



## ***Member Care Update***

**Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team**

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### **AGENCY-LEVEL MEMBER-CARE: PRE-FIELD PREPARATION & ON-FIELD CARE.**

By: Peter Shankar

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*This second article is a continuation of a thematic series on Agency-Level Member-Care. In July, Peter Shankar focused on Recruitment with us. This month we present more of his insights on Pre-Field Preparation and On-Field Care. In the next issue, Peter will share on the Role of Mission Agencies in Home Assignment, Re-Entry and Prayer.*

#### **Pre-Field Preparation**

- **Create possibilities for pre-field cross-cultural training.** The agency would need to ensure all their candidates go through some kind of cross-cultural training to equip them for field work. Pre-field training contributes significantly to the missionaries' ability to thrive on the field. Whilst theological education is important, much of the focus should be focused on mission training i.e. formal academic Missiological training, practical pre-field training, and structured cross-cultural missions internship.
- **Find and use cross-cultural training programs that fit the individual.** The challenge is always to find the right fit for the individual. A standard one-size-fits-all program will not work for everyone. We need to be creative in designing programs that have a good mix of classroom, and practical (including intercultural experience) to help equip missionaries for long-term commitments.
- **Use tools to develop competence, character, personality, team building, and spiritual skills.** Some examples of tools available: Myers Briggs, CACTUS, DISC, Reflections Test, Leadership Training, etc.
- **Include missionary kids in preparation.** Include the whole family when preparing the missionary for long-term work. Most often, we miss the spouse and the children in orientating & preparing them for a cross-cultural experience. Sadly, with little emphasis put on this, one of the main causes for conflicts on the field is family conflicts. The spouse and children would need to undergo a brief cross-cultural training and understand the dynamics involved in having the whole family move to the field.

- **Language training is of utmost importance.** Pre-field preparation could include enrolling for language classes in their home country prior to going to the field. The advantage would be the head start the missionaries will get assimilating with the community quickly and learning to fit in faster as opposed to someone who is just beginning to learn the language.
- **Introduce cultural practices & norms and local religious beliefs and practices.** Get the missionary to work on a research project to learn more about the culture he/she is going to be involved with. If there are similar cultural groups near to his/her surroundings, the missionary can better understand them and their worldviews if there are opportunities to get to know them or help with projects.
- **Briefings and introductions to agency practices on the field.** They would need to understand field practices on the field, i.e. accountability, reporting, conflict resolution, field leadership, field facilitation, field member-care structures, etc.
- **Place importance on personal development.** A structure should be in place for developing missionaries on the field. Constant feedback, training, skill development, evaluation, etc ... should be exercised to ensure the well-being of the missionary.
- **Agency Leaders should build relationships with missionaries.** Take time to get to know them and their families. Sometimes, you'll get insights as to how they will fare on the field as you interact with them.

## On-Field Care

- **Provide good on-field supervision.** Ensure a structure is in place for accountability, reporting, counsel, and member-care.
- **Provide missionaries with opportunities for continuous training and development of gifts & skills.** This will have to be on-going. As the work load and interactions increase, they will need new ideas, skills, platforms, etc to connect with the community, and also with inter-personal relationships within their working environment.
- **Ensure missionaries have a well balanced work life.** Too many missionaries don't know the meaning of REST. They work, and work, and work and get too focused on their projects/people groups. They neglect family life, exercise, eating healthy, etc. The agency will need to ensure they lead a balanced life and their family life is intact. There needs to be a constant check on this to ensure they are spiritually, physically, emotionally, and socially healthy.

- **Include missionaries in major decisions related to the field.** The agencies MUST include the missionaries when making major decisions on the field. The missionaries' view must be taken into account, and most often their views carry an important weight on decisions made for the field.
- **While the missionary is on the field, ensure there is clear communication between the church, agency & missionary.** The agency plays a vital role in ensuring that the church is kept abreast with the movements and progress of the missionary. When making major decisions involving the church, agencies must include the leadership of the church in making such decisions.
- **On a regular basis, assess the missionaries' leadership qualities.** Ensure he/she gets proper evaluation and support for enhancing his/her leadership qualities. Give opportunities to grow in leadership responsibilities.
- There should be **opportunities for mentoring & coaching leaders** on the field. Have mentoring structures in place.
- Have a **culture of seeking each other's personal development.** This has to be inculcated while the missionary is undergoing training and orientation.
- **Offer training on the job.** Like most jobs, getting the training is not sufficient enough in getting the job done. In some work/ministries, the missionary will need some coaching for them to understand how things work.
- **Stimulate on-going education** i.e. missions education, short training stints, etc. It is important to allocate time for learning.
- **Have a policy of not overloading missionaries.** Ensure missionaries have time for their family.
- **Be open for external help.** Missionaries need to be open for external help, especially when there are issues that need help i.e. marital counseling, issues with children, etc.
- **Provide room to shape and develop own ministry.** Missionaries bring with them loads of experience and skills to the field. Give them opportunities to develop their own ministries so they will find satisfaction in doing what they do.
- **Conduct annual performance reviews.** This will be helpful in knowing how well they are progressing. Most often, missionaries appreciate the honest reviews given by agencies.
- **Be open for feedback on agency's practice.** This is an extremely important practice to adhere to. Frustrations, differing opinions, should be communicated to the

agency. The agency must provide an opportunity for missionaries to share their feedback on agency's practice.

- **Offer new perspectives for development.** Set time aside for brain-storming sessions and reflect on ministry developments with the missionaries.
  - If opportunity arises, and time permits, **provide ministry role for spouses to be engaged with ministry.** More often than not, spouses will love to be involved at some level or so. Please don't leave the spouse out unless circumstances won't permit him/her to get involved.
  - Keep **records of ministry outcomes** so you can assess your progress and milestones. This will be of great encouragement to the missionary, church and agency especially when you know you're accomplishing something.
  - **Ensure policies and procedures are people orientated**, and not task orientated.
  - Have a **back-up system for poorer times** especially in times of emergency, crisis, currency fluctuation, church support slows down, etc.
  - **Policies must be in place to set aside money for retirement.** This should be discussed with the church so funds are kept aside.
  - **Help to prepare for re-entry.** Time must be spent with the missionary (while on the field) to prepare him/her for the re-entry process. The sending church must also be prepared to welcome their missionaries back. There needs to be some kind of coordination between the agency and the church to ensure the missionary makes a smooth re-entry back to their home country.
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*In the next issue, we will be addressing Agency- Level Member-Care in Re-Entry, Prayer and Home Assignment.*

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Resources:

Doing Member-Care Well – Edited by Kelly O'Donnel

Serving As Senders – Neal Pirollo

The Reentry Team – Neal Pirollo

Missionary Care – Kelly O'Donnel

Websites: [www.globalmembercare.com](http://www.globalmembercare.com) ; [www.mislinks.org](http://www.mislinks.org); [www.worldevangelicals.org](http://www.worldevangelicals.org)

Too Valuable To Loose – Edited by Bill Taylor

Worth Keeping – Rob & Sarah Hay, Valerie Lim, Detlef Blocher, Jaap Ketelaar