

Exit Strategy

Mark Durene*

Introduction

Exit Strategy in missions is not a new concept. For the past 50 years the Assemblies of God has considered *The Indigenous Church* by Melvin Hodges¹, and *Partnership in Mission* by Morris Williams² as their unofficial missions strategy. Hodges pulled no punches in making his central message known. He was all about building national churches that could stand on their own without the need of foreign missionary support. He wrote that the role of the missionary is “to work himself out of a job,”³ and, “A missionary should never hold a position which a national is able to fulfill.”⁴ Hodges went on to suggest a policy statement for Assemblies of God world missionaries that included the principle, “The missionary should never consider that he is permanent in any one place, but ever have his eyes on the regions beyond, seeking to make the assembly in each place a self-supporting and self-propagating unit.”⁵ Morris Williams reinforced these convictions by encouraging missionaries to avoid paternalism and move out of local churches as soon as they are viable, warning, “Paternalism creates nasty situations when the parent insists on mothering an adolescent church.”⁶

If the missionary’s goal is to work himself or herself out of a job, and if his or her job is finished, why remain? Is it possible to define when the job is finished? Who will make that determination, and on what basis? If necessary, how should an exit take place? Should they all leave together or is there a way to phase out gradually? In 1979 Williams posed some of the same questions. He asked, “But what happens after the indigenous church has come into being? What happens to the missionaries of the sending church? Do they go home?”⁷ This essay will attempt to address these questions and explore the possibility of a formal exit strategy for Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM).

* Mark Durene and his wife Janie served as missionaries in Chiangmai, Thailand from 1994-2012 where they were involved in university campus ministry, leadership development, and church planting. As of July 2012 the Durenes are the Peninsular Asia Area Directors for the Assemblies of God World Missions (USA).

THE RISE OF STRATEGIC MISSIONS

Formulating a clear strategy is not an option for business executives, politicians, sports teams, and most other organizations in the world. They are obligated to write vision statements, formulate core values, and set long and short term goals. Missions, too, has taken on a more deliberately strategic approach over the years. Hudson Taylor was an early leader in developing the concept of cultural sensitivity by eating, clothing himself, and living like the Chinese nationals he worked with. Cultural sensitivity led to contextualization, then to indigenous church planting, storytelling, holistic ministry, creative access and many other such creative missionary strategies. Missiologist plotters and planners conceived the 10/40 Window, the concept of unreached peoples, AD2000 and Beyond, Joshua Project, Caleb Project, Engel Scale, Gray Matrix, the C1-C6 Spectrum, and a multitude of missions periodicals that espouse myriads of strategic initiatives including *EMQ*, *Mission Frontiers* and the *Global Prayer Digest*. Ralph Winter's US Center for World Missions is a factory of missionary strategies, tools and statistics.

Of course strategic initiatives on paper do not and cannot address every factor in the gargantuan, complicated and divine task of world missions. Missions cannot be contained neatly in a strategic box. Attempts to do so have led to complications and difficulties. Sometimes strategies help some regions but hurt others. For example, when the 10/40 Window was conceived for the purpose of focusing missionary efforts and resources on a particular geographic area, multitudes of missionaries and ministries in other needy parts of the world suffered ... including unreached peoples! But no one can deny the overall benefits of strategic mission initiatives over the past two centuries. Carefully constructed strategy continues to hold a critical place in the advance of the kingdom of God throughout the world, especially when applied through the grid of the supremacy of Holy Spirit leadership.

WHO HAS AN EXIT STRATEGY?

Where, then, does exit strategy fit in this strategy-conscious missions world? Surprisingly, most missionary organizations do not have a formal exit strategy that fits their overall organization. In researching this essay, 15 missions organizations

responded to our poll concerning their official exit strategy policies (see chart below). Responses indicated that only one organization, Team Expansion, has a formal exit policy that applies to all regions and missionaries in their organization. In their missions guidebook is a section entitled, “When the Job is Done,” stating that their ultimate goal is to create an “indigenous church movement” strong enough to stand totally on its own. The final product is a church that has everything it needs to maintain health and growth without outside help. “When this is accomplished,” Team Expansion Director of Operations Wayne Meece says, “... we feel the missionaries can withdraw.”⁸

None of the remaining fourteen missions organizations had a general exit strategy policy, but ten stated that their goal was to turn the work over to nationals when the national church was *ready*. Unfortunately, the term, *ready*, was seldom clearly defined. Most of these ten placed the responsibility of deciding when the national church was ready, into the hands of the missionaries in each region or people group. Besides those ten, only one organization, the International Missions Board (Southern Baptist), requires each of their regions (zones) to develop an exit strategy based upon their zone’s definition of when the region is *reached*.

The final three missions actually have a “non-exit” policy. In other words, they never intend to exit from a region or national church. Each of these organizations has different rationale for their position. One organization, Mission to the World, states that in the past they required their teams to write an exit strategy, but have now changed to take the position that their ultimate goal is to continue to work on a partnership level with the national church or people group regardless of how viable, advanced or developed they have become. A second group, The Navigators, have taken the position that they never need to exit a region because their ministry supports the national church whether it is advanced, as is the case in the USA, or whether it is in an infant stage. The third and final group with a non-exit policy is YWAM. They claim that an exit policy does not apply to them because their workers are not North American based, but rather are locals themselves and will always remain in their indigenous region regardless of the weakness or strength of the church in their area.

Missions Organizations Exit Policy Poll

	MISSION	POLICY	QUOTATIONS
1	Association of Baptists for World Evangelism	-No general exit policy -May turn the ministry over to nationals	<i>We do not have an exit policy for withdrawing from a nation ...In almost 80 years we have never withdrawn from a country but we have nationalized [turned them over to national leaders] many ministries and moved on to other ministries or locations.</i>
2	Baptist Bible Fellowship International	-No general exit policy -Exit determined case by case	<i>At this time, we do not have an exit strategy. Our missionaries go to the field to win souls to Christ, which is an ongoing task. The missionary and their sending church are the ones who would decide if an exit was needed.</i>
3	Bethany International Ministries	-No general exit policy -Exit strategy determined by individual missionary	<i>Our missionaries have a ministry plan that is updated annually. Depending on the ministry that they are doing, there is an appropriate exit strategy. We deal with each missionary and each field on an individual basis.</i>
4	International Missions Board (Southern Baptist)	-No general exit policy -Every region is required to develop a strategy	<i>Rather than make one exit strategy for the entire world, we ask each region and each team to develop their own. This puts the decision making closer to those who know the situation the best. Each strategy would be approved by their leader.</i>
5	Foursquare Missions	-No general exit policy -Exit when "nationalized"	<i>...our exit strategy is when we have nationalized a particular country.</i>

6	Free Methodist World Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No general exit policy -Head office moves missionaries when the church becomes viable 	<p><i>There are two different types of exits for our missionaries. 1) They retire 2) A church is established (planted), and the missionaries are moved to another area.</i></p>
7	Mission to the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-exit policy -Remain and work alongside the national church 	<p><i>...there was a time when we required each of our teams to include an exit strategy in their team planning documents... We no longer have a policy of disengagement, but rather a posture of working alongside indigenous leaders and sometimes under them...</i></p>
8	Navigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-exit policy -Ultimate goal is partnership rather than exit 	<p><i>In almost all of the other 104 countries in which we minister [other than the USA], the challenges are at least as great and our resources are far less. Therefore, I see no end to our contribution, small as it is... [rather than exit], we call the most mature stage Partnering Countries</i></p>
9	Nazarenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No general exit policy -Exit strategy developed by region 	<p><i>...each regional director, field strategy coordinator, and individual missionary, is expected to craft a strategy ... The broad strategy is to develop a mature, multiplying, indigenous church... allowing us to exit...</i></p>
10	New Tribes Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No general exit policy -Focus on long-term on-going relationship and a mature church, although they may move out if no longer needed 	<p><i>...our missionaries labor for the goal of planting a mature tribal church rather than laboring for the time they will be able to leave that church "on it's own"... There may come a point when a missionary team no longer lives in the people group on a regular basis, but hopefully that missionary team can continue to provide resources, and encourage into the future.</i></p>

11	Operation Mobilization	-No general exit policy -Individual fields may develop their own	<i>...exit strategies vary widely depending on the field, so we are not aware what policies each field may or may not have regarding an exit strategy.</i>
12	Presbyterian Church (USA)	-No general exit policy -Missionaries work for existing national churches and exit when no longer needed	<i>...we don't have such a policy. We operate under the guidelines of a Partnership Policy, meaning we work with partner churches and organizations around the world. The mission positions we fill are based on their requests... If the partner eventually is able to place a national in a particular position and our mission person is no longer needed, then we bring that person home.</i>
13	Team Expansion	-Formal exit policy titled, "When the Job is Done"	<i>By the end of our involvement, we hope to have facilitated the establishment of an indigenous church movement in our target region. This church movement would be so strong, allowing expatriate involvement to decrease... The...church would eventually be able to stand totally on its own, i.e., having all the resources, motivation and energy to keep on growing without outside help. In a word, autonomous. When this is accomplished, we feel the missionaries can withdraw.</i>

14	Wycliffe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No general policy written -All missionaries expected to complete the job and exit 	<p><i>...when the language groups in a given country have a solid foundation of scripture in their own languages, have made progress in literacy, and have developed some capacity to continue Bible translation and language development, as desired, Wycliffe moves on to address those same needs in other countries and language groups.</i></p>
15	YWAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not Applicable -Workers are nationals who would remain in the national work 	<p><i>The question presupposes that we are a North American based Western mission. We are not. Our workers come from 160 nations and would remain resident in those nations regardless of the success of their efforts.</i></p>

TO EXIT OR NOT TO EXIT

The majority of the organizations polled think that it is a good thing to exit a national church when it is ready to proceed on its own. But why have a few decided not to exit? What rationale is used for each of these positions?

Don't Exit!

The *non-exit* position taken by Team Expansion raises an important question. Does the indigenous church philosophy demand an exit strategy or not? Is it really necessary to exit a national church once the church is completely self-sufficient and vibrantly growing? Isn't it possible to remain in the national church structure in other capacities indefinitely? After all, the Church is called to be a unified body represented by an international family of Christians working toward the common goal of world evangelism. If all churches and denominations could cooperate with one another in meeting this goal, the task would be much lighter.

Reason 1: Unity Says 'Don't Exit'

The principle of power in unity is the first argument against a full-scale exit. This principle, in fact, is the philosophy of Carlos Annacondia, Omar Cabrera, Ed Silvano and others who have been instrumental in the powerful Argentina revival movement of the last 22 years. In his book, *That None Perish*, Ed Silvano states that unless and until all churches in a community join in unified prayer, true revival cannot happen. He testifies of cities unable to break through in revival until joint prayer between all denominations and church groups took place.⁹ This illustrates the principle of the power of unity in the Body of Christ. Given this principle, perhaps missions organizations should never exit or separate from a national church. Perhaps they should remain and fill a critical synergistic and spiritual role by continuing on as a long-term partner with the established, indigenous national church ... indefinitely.

Reason 2: The Call of God Says 'Don't Exit'

Another argument against forming a full-scale exit strategy involves God's sovereign call to ministry. Many missionaries are working in their particular region in response to a specific call from God to go there. If God has called them to a specific locale, what missions board has the right to form an exit strategy forcing that missionary to leave because certain criteria have been met? If God is truly the Lord of the Harvest, then man's methods should not interfere with His placement choices. Man's exit strategies should not and cannot conflict with God's sovereign call to a specific people group. One of the most zealous campaigners for the cause of frontier missions, Trent Rowland, founder of the Caleb Project, recognizes and acknowledges the sovereignty of God's call. He cautions, "In our zeal for the frontiers, we must be certain to affirm and work in partnership with others assigned by God to different Kingdom work. Non-frontier workers must rejoice in their calling and not seek to broaden the definition of frontiers to include themselves ... they must not feel less important..."¹⁰

Exit!

On the other hand there are many more voices crying out in favor of exit strategies for missions organizations. *Christianity Today* published an article called *Exit Strategy*¹¹, which challenged missionaries to form an exit plan from the time they

first enter missions. The article takes the position that planning an exit strategy is just as important as planning the ministry strategy in a given nation, particularly in Third World countries.

Anyone considering going into missions should have the idea in the back of their minds, 'Do they really need me?' Or, 'Can the national church do it on their own?' When expatriates work in Third World countries, it is just as important when they plan what they're going to do that they also plan how they're going to get out.¹²

Reason 1: Building Maturity Says 'Exit'

This raises the first argument in favor of forming an exit policy; maturity. When the national church no longer needs the foreign missionary and can do it on their own, the foreign missionary is no longer helping, but rather hindering the maturity of the national church by remaining in that people group. When my children graduated from high school I loved them and wanted to be with them just as much as I did the first 18 years of their life. However, I knew that if I did not allow them to exit my home, their next critical step into maturity would not happen. In the same way, the national church may not be able to take critical steps into maturity if the foreign missions organization remains present to finance, teach, administrate or even advise. Of course, I did not cut off all ties with my young adult children. They still needed my advice and encouragement, and at times needed my financial help. I had to be careful not to give them too much money so that they did not learn how to trust God for their finances. I had to be careful not to make their decisions for them, but to give them input that would help them make wise decisions. In short, I tried to maintain intimacy without dependency so that we could begin to relate together as mature adults. In the same way, missions organizations must find ways to exit gradually in such a way as to maintain intimacy without dependency, to achieve the ultimate goal of two organizations relating together as mature adults.

Failure to exit in time can result in the stunted growth of the national church. Steve Saint, son of martyred missionary Nate Saint, has begun to speak out against missions organizations who failed to exit appropriately from the Huaorani (Auca) tribe that martyred his father. With disappointment and sadness Saint reported in an article published in *Mission Frontiers* that the Huaorani are utterly dependent on foreign missionaries and churches for much of their livelihood and for all of their

religious buildings and paraphernalia. He believes that missionaries stayed with the Huaorani far too long, and spoke out against their efforts in general. "The greatest weakness I see in our North-American missionary effort today is that we are taking our role too far in too few places!"¹³ In a subsequent article Saint expanded on this comment by saying,

Missions is not to go in and create and control a church for other people, nor (to) be the church for them. It is simply to plant the church ... and nurture it until it is able to propagate, govern, and support itself. When missions go beyond that, then they are imposing themselves in the area of responsibility that belongs to the indigenous people, and then everything gets out of whack.¹⁴

Reason 2: Reached Peoples Say 'Exit'

Steve Saint did not stop at criticizing missions for failing to exit in a timely fashion, but went on to suggest another radical possibility; to move out of *reached* places into more needy fields. In his proposal Saint raises a second argument in favor of formulating exit policies. Because there are places in the world without a Christian witness, missions organizations are obligated to get out of the *reached* places to go to those places. The task of world evangelism is massive, and in order to get the job done Saint believes we must exit where appropriate to focus on the places of greatest need.

We hear a great deal these days about the millions of people in the "10-40 Window" that have no Christian witness amongst themselves. The plea is being made that more workers are needed for the harvest. Without distracting at all from that, I would suggest that we must consider moving workers from places where their appropriate role was over, or should have been over, long ago.¹⁵

The *10/40 Window* has been used and abused for the past decade as have missions statistics in general. However, William Carrey's *Enquiry* and Hudson Taylor's *The Needs of China* showed that despite many weaknesses statistics can be powerful tools to inspire missionary efforts. Recent missiology has recognized that the *10/40 Window* fails to take into account "reached" people groups within that geographic region, and can negatively impact "unreached" peoples outside the region because it infers they are in a "reached" geographic region. The problem is one of emphasizing a geographic region rather than people groups. It is clearly a mistake to exit from an "unreached" people group outside the *10/40 Window* (e.g.: the Triqui Indians in Northern Mexico) to go to a "reached" people inside that window (e.g.:

South Koreans). The obvious next step was to find a way to concentrate missionary efforts on people groups rather than geographic regions.

Since the *10/40 Window*, many other methods of measuring the need for missionary efforts have arisen including Marten Visser's *N-Formula*. Visser tries to quantify the need for pioneer missionaries (*N*) among people groups by using a rather complicated mathematical formula. His two determining factors are the strength of Christians in that people group represented by *x*, and the strength of missionaries presently working there represented by *y*. Although Visser focuses on people groups, he also applied his formula to 214 nations of the world to attempt to determine the need for pioneer missionaries by nation. He divided the need into the 4 categories listed below:¹⁶

Category	Need	Number of Nations
1. $N = 10$ or more	Urgent need for pioneer missionaries	46 Nations (18 plus 28 Muslim "creative access countries")
2. $N = 1 - 10$	Need for more pioneer missionaries	44 Nations
3. $N = 0.1 - 1$	Sufficient number of missionaries	73 Nations
4. $N =$ less than 0.1	Missionaries are over-represented	51 Nations

As stated already, looking only at political boundaries does not reflect accurate statistics about the people groups in those nations. However, when applied to the missionary milieu in the nations investigated, Visser's formula offers some very interesting statistics that provide cause for reflection. As of April 2004:

[J]ust thirteen percent of all missionaries work in category one countries. Another thirty percent work in category two countries, where more pioneer missionaries are needed. Forty-one percent work in countries with sufficient missionaries, while sixteen percent work in countries which are probably over represented in our missionary attention.¹⁷

In simpler terms, these statistics suggest that 47% – nearly one half – of the current missionary force are working in nations that have enough or more than enough missionaries. Suppose these statistics were applied to people groups rather than to nations. If certain people groups were represented to have sufficient or even over-representation of missionaries over other people groups, this would certainly

represent a rationale to exit groups that already have sufficient missionaries in order to move into groups that are far needier.

Reason 3: Creating the Right Core Value Says 'Exit'

There is a third motivation to implement an exit strategy, namely, to instill the right core value among the missionary corps. If missionaries constantly carry with them the core value of preparation for exit, it will impact their ministry. Their vision, strategy, planning, and daily work will be permeated with the thought of preparing the local and national church for independence. A strong exit core value will help them concentrate on mentoring pastors who will become pastor's mentors, help them teach prospective teachers, help them set up ministries that will run themselves, help them plant church-planting churches, and help them establish a national church that will function on its own.

Reason 4: AGWM Strategy Says 'Exit'

AGWM has chosen to publish very little in terms of official overall missions strategy. Their Missionary Manuel addresses AGWM organizational structure as well as personnel policies and procedures ... no strategy. Their website includes a mission statement, briefly describing their fourfold mission, namely:

REACHING. We are proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ to the spiritually lost in all the world through every available means.

PLANTING. We are establishing churches in more than 191 countries, following the New Testament pattern.

TRAINING. We are training leaders throughout the world to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to their own people and to other nations.

TOUCHING. We are touching poor and suffering people with the compassion of Jesus Christ and inviting them to become His followers.¹⁸

The web site goes on to express the message of AGWM as Bible-based, Spirit-empowered, and Christ-centered.¹⁹ Finally, their method is described as "All the

Church” (the US A/G Church), carrying “All the Gospel” (Pentecostal theology) to “All the World.”²⁰ Virtually nothing is said in the Missionary Manual or on the AGWM web site about indigenous church planting methods, targeting nations or people groups, the priority and place of Bible schools, or any other such methodology or strategy.

Historically, then, how has AGWM approached the issue of an exit strategy? Whether it was intentional or not, a missionary exit happened in South Korea. The Assemblies of God there grew by leaps and bounds in the 1970’s and 1980’s. By the early 1990’s the Assemblies of God had grown so strong that many of the missionaries along with Area Director Ken Benintendi felt they were no longer needed to plant churches. According to Benintendi the exit was intentional but carried out as a passive exit.

We have not had a clearly defined exit strategy as such, but simply responded to the situation as it developed. When we no longer were needed to plant churches or evangelize, we no longer looked for young couples to go and study the language to equip themselves for those types of ministries. As our veterans retired, they were simply not replaced.²¹

Today, all AGWM missionaries have left South Korea except for one missionary family who are pastoring an international church in Seoul, and another family whose husband teaches seminary and whose wife serves as a liaison between Yoido Full Gospel Church and the US Assemblies of God. The exit was not comprehensive, but can be termed an exit nonetheless. The remaining missionaries are not critical to the daily operation of the South Korean Assemblies of God, but rather work either with internationals or in a servant role to the national church.

The exit in South Korea is by no means in conflict with the AGWM manuals of missions philosophy written by Hodges and Williams. In his book Hodges champions the cause of “indigenous church principles” as the central task of missionary effort. He states that the goal of missions is to build a “three-self” church that is able to stand entirely on its own without the need of missionary guidance or support to maintain itself, grow and “reach” its nation or people group for Jesus Christ. The inference is that the missionary eventually will not be needed.

Hodges compares the missionary role to that of a scaffold in constructing a building. Scaffolding is necessary in the early stages to raise the building, but once the building is completed scaffolding is not needed and becomes an ugly spectacle if

it remains.²² He goes on to say, "The successful missionary is one who has done his work so well that he is no longer needed in that area. He can leave the work to his converts."²³ He then quotes Alexander McLeish as saying,

A modern missionary ... is not intended to be a permanent factor in the life of an alien people. His work is to make Christ the permanent factor, and himself pass on to other pioneer tasks as quickly as he can. Institutions which tie the foreigner down to permanent work are intrinsically dangerous expedients.²⁴

For the most part both Hodges and Williams address the issue of the missionary's relationship to the local church rather than to the national church organization. Both authors strongly advocate that missionaries "plan to withdraw more and more from the local affairs until he can leave them entirely in the hands of the nationals."²⁵ Williams says, "The missionary should be very careful not to stay too long as pastor ... He will then move on to another new area and start over again."²⁶ These strong endorsements for exiting local churches can easily be extended to the national level. The rationale behind their philosophy is that the Christian message is universal. It applies to all races, nationalities, tribes, languages and cultures. Every people group is entitled to worship and serve God, and is responsible to proclaim that message to their own people. If a local church carries that responsibility, then even more so does the national church leadership. As the head of the local churches, the national church leadership carries the responsibility of propagating Christ in their nation in a culturally appropriate way. If that responsibility is carried by foreigners, the church has not yet become fully indigenous. The national church must grow to stand on its own, and to prove that has happened, the mission must exit from both local church and national church leadership.

PROPOSAL FOR AGWM

I believe that AGWM missions stands to benefit greatly from a working policy that includes an exit strategy. This strategy would provide a clear core value that would help to maintain a focus on building strong national churches and prevent over-dependency on missions money. However, as we pointed out above, there are two strong reasons not to exit comprehensively. The first is that ongoing relationship in the universal body of Jesus Christ is a strong biblical core value. The Church

universal is called a *body*, a *building*, a *nation*, a *people*, a *bride*, a *flock*, and many other terms signifying oneness. The Church universal is also called to unity, to be one, and to love, serve, encourage, and build up one another. AGWM should expect to have a continuous relationship with A/G churches throughout the world always.

The second reason against a comprehensive exit is that strategy cannot and must not contradict God's sovereign call to individual missionaries. If a missionary is strongly confident that God has called him or her to a nation, and AGWM leadership has no reason to disbelieve that conviction, then AGWM must be careful to respect the call, and must not force them to exit.

Three-Stage Engagement Strategy

The exit, then, must not be comprehensive, and must come in stages. My proposition is to define three stages of missionary involvement with a given nation or people group. In the initial stage missionaries usually play an intimate role in all aspects of church growth from evangelism to national church structure and leadership. I call this stage the "Primary Engagement" stage (see chart below). At this point missionaries exit on a micro level. They exit from local churches they plant and ministries they start, but do not exit the country or people group because there are no nationals to carry on the work.

As the national church develops and is able to take on more and more leadership, the exit process begins to step up. I call this stage the "Secondary Engagement" stage. At this level missionaries are no longer obligated to serve as church planters, and fewer are needed to teach at the Bible school. Their role becomes more specialized, initiating and leading ministries that nationals cannot lead. Missionaries begin to exit the people group more and more until all national church ministries are led by nationals.

The third and final stage is called the "Graduate Engagement" stage. At this point nationals are able to take leadership over all the ministries of the national church. Church planting, Bible schools, Christian education, and every other department and council are led by nationals. Missionaries may or may not continue to live among the people group, depending on special requests on the part of the national church, but on-going communication takes place, at worst, between the national

church and the World-Wide Council of the Assemblies of God, and at best, with AGWM as well.

STAGES	MISSIONARY INVOLVEMENT	EXIT STRATEGY
Primary Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reaching</i>: witnessing, crusades, team outreaches, ICI and other tracts and evangelistic materials, etc. - <i>Planting</i>: church planting - <i>Training</i>: discipling, mentoring and Bible school administration, teaching, etc. - <i>Touching</i>: disaster relief, helping displaced peoples, helping poor people, orphans, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set goals for handing over each ministry to nationals, but remain in the people group to move on to establish another ministry
Secondary Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reaching</i>: providing outreach teams as requested by the national church, writing evangelistic materials, helping the national church with evangelism strategy - <i>Planting</i>: helping the national church with church planting strategy - <i>Training</i>: helping the national church with leadership training, and teaching Bible school as requested - <i>Touching</i>: working as a liaison between the national church and supporting agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine and recruit the missionary personnel needed - Help the national church take leadership over all ministries and programs of the national church - Set goals to exit, not only from each ministry, but from the nation or people group

Graduate Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All ministries and departments of the national church are led by nationals - Missionaries may or may not be present depending on the invitation of the national church - National church communicates and partners with the World-wide A/G Council and with AGWM 	- No further exiting need take place
---------------------	--	--------------------------------------

Implementation

The Three-Stage Engagement Strategy is only a guideline and a skeleton outline. In order to move this guideline from paper to the field, a great deal of effort must be made on the part of regional missionaries to fill in the details. It is not possible to write a strategy specific enough to use as a working plan for all people groups and national churches. In our exit strategy poll we found that of the 11 organizations that favored the concept of an exit policy, all of them either inferred or specified that the responsibility for the writing of this policy lies in the hands of the regional missionaries for their particular field or people group, rather than in the hands of the central organization. Each field has its own unique challenges, restrictions and limitations. Each faces vastly different cultural and spiritual melees. Each will come up with different definitions for critical words like *church*, *Christian*, *unreached*, *reached*, *viable*, and *exit*.

To make this happen, each field must meet together to pray, brainstorm, plan and set goals for each of the categories mentioned above, to formulate their exit strategy. No one else can do the job better than the missionaries who work among their people group. There can be nothing more important to implementing this strategy than the intentional joining of field members in a grassroots effort to determine their approach to building an indigenous ministry among their people group. Perhaps the best approach for AGWM is for the Area Directors to require each field to spend several days together in prayer and discussion to put together an exit strategy for their ministries and their field.

The following outline is a suggested approach for a field to use in formulating their exit strategies:

1. Field Strategy Meeting
 - a. Determine what stage your field is at presently, using the guidelines on the chart above.
 - i. Are there multiple people groups represented on your field?
 - ii. Are you working with one people group, or multiple people groups?
 - iii. To what level are each people group "reached?"²⁷
 - iv. What stage is your field at presently?
 - b. Evaluate the state of your current missionary involvement.
 - i. Define the words, *church*, *Christian*, *unreached*, *reached*, *viable*, and *exit* in your context
 - ii. Categorize all your ministry involvement in terms of *Reaching*, *Planting*, *Training* and *Touching*.
 - iii. Are you giving leadership to nationals? Are you taking too much leadership? (refer to Appendix 1, *Lewis Summary of ICP Core Values*, see below p. 21)
 - c. Examine your exit strategies. Are there ministries you are doing that nationals could be doing?
 - i. Discuss how comprehensively you hope to exit each ministry. Are there ministries that AGWM can continue to fill indefinitely? Which should ultimately be exited completely?
 - ii. Brainstorm together. Come up with multiple methods of preparing and turning over each of your ministries to nationals.
 - iii. Write out a working plan for exiting each ministry in your field to the extent you have determined the exit should take place.
 - iv. Set time goals for exiting each ministry in your field.

2. Approval
 - a. Consolidate each ministry plan into one exit strategy document.
 - b. Submit your exit strategies to your area director.
3. Annual Evaluation
 - a. Meet at least annually to evaluate your progress.
 - b. Allow each ministry time to present to the rest of the field a summary of their ministry and their exit progress.
 - c. Set new goals for exiting each ministry
 - d. Present your plan to the Area Director.

CONCLUSION

I graduated from North Central Bible College (now North Central University) in 1980 with a BA in Missions. Indigenous church principles were emphasized throughout my studies, and I agreed whole heartedly with that philosophy of ministry. When I arrived in Thailand for my initial missionary term in 1994 I was determined to follow those principles. I had heard stories of missionaries who used their money to pay for national workers and build ministries, and when the money failed, their ministries fell flat on their face. I was not going to be a missionary like that. However, when I finished language school and was ready to start leadership development and plant churches, I did what I saw everyone else doing. I helped a young Thai pastor find a building to rent for his home and church, and helped him with a salary because there was no other way he could do the work of the ministry full-time. I believed that if we worked together and worked hard, in no time the church would grow and pay the rent and the pastor's salary, and the church would be "indigenous." It worked great for the first two or three years. The church grew quickly and began to take on more and more of the expenses including a portion of the pastor's salary. But then problems arose. The church started to go up and down but never seemed to grow enough to take on all its expenses. This was not what I had planned. After several years I am still stuck with the rent and salary for a church that was supposed to be indigenous. Back in 2000 when I started that church, I really could have used some direction and input just like the proposal in this chapter. Missionaries need one another to strategize and maintain accountability in building national churches that will stand on their own as light and salt to their own people.

Perhaps the very best thing we can do to help each other maintain indigenous church planting principles is to cooperate together to formulate exit strategies.

APPENDIX 1

LEWIS SUMMARY OF ICP CORE VALUES²⁸

- 1) A key element of the ICP²⁹ is that the local church is not to be dependent on foreign money or missionaries, or rather, foreign funds can assist, but must not cripple the church by making it foreign dependent.
- 2) Further, no patronage should be based upon a person (either by money, power, or control of the 'goodies'). If the nationals receive support from the foreigners, they can have a public image problem among fellow nationals that will not help their future ministry.
- 3) National workers are better off without foreign support, and the national workers and leaders should not be bypassed in developing ministries for and in their country.
- 4) The missionaries must remember that they are transitory elements – it is the church that must endure.
- 5) A missionary should not hold a position that a national can do, especially since there is a tendency for the foreigner to operate in the ways of their own culture, rather than the target culture.
- 6) The missionary must remember that it is a team effort, each individual must be subject to the good of the whole.
- 7) In the area of training, it is important not to isolate the national in their training from their work in a semi-foreign environment, rather the training should be both intellectual and spiritual within the parameters of their calling and task. Further, training should be developed for the whole church and for all ages.

¹ Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976).

² Morris O. Williams, *Partnership in Mission*. Rev. and enlarged ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986).

³ Hodges, 34.

⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁵ Ibid, 136.

⁶ Williams, *Partnership in Mission*, 220.

⁷ Ibid, 160.

⁸ Email communication to Mark Durene from Team Expansion Director of Operations of 1/20/2006.

⁹ Ed Silvoso, *That None Perish* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997).

¹⁰ Trent Rowland, "3 Mission Leaders Ask Disturbing Questions / 2 Mission Leaders Exchange Significant Letters" *Mission Frontiers*, Nov. – Dec. 1991.

¹¹ Wendy Murray Zoba, "Exit Strategy" *Christianity Today* 43 #6 (May 24, 1999): 50-56.

¹² Chet Thomas quoted in *ibid.*, 51.

¹³ Steve Saint, "Looking at Missions from Their Side, Not Ours", *Mission Frontiers*: May – June, 1998, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1998/0506/mj984.htm>.

¹⁴ Rick Wood, "Fighting Dependency Among the Aucas; An Interview with Steve Saint" *Missions Frontiers*, May – June, 1998, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1998/0506/mj985.htm>.

¹⁵ Saint, continued.

¹⁶ Marten Visser, "Where Are Pioneer Missionaries Needed? The N-Formula," EMQonline: <https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emqonline/imgs/dot.gif>, 2004.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Assemblies of God World Missions Web Site: About Us: Our Mission, http://worldmissions.ag.org/about/about_mission.cfm.

¹⁹ Assemblies ..., Our Message, http://worldmissions.ag.org/about/about_message.cfm.

²⁰ Assemblies..., Our Method, http://worldmissions.ag.org/about/about_method.cfm.

²¹ Ken Benintendi Email to Mark Durene, February 3, 2006.

²² Hodges, 18.

²³ Ibid, 18.

²⁴ Ibid, 18.

²⁵ Ibid, 34.

²⁶ Williams, 187.

²⁷ According to the Lausanne/IFMA meeting of mission leaders in March of 1982, the recognized definition of an unreached people group is those groups in which, "...there is no indigenous community of believers with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize (or reach) the rest of its members without outside assistance."

²⁸ Paul Lewis, "Hodges, Williams and Contemporary China", Presented at the first International Pentecostal Missiology Symposium at APTS, Baguio, Philippines in April 2002, 2-3. In this summary, Lewis summarized the indigenous church principles espoused by Melvin Hodges in his works, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, Mo: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), idem, "Are Indigenous Church Principles Outdated?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 9 # 1: 44, and idem, *The Indigenous Church and the Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978).

²⁹ ICP stands for "Indigenous Church Principles."