

A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF RESEARCH AND
PLANNING FOR MISSION EXPANSION OF
GLOBAL MISSIONS BOARD

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of research and planning has been a perennial issue in the whole mission endeavour of the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Apart from the fact that research gives room to effective planning, it is a beacon and pillar to a sustainable mission endeavour, a necessary tool for adequate planning for lasting cross-cultural missions.

In response to this challenge, this research work has substantiated the need for a basic research and not applied research, which encourages a trial and error approach. With basic research and strategic planning both human and financial resources would be appropriately channelled for a purposeful mission activity. Research and planning are essential and fundamental in cross-cultural missions. With good research work, areas which have previously being undiscovered becomes open for ministries and makes the truth of the gospel to be presented in a contextualized manner.

Such critical and exhaustive investigation about a community, the culture and the people, is not only limited to prior the entrance, it continue while ministering among them. This makes Christian Theology to be relevant and the Word preached to become flesh in the culture, symbols and thought-patterns of the people. Therefore this calls for a collective response from the mission agency (GMB), the missionary, the theological institution and the local Church.

5.2 Conclusion

Research and planning are essential and fundamental in mission, and almost impossible to do without them in a purposeful mission effort. Research is the key that opens doors for effective ministries in a community that previously have been undiscovered by the Church, it stimulates the church to pray, it sensitizes a missionary heart to be committed to go for the task, and its an initiator for an unreached people group to hear the gospel preached to them. Effective planning gives a direction of action.

By establishing priorities, research reveals the direction to go and planning tend to keep efforts centered on reaching the established goal. In a world of rapid change there is no substitute for research and planning in meaningful mission endeavour. Hence, with other factors put in place rightly missions are bound to strive.

It become relevant to consider the view put forward by this research work for the advancement GMB activities. It is not late for the GMB to consider a paradigm shift to reaching the unreached people groups, that is preaching the gospel where Christ is not known. In such areas it becomes imperative to have a critical exhaustive investigation of the community, the people and their culture, before and while ministering to them.

With research and planning the Church can guide her human and financial resources into a purposeful mission. We stand now at a formative period in the history of the expansion of Christianity the old era must give way to the new. We are faced with challenge of making convert adapt easily without betraying his cultural heritage or without remaining a foreigner to the Christian community for long. "Yet unless the written word of God can be

incarnated in the linguistic flesh of the receptor people, the saving experience is not likely to be transmitted" (Yamamori, 14).

Research and planning may look long-process and financial intensive, it is still the pathway to a sustainable cross-cultural mission activity. A logical, disciplined approach to research and planning, therefore is not an option for the Christian missions, because in this process we are cooperating with God as He leads through His Spirit.

5.3 Recommendation

Having seen the importance of research and planning, it becomes imperative to respond positively by implementing these suggestions put forward by the effort of the researcher.

The time is ripe for the Global Missions Board to recruit a research team who will work hand-in-hand with the Research and Media division of the GMB.

The research team should be saddled with the responsibility of setting a specific course of action as we aimed at starting work among unreached people groups.

The two months (long vacation job) short term mission can be used to initiate research findings. Their experience provides potential research documentation with an insightful introduction to an adequate research work.

Researching and documentations are great tools to mobilizing constituent churches to being involved with mission. Research documentations should be used with utmost confidentiality.

Trained missionaries, and pastors should be sent to preach, teach, and train nationals on biblical principles of living (practical Christianity) through discipleship.

The Nigerian Baptist Convention through the GMB should be ready to utilize her financial resources to sponsor research programmes, train and equipped missionaries on planting and sustaining church among unreached people groups.

Missionaries should always be ready to present balanced gospel message and avoid negative syncretism. This is only possible when research and planning are well taken care of.

There should be harmonious networking among other mission agencies and our GMB on research documentations of various work done in different mission fields (both Virgin and occupied). Churches, associations and conferences should work hand-in-hand with the GMB research and media division before entering a new field.

Missionaries need to avoid the pitfalls of subjectivity and misunderstanding when researching into a new religious community.

All these are necessary to enthrone Christ among the nations and until the Kingdoms of this world became the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.