

This edition of Educare contains the second of two articles on the theme of African missionaries and their families. We are privileged to have been given the opportunity to see the mission field through African eyes, thanks to the material provided by Dupe Kashimawo. Dupe is an experienced missionary and MK educator who has international responsibility for member care and MKs in her organisation.

In the September 2020 edition of Educare, Part One looked at general attitudes to missions, terms of service, faith and finance, family life, children's education and language learning. Part Two looks at cultural challenges, including working with international mission agencies; member care, the support available from African sending churches, learning from the past, and mistakes made by senders old and new. In addition Dupe shares her perspective on emerging issues for African senders, and advises the more established mission agencies as to how better to understand and partner with Africans. We hope that this information will be both challenging and helpful for those of us who work with, recruit or come across missionaries from Africa.

Gill Bryant

## Understanding Missionaries from Africa Part Two

by Dupe Kashimawo, CAPRO Kenya

*The content of this presentation is a combination of personal experiences and persuasions, as well as information gleaned from CAPRO and other missionaries.*

### **Cultural challenges: describe specific cultural challenges faced by African families**

- **In relating to the host culture: matching the expectations – spoken or unspoken – of others?**

There is a difference between the general perspectives of the African missionary and other (more secular) cultures, which express a very rational way of looking at life. It leads to criticism, cynicism and a very negative attitude to things of God and even life in general. Coming from Africa, our way of looking at life is completely different. In Africa we usually look at things with the 'God factor' perspective. African missionaries are motivated and persuaded of the divine connection in all of life. It is therefore a challenge to be expected to see or behave from a rational perspective. African missionaries generally will see and believe in the divine perspective and intervention in the issues of life, work and ministry, and this can sometime lead to misunderstanding with colleagues who see differently.

- **In relating with the international missions community**

As Africans doing missions in a Western world, we are often one among very few. As an example, cultural differences between French missionaries and American missionaries cause friction. We were caught in the middle of the conflict. (A reality for one of our missionary families.)

- **Is racism a factor?**

When you come from Africa, others already have a built-in suspicion of you, and you have the burden of proving them wrong and establishing trust. Suspicion may lead to certain attitudes and behaviours towards the African missionary that may appear as racism. Sub-Saharan African families serving in Arab countries also face the challenge of racism. Fair-skinned Arabic-speaking peoples have a world view of superior racial theory—a theory proposing that certain races are superior to others and thus the inferior races are maltreated and are seen as less than human.

- **Relating to Africans from different countries**

Some African missionaries, depending on the country they come from, their spiritual maturity and their mission awareness, do come into missions for possible financial benefits. The other more mature and focused fellow African missionaries, who come with a different way of looking at things, may be seen at times to be at odds with fellow Africans. For example, they are not covetous, greedy or grabbing, but are willing to suffer lack if need be rather than to compromise a spiritual position.

- **In relating to Asians, Westerners or Latinos**

In regard to relationship between African missionary families and their colleagues from the West, the African missionary families are often valued by their Western missionary colleagues. The expression of this value leads to cooperation and teamwork. Nevertheless, a stark and glaring imbalance concerning means and lifestyle is something that is often not talked about. Missionaries from the West frequently have the means to travel back to their home countries at least every two years. Some, indeed, travel back home every year. African missionary families serving in countries other than their own, on the other hand, may not have the means to travel back to their home countries at such a regular interval. It might take four years or more before they are able to do so. Such disparity creates, to a large degree, an unconscious sense of superiority that the Western missionary workers may unknowingly display toward their African missionary colleagues. This certainly trickles down to the children of African missionaries serving alongside Western missionaries in some ways. For example, the children of African missionaries often do not have the opportunity to go on vacations to a foreign country or even within the country where their parents are serving, whereas it is common practice for Western missionaries to take their children on vacation trips during the summer. In addition, kids of Western missionaries often will have access to excellent schools, children's toys and games (game consoles for example), which the parents of their African counterparts may not be able to afford for their children.

We haven't had to deal with Asians, but with the few Latinos we have come across, we rather realized that our challenges are similar.

The expectations we have as Africans of our fellow missionaries from the West are very high - in regard to prayer life, firm belief in the Word of God, entire dependence on the Word of God. We believe and want to take the word of the Lord literally even if we may tend to go overboard with that sometimes.

## **The benefits and challenges of working with an international agency**

The International agencies are more advanced, experienced and organized. They have weathered the storms and teething problems that African mission agencies are still grappling with.

The support system is better organized even when it is faith based. It is more solid and regular, which enables the missionaries of these agencies and their children to live a better standard of life, with better schools, for example.

They are more sensitive to missionary care and the children's needs. The organization and the parents intentionally work to ensure that MKs are better cared for, provided for and efforts made to compensate the children for the peculiar calling on their parent's lives and what it exposes them to. They plan, schedule and budget fun, leisure and holidays into their life. This accounts for the longevity of their missionaries on the mission field. Some international missionaries serve their missions into their 80s, while others may even begin mission work at well over the age of 50.

The general care and organization of international agencies can be said to have a great impact or contribution to why some have the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and even 5<sup>th</sup> generation of missionaries in a family. For the African missionary family this is very rare. There is a great tendency for missionary parents to seek a better life for their children other than the difficult one they have had to experience in their mission service. Some may even consider that they have paid the price of sacrifice, so their children could and should be free to serve the Lord in less demanding ways. Many MKs, even though they love the Lord, have chosen not to put their children through a similar path, because of the challenges especially of lack and deprivation.

Working with international agencies stretches your thinking. It makes you gain a wider perspective, thinking outside of your box. You look at the Gospel in a more encompassing way. It enables the missionary and missionary children to be able to respond to every culture and belief system appropriately.

It confirms to you that the Gospel is truly universal, cutting across every culture and peoples, whether developed or developing. It makes you discover that human beings have the same basic need, whether rich or poor, "developed" or not. They need to feel loved by the everlasting love of God. You learn that human development never answers the questions human beings are asking themselves.

## **What are the benefits and challenges of working with an African agency?**

To a good extent, one may feel at home. There is a level of mutual understanding and perspectives one can relate to. Even though there are cultural differences, working within an African mission agency as an African can be more convenient because it is a near culture with colleagues. There is less cost for livelihood required prior to becoming a missionary and the demand by the mission board is generally agreeable.

On the other hand, not enough provision for missionary care and sensitivity towards children and family needs have been put within the structure and policies of African mission agencies. African missions have grown in many ways but with not much growth in the area of member care. The emotional and psychological impact the hardships and trauma families and children go through have a long-lasting impact on them. African missionaries are often affected emotionally and psychologically without realizing it, and access to psychologists or therapists and trained counsellors is often lacking, but the effect can be apparent in the individual or family even when they don't talk about it. Interactions with missionaries and MKs reveal many emotional and psychological wounds as well as a sense of loss at different stages.

### **How is member care organised in CAPRO?**

Member care in CAPRO began to take a more formal shape about 8 years ago. Prior to that, member care was more of leadership pastoral care, staff welfare and a 'one another and communal care'. Leadership addressed the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of members on a one-on-one basis as the need arose through a team assigned to Staff welfare and hospitality.

At present, the leadership at every level have responsibility for member care. We also have member care personnel, those with a calling to member care and those assigned with member care responsibilities. We have member care units under the Human Resources department at the International Office as well as in some of our national headquarters. Member care activities include candidate selection interviews, briefing, orientation and debriefing of missionaries going to or returning to the home country. It involves ensuring that appropriate policies are in place and carried out with regard to the welfare of staff. It includes the care of missionary families and MKs.

On the whole, member care is still a growing concept in CAPRO.

### **In general, how well-developed is the concept of member care amongst African mission agencies?**

Most African mission agencies do not have a structured member care ministry. Member care activities are generally a natural response to the 'love one another' and care command of scriptures and the basic African community care culture. Staff welfare and HR activities might be in place but the organized member care that involves intentional care in a holistic way, trained personnel and laid out guidelines for MC of missionaries at every stage is just emerging for CAPRO and definitely still far-fetched for most African mission organizations.

### **Could you say more about areas such as transition, re-entry to the passport culture for children and adults, the effects of traumatic events such as deportation, evacuation, severe sickness, physical assault and persecution.**

Effective member care activities in these areas are still far from organized care. There is a lot more of a dependence on God and a contentment with whatever is received or not received. This usually results in a lot of wounded emotions and psychological wounds, that impacts on the effectiveness of African missionaries and sometimes early attrition from

mission service. It also results in the negative perception of missions as a vocation by those outside the calling. I can also say that to a large extent it could be the reason why there are so many 'mission' bodies. Often it is as a result of discontentment with the level of care perceived, received or not received within existing mission organizations.

**How well-developed is the idea of member care in churches? (A note – this is still very variable in Western churches, even though the West has a long-standing tradition of sending missionaries.)**

It is very poor due to the same reason as for the poor support of missionaries. But individuals within the churches who understand the mandate of missions and the goer/sending concept do their best to help provide needed support to help missionaries and their families going or returning.

**How does CAPRO educate churches about caring for their missionaries?**

From the entry point, Mission candidates take a letter from CAPRO to their home church as a pre-requisite to admission to the School of Missions. After the one year training a letter is also sent to the home church informing the church about the decision of the mission candidate to serve as a missionary from the church with CAPRO. CAPRO runs a series of mission awareness programs and some church based discipleship training sessions that challenge the church to embrace her commission as senders.

Families and home churches of graduating mission candidates are invited to the induction and sending ceremonies before missionaries are assigned and sent to the field. Mission candidates are challenged to solicit the support and partnership of their home church and to give regular feedback. They are to participate actively in their church life when on holiday and to feel accountable to their home church.

**Learning from the past**

It is often said by mission leaders from the older sending countries that they want to help the newer senders to avoid the mistakes that they made in the initial phase of sending missionaries.

**What do you think of this statement?**

- I think it is true to a great extent. It takes a lot of time for missionaries to study, understand and unravel cultures. Having spent such hard currencies, older missions want to pass their experiences on so the new senders don't have to make the mistakes they made nor have to spend a huge amount of time to learn.
- In the mission enterprise in particular, experience matters, mostly because we draw from the same resource (God), the Owner of the work. Our God deploys wisdom and resources as we face challenges in the Great Commission as we seek His face through prayer. The wise ways of doing things and the breakthroughs older missions receive are supposed to be stepping stones for newer missions to accelerate the work. Experience has a huge cost, especially in time, materials and human resources,

and it is not to the advantage of missions to lose more time and lean resources in recycling failures.

- Also, older missionaries have walked along with locals, have built strong relationships, have set patterns which they know or fear that if not maintained will set the outreach backwards.

### **Can you point to mistakes made by older senders?**

Quite a few examples:

- Failure to learn language
- Coming in as teachers rather than learners.
- Unintentionally creating dependency.
- Holding onto or imposing their home cultures and demeaning local cultures.
- Insensitivities to local and community structures of leadership and communication
- Living in isolation, not interacting enough with local people.
- Coming in as bosses, chiefs and employers
- Introducing and initiating projects that locals could not sustain.
- Insufficient attention to personal, family, marital health and well-being.
- Using non-reproducible methods of outreach, discipleship, church planting & leadership development.
- Not raising locals who could take over the work early enough.
- Etc. Etc. Etc!

### **To what extent do you feel these are being mirrored by new senders?**

Some African missions are engaging in social services without the preaching of the gospel simply because this seems to attract Western support much more than spiritually focused activities. For example, some faith-based donors may be willing to support agricultural projects or empowerment skill training that is completely devoid of spiritual impartation of any sort, rather than sponsoring any church growth training.

Speaking for CAPRO missionaries, I can say to a very large extent over the years, through training and supervision, we have learnt to avoid repeating some of the past mistakes of older missionaries, but I can also equally say to a very large extent insufficient attention to personal, family, marital health and well-being is still a strong shortcoming. The drive to get the job done quickly, send reports home to supporters as well as the passion and joy of doing ministry tend to push the missionary overboard to the detriment of these crucial areas of their lives and families.

### **Do you have different issues?**

African missionaries do not have affordable missionaries' children schools where they can be at peace that their children are receiving appropriate and adequate care that can enable the missionaries mind the ministry work they have enlisted to do.

I would say the emerging issues I see these days are in the area of preparation and quality of training of missionaries. The changing face of doing missions means that the rugged training required to prepare quality men and women for the field is constantly being shortened and lightened.

The needs for physical structures, finances and access to high tech materials for training are becoming limiting factors in the preparation of African missionaries for global impact.

The answer to this differs from one missionary team to the other, not necessarily due to the organizational emphasis.

### **Learning from you**

#### **What do we, as non-Africans, need to understand about African missionaries and their families?**

African missionaries embrace missions from a deep spiritual experience rooted in obedience to the Great Commission.

African missionaries are ready if need be to suffer for the love of the Lord and obedience to His command.

African missionaries also have a desire for their children to find their purpose in the Lord's heart for the nations.

African missionaries do appreciate and want all that will enable them to serve the Lord long term in missions with effectiveness.

African missionaries are generally passionate about their vision and calling.

African missionaries are mostly driven by a sense of selflessness and sacrifice. They consider suffering if need be as part of their worship of God.

African missionaries have a high sense of spirituality, and want to be biblical in every action. This spirituality can at times be misunderstood by non-Africans, and is at times misplaced or misdirected spirituality.

Western missionaries or organizations should be sensitive to the times of need of the African missionary, whose support base can affect his emotions and work output.

They should also understand that the African has strong ties with extended families. Any negative report from home, or insensitive remarks, could give room to conflict of interest.

**What advice would you give to international mission agencies seeking to incorporate Africans?**

Trust is essential. Make allowance for differences. Respect the grace of God on their lives.

Make allowance for their stumbling as they seek to walk alongside you in doing the Father's will.

Make allowances for them to exercise their principles of taking God at His word.

Encourage their unique ways of pursuing the Lord.

Give them opportunity for capacity development.

**Please add anything else that you would like to share.**

Here are some other issues for me.

I am personally disturbed by whatever had delayed the consideration of Africa as a mission sending continent, if CAPRO as an indigenous African mission organization (and the several other African mission agencies), has been training and sending missionaries for at least 40 years now. Our effort at MK education has been on for close to 30 years and we are still not at the point where we can say that this growing need is being met. I understand there was a recent Global Summit on MK education, this I pray would someday contribute to the African MK education needs. I truly believe that if the existing and emerging African missionaries are blessed with the rich resources of the experience of the older mission agencies, the spread of the Gospel will be accelerated and the future and continuity of missions by generation next would be ensured.

Avoidable and unnecessary resolvable interpersonal relationship conflicts and misunderstandings between different African missionaries, African and other international missionaries, and the resulting impact on the quality and speed of our witness.

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