has been working in organizing medical mission events (particularly) since 2005. He and his family serve in the Ambassador Program of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board as missionaries to the Philippines (www.vbmb.org). He received his Doctor of Theology degree from Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary January 2012. His missions blog is www.missionmusings.wordpress.com.