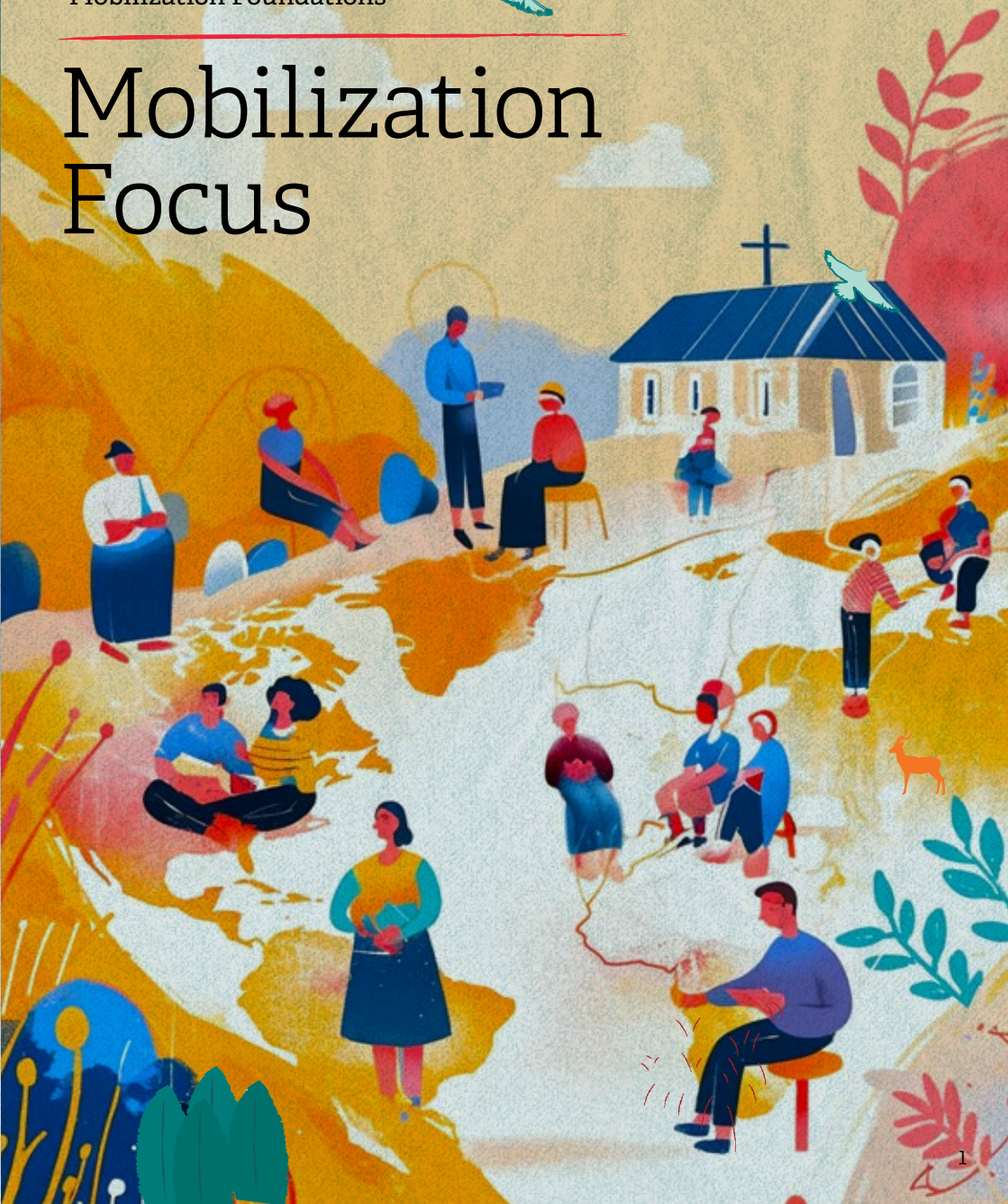




Mobilization Foundations



Mobilization Focus



Introduction

Having discussed mobilization as a vocation and in church history, this section looks at those that are being mobilized — churches, families, couples and individuals — and where they are coming from (their unique contexts and situations).

In the same way that a frontline worker needs to learn the language and culture of the people they are reaching, mobilizers need to learn the language, culture and history of their mobilization context.

© 2024 Jocelyn Wong. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

ISBN 978-0-85363-203-0



Focus: the Church

In many ways, local churches are like the fuel that, under God, drives world mission. The local church is the source of missionary personnel, of financial support and of informed prayer. It is essential for mobilisers to understand this and to make every effort to build good relationships with the local church.

Local churches are hugely diverse. Every church is unique in terms of its culture, leadership, and its membership. Within churches, there are also different levels and perspectives in their understanding of mission and different experiences of mission involvement. It is necessary for mobilisers to invest the time needed to become familiar with these realities in the local churches they work with.

Does the church have a biblical understanding of missions? Are they sending/supporting missionary personnel already? Does the pastor himself prioritize teaching about, and praying for missions? Are church leaders active in identifying and encouraging members with potential as cross-cultural workers? Does the church have regular programs or activities that help with missions awareness and education? Do they provide opportunities for missions engagement? These are encouraging signs and helpful for fruitful collaboration.

Or is mission involvement delegated to a few enthusiasts ("mission champions")? Are global Christian concerns never, or rarely mentioned in corporate gatherings? Are those

with a call to cross-cultural ministry being heard, prayed for, encouraged? Or are they advised to stay and prioritize church needs? If so, much patient work needs to be done in order to firmly put mission on the church map. (Note: Booklet 4 will cover Mobilization Principles and Practice)

Mobilizers need to be mindful that historically, churches have not always had good relationships with mission organizations – both have contributed to relationship or partnership issues. There are many reasons why churches are not engaged in missions or prefer to be directly engaged on their own. For each mobilizer's ministry contexts, it would be helpful to ask why this is – the reasons for one church may not be the same as another. Finding out these reasons will significantly help in contributing to solutions – which includes rebuilding trust. A key resource that may help is the Lausanne Occasional Paper 24, ["Cooperating in World Evangelization: A Handbook on Church/Para-Church Relationships."](#) While this paper was written in 1983, many of the issues discussed such as rivalry, trust issues, and doctrinal differences are still issues evident in church and mission organization relationships today.

In some less mission-minded churches, one member may discern that God is leading them to reach out beyond current local ministries. It is not uncommon to meet someone whom God is beginning to stir in this way – at a conference, a workplace or student fellowship, a prayer meeting or youth camp. Often it is because they heard a missionary or mobilizer speak, or accessed some mission resources. It is good and ideal if — at this early stage — they can connect with mature, prayerful brothers and sisters in their church who will come alongside them in support and encouragement. This simple act of encouraging someone in their missions journey can also result in a better understanding of the call and priority of missions.

In cases where they feel unsupported by the church as they grow in their burden for missions, the role of the mobilizer is crucial. The mobilizer can come alongside them, connect them to other like-minded individuals for support and encouragement as well as provide helpful advice and resources to help this person mobilize the church – or at least those in the church that are within their sphere of influence. Who knows, they may even be the catalyst in sparking a passion for missions in their church.





Focus: Church Members

What sort of people does God call? Who are they? How is their call confirmed and their interest sustained? How do they keep going towards their goal of serving cross-culturally? What factors help or hinder this process (which may take a few months or many years)?

Each person comes with a unique set of factors to be considered – there are generational, cultural, educational and social factors, different personalities and spiritualities. Some come with a variety of cross-cultural experiences (travel, work-related) and some have no cross-cultural experience at all.

Whatever their background, the following factors have helped people press on towards the goal:

- encouragement and nurture by mobilizers and/or church friends
- attendance or volunteering at mission conferences and awareness events
- interaction and/or friendship with missionaries
- participation in short-term mission programs
- a consistent desire to grow in their walk and relationship with God

OMF's "6 Ways to Reach God's World" video series points to different ways of involvement that can help in sustaining interest in mission.¹

By contrast, these factors often discourage potential cross-cultural workers from taking next steps:

- Family obligations or opposition
- Fear of fundraising
- Unsupportive church leaders

¹These "6 Ways" — only one of which is "going" — are all important in the mission enterprise. If it should happen that someone has been preparing to "go", but hits roadblocks along the way, it would be helpful for them to be open to other ways God may be redirecting to in missions engagement — like developing ministries aligned with the other "5 Ways" — prayer mobilization, working with diaspora, playing a role in the sending process, being a mobilizer or educating others about mission.



As people get closer to deciding on full-time missions engagement (e.g. inquiring how to apply, or in the early stages of the application process/preparations), they need intentional pre-field pastoral care. This involves providing encouragement and guidance, including giving people opportunities to process and debrief their experiences - especially through discouragements that often appear during this season of preparation. The role of supportive and prayerful friends, mentors or family members is crucial during this time.

At every stage, there needs to be an emphasis on walking closely with God personally, through the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines. Ultimately it is as one experiences God's love deeply and understands God's love for the lost that one perseveres in journeying in obedience, through its ups and downs.

The Missions Community and its Role in Mobilization

We have had the role of the missions community in mind in previous booklets, and it is fitting to finish our brief discussion of this topic by returning to it.

We can picture mobilization as a triangle² – people on one side, churches on another and mission agencies on the third. All three are needed to make the process complete and sustainable – provided that all three share the same vision, mission and values.



Just as each church is different, each mission agency is also distinct in their cultures, theological emphases and specific areas of focus. As the relationship develops, it will soon become clear if there are areas which are not a good fit for ongoing collaboration. Mobilizers journeying with a church may find that another agency may be a better fit with the church's values, culture or context.

With more specialized knowledge and experience, mission agencies provide relevant information and counsel. Their resources and personnel are key factors in the learning process of prospective cross-cultural workers. They produce up-to-date resources that describe needs and opportunities to serve and connect these with people and churches. Mobilizers can also connect enquirers with current workers in a similar location or profession. These relationships can be very fruitful and significant in sustaining workers over the long-term.

² <http://douggehman.blogspot.com/2007/10/two-structures-of-gods-redemptive.html>

Prayer mobilization is also crucial, and mission agencies have personnel and volunteers experienced in this area. It is good to link enquirers with prayer groups and resources as early in the process as possible. Finally, by drawing on the experience of current workers, mission agency personnel can recommend or develop training resources, books, videos and other materials that will serve to effectively equip and prepare those they are mobilizing.

In all these, it is important for the mobilizers to keep in healthy tension the interest of the field (as they labor to fulfill their God-given vision) and the interest of the local church and the potential worker (mindful that God is also interested in them and their growth as His children and His church).



Conclusion

It is our privilege to partner with God, the Ultimate Mobilizer. He is the One who calls, moves, guides and blesses us. He does this by firstly calling us to Himself. Then, as we are grafted into the Vine that is Christ, He enables us to bear fruit for Him.

It is the same for those we are seeking to mobilize into His work. The mobilization task is primarily a pastoral one — we are under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd — and those who are spiritually mature and vibrant are the ones who will persevere. May we be those who help others to hear His voice, obey His leading and reach towards the potential He has given them – for His glory!



Reflection Questions

1. What difficulties have you experienced in your own church, or in other churches, with respect to mission awareness or engagement? What are the reasons for these difficulties and what can you do to lessen these? Who or where might you find help or guidance?

2. Where and how can your gifts be best used to encourage church members/leaders to put more focus on world mission?



3. In your experience, at what stage are people most likely to be discouraged from their calling? Why is this?

4. What discouragements have you heard voiced most often by enquirers or by those we journey with? How can we be of help when these things happen?

5. Think of two examples in your own experience — one good, one bad — of how a missions journey has unfolded. List the positive and negative factors demonstrated in these stories. Reflect on how these can inform your mobilization strategy.



9 780853 632030 >