

Topic: Costly Mission (Mission Council in the Netherlands)

Question: How Do We Understand “Costly Mission” and the Practice of Radical Solidarity and Responsible Member-Care for Mission Workers, Their Families, and the People They Serve? A Perspective from a Majority World Mission Organisation

Realities & Assumptions:

1. A ‘costly faith’ & ‘costly mission’ is assumed in regions where Christianity is a minority faith.
 - a. In some countries, there is a cost, regardless of your personal faith or personal commitment to Christ – as long as you are associated with the Christian faith (by birth or otherwise), you will face loss - opportunities, discrimination etc. even death.
2. When Christians intentionally engage in a missional agenda/vocation, it is assumed that there is a price to be paid by that Christian & by the people related to that Christian (family & children etc).
 - a. At its onset, the price is often much more costly than what is paid by a missional person from the West & people from economically advanced nations.
 - i. Salary / personal support is often at bare subsistence, with no extras for savings for what is often deemed to be basic necessities in advanced economies such as medical insurance, retirement, the purchase of one’s own home. It is often “by faith” – trusting that God will move hearts.
 - ii. For the best and brightest mission workers, it means the loss of opportunities for a better life for themselves & their dependents if they had chosen another route in life (migration etc.)
 - iii. *To be noted (sadly) in the majority world, a missional vocation & the priesthood is sometimes viewed as a means for financial security for self & family.*

Perspectives & Practices in the Mission Organisation:

1. Recognize that balancing the tensions is an ongoing reality in mission deployment & decisions:
 - a. The pressures & even sufferings borne by mission workers.
 - b. The pressures & potential negative effects upon the families, esp. children of mission workers
 - c. The impact upon others; the national church, and the people served in the field.
 - d. The long-termed effectiveness of the work.
2. Enculturate an organisational ethos that values solidarity & authentic relationships
 - a. “We are in it together.”
 - b. At its core, it is based on authentic relationships - more important than anything else.
 - c. This is obviously very tough in the face of the inequalities of life that are realities.
 - i. When I come from a society where what I routinely pay for one-night in a hotel is the equivalent of what an indigenous pastor may spend on his family for an entire week)
 - ii. When much as I experience deprivation whilst in the field, I know I can safely return to a place of relative security.

3. Keep the “tough topics” on costly mission on the table as ongoing conversations.
 - a. Through regular updates & visits to understand ground realities.
 - b. Topics/concerns that relate to the personal well-being & welfare of mission families.
 - c. Examples:
 - i. Risks in security sensitive regions
 - ii. MT – son was going through a rebellious stage because of the absence of the father.
 - iii. PT – did not have \$\$ for son’s education because of son’s needs. The mission worker had to leave the preferred place of ministry & engage in another ministry for the sake of the family.
4. Help mission workers process their thoughts in their ministry decisions – consequences, options.
5. Work to ensure that the systems to identify and to address potential problems & trouble areas are in place (example: risk-assessment, safeguarding & whistleblowing protocols)
 - a. Neglect and abuse of children, domestic violence, abuse of power, misuse of money among mission workers have happened in the past. We need to view them beyond the sins / crimes that they are. They are symptoms of dysfunctionality in the mission fraternity that should be addressed.