

COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
AND DISCIPLESHIP METHODOLOGIES AT URBAN
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

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ABSTRACT

Leadership development and discipleship methodologies are integral components of church ministries in Cambodia. Historical foundations, cultural influences, and educational approaches within leadership and discipleship can shape the overall effectiveness of a local Khmer congregation in its ministry context. Relationships between existing church leadership and maturing laity comprise a necessary bond for assisting future generations of leaders and disciples.

The purpose of this ethnographic research is to show how history, culture, and education have affected urban Assemblies of God churches in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Field research interviews with missionaries in Cambodia provide insight into historical themes such as strategy, methodology, national leaders, growth, tensions, and cooperation/fellowship. Participant observation at six research sites and interviews with Khmer nationals reveal cultural influences on training/teaching, personnel, programs, and roles. Interviews with Khmer head pastors about education methods portray the functionality from missionary involvement during initial years to current implementation through national leadership.

Missionary participation in Cambodia has played a significant role since 1990 and emerged from relief and development projects and initial church planting. While missionaries' efforts set ministries in motion, cultural emphases among the Khmer people gravitate toward authoritative figures to oversee leadership and discipleship while emphasizing doing rather than being. The eventual result comprises Christian education

for leaders and disciples flowing from previous missionary influence into head pastor application through fellowship, participation, and encouragement. This ethnographic research of history, culture, and education in Cambodia presents ongoing leadership development and discipleship methodologies within a Khmer Christian subculture.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG – Assemblies of God

AGC – Assemblies of God Cambodia

AGMF – Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship

AGWM – Assemblies of God World Missions

C&MA – Christian and Missionary Alliance

CAQDAS – Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CBI – Cambodia Bible Institute

CCC – Australian Christian Churches

CGA – Cambodia Global Action

CHE – Community Health Evangelism

CIM – China Inland Mission

CSM – Cambodia School of Missions

EFC – Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia

FCC – Fellowship Churches of Cambodia

ICA – International Christian Assembly

ISPP – International School of Phnom Penh

KEC – Khmer Evangelical Church

LLI – Lay Leadership Institute

MAPS – Mission Abroad Placement Service

NGO – Non-Government Organization

OMF – Overseas Mission Fellowship

PAOC – Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

Pingst FFS – Pentecostal Alliance of Independent Churches

PTG – Posttraumatic Growth

PTSD – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

RPTS – Reaching, Planting, Training, and Serving

RUPP – Royal University of Phnom Penh

SOC – State of Cambodia

TEE – Theological Education by Extension

UNTAC – United Nations Transitional Authority of Cambodia

YWAM – Youth with a Mission

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Most of all, I give praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. His grace carried me while learning more about leadership and discipleship in Cambodia. It is an honor to serve in His mission.

INTRODUCTION

Cambodia changed dramatically in the year 1990. After twenty years of turmoil marked by war, genocide, and displacement, Cambodia re-opened its borders to missionaries. Although Christianity had nearly fallen into extinction in Cambodia, a new era was about to begin as missionaries entered the country. Since 1990, missionary activity among the Khmer people has remained robust for over three decades. Churches and non-government organizations have spread from bustling population centers to distant, tranquil rice paddies. A country having approximately 200 believers in 1989 began to experience phenomenal growth, and the church currently numbers over 200,000 believers.¹

As numerous denominations and fellowships entered Cambodia in 1990, the Assemblies of God (AG) also launched its ministries. Initial approaches included health clinics, orphanages, and English programs, which ultimately led to new places of worship. The Assemblies of God Cambodia (AGC) was chartered with full government recognition in 1997 and elected its first committee members. Men and women who survived the horrors of the previous decades gratefully welcomed the task of sharing the gospel among their people group. Their labors have been part of a Fellowship growing to over 14,000 adherents with 205 worship sites throughout the country.²

¹ Hanns Hoerschelmann, Joseph Keo Thyu, and Anne Juergensen, "Cambodia," *The Ecumenical Review*, 64, no. 2 (2012): 104.

² The National Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia, "Report of Churches of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia 2019," Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2019.

Our family arrived in Cambodia on September 11, 2010. Following fifteen months of language studies in Phnom Penh, we moved to Siem Reap Province to serve with another missionary family. New ministry opportunities among young adults and youth helped us sharpen our language skills and provided more familiarity with Khmer culture. We finished our first mission term in May 2013 and returned to the United States for a one-year furlough.

Before starting our second mission term, a fellow missionary asked me to serve as the academic dean at Cambodia Bible Institute (CBI), an AG Bible School in Phnom Penh. Ministry at CBI allowed me to assist in two essential areas: leadership development and discipleship programs. From 2014 to 2018, I surveyed practical strategies to resource our constituency with new leaders and devoted believers. Furthermore, I began to research AGC history for my graduate studies to help future missionaries recognize the key events shaping leadership and discipleship in our fellowship.

My ministry as the academic dean caused me to gravitate toward the necessity of understanding leadership development and discipleship programs among the Khmer people in urban settings. I have always been fascinated by the prospect of these vital ministries, and our second mission term allowed me to devote time and research in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. Several of our charter churches are located in the capital city and have produced capable leaders. The friendships I formed with those leaders provided greater insight into their ministry as well as their views of leadership and discipleship.

For any denomination or fellowship to remain viable in Cambodia, there must be a direct focus on leadership development to train future leaders and discipleship programs

to enhance parishioners. The urban setting of Phnom Penh is the nucleus of the entire country, and the same is true about urban churches. Understanding the facets of leadership development and discipleship methodologies in an urban setting can answer fundamental ministry questions and shape the next generation.

Rationale and Need for Study

While completing my graduate studies in 2016, I chose to write a thesis on the history of the AGC. Two specific reasons directed me along this path. First, no one had ever conducted comprehensive research on the Fellowship's initial years and progression. Second, many of the significant individuals directly involved with the AGC, both missionaries and national church leaders, were still living and able to meet for face-to-face interviews. The thesis was a way to complete my degree, but it also provided opportunities to resource our fellowship, especially for missionaries in Cambodia.

Interviews with missionaries and church leaders demonstrated cultural intricacies that, combined with the primary emphasis on leadership development, took the Fellowship down a unique course. I began to see a leadership hierarchy within the churches, a society struggling with basic training principles, a church framework vastly overshadowed by the dominant religious structure of Theravada Buddhism, and leadership positions permitted for exclusive individuals. These factors compelled me to research our fellowship's leadership development and discipleship methodologies.

Surveying AGC history revealed how first-generation Christian leaders were quick to receive all aspects of leadership development. This enthusiasm was related to a fifteen-year absence of missionary activity from 1975 to 1990 due to the Khmer Rouge regime's control for nearly four years and a ten-year Vietnamese occupation of

Cambodia. After missionaries returned in 1990, Christianity grew as laborers planted churches and launched ministries. Missionaries directed their attention toward training leaders since they did not know how long foreigners might remain in the country. Although early efforts included leadership development, discipleship was bypassed because missionaries hoped national leaders would become responsible for instructing new believers.

Leadership principles in Southeast Asia include a hierarchy that distances the authoritative leader from others who are viewed as subservient. This pattern is also present in Cambodian churches because leaders are regarded as the only individuals with the ability to maintain control. Culture necessitates a distance is rigidly upheld, but that practice causes a vacuum in churches between leaders and laity. For missionaries to adequately train the next generation of Cambodian leaders, examining these cultural patterns associated with leadership principles remains essential.

The overarching significance of researching leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban churches closely connects to my involvement with our national church. My primary responsibilities as a missionary include resourcing the AGC in the urban setting of Phnom Penh through leadership training and providing opportunities for church discipleship programs. Additional research in these areas will provide insight related to the Fellowship's history and current trends. Moreover, findings can equip missionaries with clear perspectives as they assist Cambodian churches.

Whether in Bible school classrooms or church offices, leadership development continues in Cambodia. However, for over three decades, hierarchical structures have taken leadership development down the path of simply maintaining authority while

neglecting discipleship. Since leadership development in Cambodia has been elevated at the expense of discipleship ministries, national leaders and missionaries must address core issues related to culture, education, and ecclesiastical methodologies.

Research Problem, Limitations, Terms

Research Problem

In this dissertation, I aim to critically examine leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches from 1990 to present. The purpose of this research is to show how history, culture, and education have directly impacted leadership and discipleship in the AGC. Focusing on this research problem in Phnom Penh will provide opportunities for interviews and participant observation among urban AGC churches.

Five sub-questions are associated with this research. First, what is the history of Christian mission efforts involving leadership and discipleship in Phnom Penh from 1990 to 1999? Second, what were the initial leadership and discipleship methodologies implemented by AG missionaries in Phnom Penh from 1990 to 1999? Third, how does culture influence leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches? Fourth, what emphases and neglect from missionaries and head pastors have been evident in leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches? Fifth, what proposals for effective leadership development and discipleship methodologies are needed in urban AGC churches? Since this research will focus on history, culture, and education, questions one and two will focus on history, question three will focus on culture, and question four will focus on education. Question five will provide findings from the research data.

Limitations

Although numerous denominations and fellowships now exist in Cambodia, this research will focus only on the AGC. Understanding how history, culture, and education have shaped the AGC will shed light on significant events of the past in addition to current trends within the Fellowship. The findings will not represent all denominations and fellowships working in Cambodia. Conducting research through interviews and participant observation among all denominations and fellowships would require extensive time.

Phnom Penh was chosen as the research setting because it is the largest urban area in the country and the central location for the AGC. Several AGC churches in Phnom Penh have a longstanding history in the Fellowship and have accessibility to participant observation. Furthermore, the churches have regular attendees available for interviews. The AGC churches included in the research are located in various administrative sections of the city and provide insight according to each site. Although approximately 90 percent of the AGC is situated outside the urban setting of Phnom Penh, it is more practical to research a centralized area rather than the provincial landscape of the country.

The AGC currently has twenty-three places of worship in Phnom Penh. The sites include cell groups, house churches, churches affiliated but not officially recognized, and churches officially recognized by the Fellowship. Research sites must meet three criteria: officially recognized within the Fellowship, having a pastor who has ministerial credentials, and existing as an AGC church for ten years or more. Churches meeting these criteria tend to have established ministries associated with leadership and discipleship rather than other urban AGC churches still in earlier stages.

Interviewees who are part of the research must meet two criteria: they must be eighteen years of age or older and have been part of their local church for one year or more. These criteria allow individuals to have a basic understanding of leadership and discipleship. Also, this provides an opportunity for interaction among various age groups within the church. Youth, children, and new attendees will not take part in the interviews, but I can include them in research related to participant observation.

Terms

Contextualization: A contextualized approach within cross-cultural ministries includes making the gospel relevant to a specific people group without changing the Scriptural meaning.

Discipleship: In a church setting, this includes methodologies used to teach, train, and mentor believers for learning and applying biblical doctrines.

Khmer People: Although there are forty-four people groups in Cambodia, this people group generally refers to the country's primary people group since 97.6 percent of the population identifies as Khmer.³ Any reference to a Khmer person means someone who is a Cambodian national. Individuals from different people groups in Cambodia are identified by their people group rather than being called Khmer.

Leadership Development: In a church setting, this refers to teaching, training, and mentoring for performing ministerial duties.

Patron-Client Relationship: These are societal relationships linking superior and inferior individuals and providing mutual benefits for both parties. While patrons are the

³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Cambodia," The World Factbook, accessed January 31, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>.

source of provision, clients are the recipients who provide necessary services to the patron. This type of relationship aligns Khmer society in beneficial, reciprocal ways.

Provinces: In addition to the autonomous municipality of Phnom Penh, Cambodia has twenty-four provinces. Any mention of provinces or provincial life generally means the rural setting in Cambodia distinct from the urban setting of Phnom Penh.

Relief and Development: This ministry approach includes humanitarian aid to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. Examples of relief and development include education projects, medical services, and orphanages.

Literature Review

Historical Review

The annals of leadership history during the Angkor Empire from the ninth to fifteenth centuries demonstrate a society held together by authoritarianism. While the activities of some kings may differ or are unknown, the characteristics associated with their leadership are comparable. Kings and their authority are described by religious devotion, supreme authority, and serving as the chief patron in society. These aspects, especially authority and patronage, remain important to modern studies; thus, I include them in my research as I examine leadership development and discipleship. Just as current leaders in Cambodia uphold patronage networks, ancient kings demonstrated relational influence within society by maintaining patronage and obligations.⁴ Although this particular focus on history is distinct from my research about urban leadership and discipleship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the characteristics related to kings

⁴ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 8th ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 56.

and rulers in Cambodia remain significant in modern times. Historical records lay a foundation of leadership dynamics that began over 1,000 years ago and has continued through eras in Cambodia. My research among leaders and disciples seeks to determine whether similar religious, authoritarian, and patronage traits continue within urban churches.

Following the years of war and genocide, Cambodia endured numerous challenges before, during, and after the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) from 1991 to 1993. James Dobbins notes five areas to demonstrate the immensity of obstacles and restoration within the country: geographical/geopolitical, cultural/social, economic, political, and institutional. The area I examine most involves culture/society since it is rooted in deference for authority as the Khmer people have continually realized their submissive role to maintain survival.⁵ Throughout UNTAC's involvement, the people maintained this position as the country relied upon outside assistance for daily survival. The five areas connected to UNTAC's time in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993 also remain significant to review following the national elections in 1993. Despite some positive outcomes from the presence of UNTAC, the government struggled due to conflict, corruption, patronage systems, and nepotism. Even though previous studies have surveyed these areas at large, rather than focusing on Christianity in the country, possible parallels exist between the events related to UNTAC and initial missionary involvement during the early 1990s. My research on leadership development and discipleship investigates history, culture, and education to find possible connections

⁵ James Dobbins, et al., *Overcoming Obstacles to Peace: Local Factors in Nation-Building*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 35.

to prevalent issues such as conflict, corruption, patronage systems, and nepotism in urban churches.

Christian history in Cambodia reveals centuries of minimal growth with repetitive waves of persecution. Steve Hyde's research presents history and culture along with perspectives about Christianity among the Khmer people. The historical development of the Cambodian Church was initiated through Catholic and Protestant mission efforts and has been further shaped by social and political trends. This area proves significant to my research, which notes historical patterns and cultural expressions among Khmer leaders and disciples.⁶ Current social issues in Cambodia and the growth of Christianity also address the challenges and possibilities of the Cambodian Church in modern times. Catholic and Protestant history remain essential by providing a foundation for mission efforts, which started nearly five centuries ago, endured stoppages due to persecution, and ultimately restarted in 1990. Additionally, I use historical findings from interviews concerning leadership and discipleship within the AG. Whereas the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical components include research in rural and urban settings among various denominations, my research focuses specifically on the urban leadership and discipleship patterns of the AGC.

The AG has maintained a strong presence in Cambodia through missionary efforts for over thirty years. Chronological details of the Fellowship's history in Cambodia include establishing a wide range of ministries, withstanding challenges, and resourcing

⁶ Steven J. Hyde, "A Missiological and Critical Study of Cambodia's Historical, Cultural, and Sociopolitical Characteristics to Identify the Factors of Rapid Church Growth and Propose Its Future Prognosis" (Ph.D. diss, Bethany International University, 2015), 198.

its fellowship in strategic areas of the country. My current research addresses the events of the AGC as it was chartered in 1997 and the internal structure and outward ministry focus that followed. Approaches, misconceptions, and ministerial responsibilities recently examined reveal weaknesses in leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Interviews in urban AGC churches from 2016 survey the working relationship between missionaries and national leaders as they work to enhance the Fellowship.⁷ Although previous studies about leadership development and discipleship methodologies have been shown in a historical sense, my current research aims to demonstrate how history, culture, and education in Phnom Penh have impacted the Fellowship. Furthermore, new proposals about history, culture, and education can enrich the previous findings.

Dependency between missionary efforts and national churches has presented an ongoing saga in Cambodia. Khmer Christians experienced this scenario firsthand in the 1960s as outside financial support ceased. A small percentage of believers survived the following decade during the genocide at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. New doors were re-opened in 1990 when missionaries entered Cambodia to assist the small number of existing Christians. This is an area I survey through missionary interviews to understand how the influx of missionaries and relief agencies may have caused believers to return to a state of dependency. Churches receiving assistance may grow, but they also suffer from a dependency seen as “dysfunctional growth” because that dependency hinders long-term

⁷ Joshua J. Lovelace, “The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia: An Analysis of Beginnings, Continual Progression and Enduring Optimism for the Future” (Master of Arts Thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2016), 68.

effectiveness.⁸ Jean Johnson notes how the initial strategies of missionaries will determine the overall effectiveness in the future. This notion correlates with my research since it involves leadership in Cambodia and the historical situation when missionaries began to train and disciple individuals in the early 1990s. Previous studies related to dependency examine Christianity at large rather than one specific denomination or fellowship; however, the findings from these other studies have overarching implications for cross-cultural ministries among the Khmer. One area of my research involves missionary assistance during the 1990s, but it relates only to the AG in Phnom Penh. Also, I survey the historical situation during the initial decade to compare any dependency issues that may continue among leaders and disciples within the Fellowship.

Cultural Review

Patron-client dynamics can serve as an integral component in relationships between missionaries and national pastors in Cambodia as they may determine the roles of each participant. Robert Oh's research provides anthropological details about relationships between Korean missionaries and Christians in Phnom Penh. Based on previous research by Wolfgang Muno, five characteristics describe the relationship between patrons and clients: dyadic, asymmetrical, personal/enduring, reciprocal, and voluntary.⁹ The focus on Korean missionaries and Khmer believers involves field personnel, churches, and non-governmental organizations seeking to provide support for

⁸ Jean Johnson, "The 'Thinning' Revisited: Dependency and Church Planting in Cambodia," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 27, no. 2 (2010): 72.

⁹ Robert Oh, "Patron-Client Dynamics Between Korean Missionaries and Cambodian Christians," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association*, 48, no. 1 (2015): 13.

individuals and groups. Provisions align on both sides for the patron and client to allow mutual benefits, yet imbalances can occur due to a lack of reciprocity and produce exploitation or authoritarianism.¹⁰ Researching this cultural area in urban churches can prove important due to the roles of missionaries, church leaders, and disciples. Although previous research includes terminology and information from a Korean perspective, my research involves patron-client relationships among Western missionaries and Khmer Christians. Furthermore, I closely examine Khmer terminology as this also has its nuances with levels of speech, levels of formality, and ways to address individuals in leadership/discipleship roles.

Recent generations in Cambodia have encountered cultural changes due to globalization and widening economic markets. An examination of history shows Cambodia was isolated by the time of its colonization in 1863 due to the monarchy's resistance to modernization and failure to allow more diversity among the people.¹¹ One closely related area I investigate involves studying hierarchy within the country's history and how this created ongoing issues due to isolating people. The older system with feudalism and nepotism begins to lose its place among this generation as society experiences changes related to transparency and power limitations.¹² As globalization becomes more of a reality because of an outward focus, new development stemming from opportunities in education and economic diversity can propel Cambodia despite previous

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Chanto Sisowath, "Globalization and Generational Change: The Evolution of Cambodia's Social Structure," in *Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions: East Asia and Beyond*, ed. Jim Dator, Dick Pratt, and Yongseok Seo (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 301.

¹² Ibid., 305.

ideologies. Although globalization, in an economic sense, appears to dominate the areas of change, insights related to culture, especially as it relates to the younger generation, remain significant in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. Local churches currently face these cultural issues as Cambodian pastors address leadership development and discipleship methodologies. My research does not focus on economics, but surveys globalization related to history, culture, and education. This approach can have positive ramifications for the future of urban churches as they develop leaders and disciples.

The cultural dynamics of community elders have always maintained an important role in Cambodian culture, especially in the years following the Khmer Rouge regime. Ethnographic research from Eve Zucker shows that a lack of elders “represents a structural void within a society that is organized in large part according to kinship, ranking, and hierarchy.”¹³ War and genocide profoundly disrupted society, yet areas with elders returned to their traditions and reeducated younger generations. On the other hand, the areas lacking elders during the early 2000s changed and lost association with their ancestors. This phenomenon relates to morality in society since it is held together by the bonds of kinship. Changes to the overall structure can become quite extreme, even transforming morality, relationships, and religion, which all remained unaltered for centuries. Zucker notes that social change in areas without elders includes religious shifts as Cambodians embrace Christianity rather than Buddhism. Since the rejection of Buddhism may connect to the lack of elders, this aspect could represent the growth of

¹³ Eve Zucker, “In the Absence of Elders: Chaos and Moral Order in the Aftermath of the Khmer Rouge,” in *People of Virtue: Reconfiguring Religion, Power, and Morality in Cambodia Today*, ed. David Chandler and Alexandra Kent (Copenhagen, Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008), 197.

Christianity in Cambodia. Part of my research investigates whether the lack of elders in the urban area of Phnom Penh has influenced leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Whereas previous research was conducted in the provinces, research in an urban setting may find correlations due to the unique role of elders to maintain morality, relationships, and religion.

Researchers have examined posttraumatic growth (PTG) in various people groups, including the Khmer people, after experiencing trauma from war and displacement. Information linked to previous studies involves posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among those who survived the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. Initial references to Lawrence Calhoun and Richard Tedeschi, who coined the PTG phrase,¹⁴ signify positive changes, development, and advancement for those who previously endured crises.¹⁵ One area I research involves leadership because some interviewees believe challenges and hardships enabled them to lead others. Research results indicate that nine of the twelve individuals surveyed became more effective as leaders and maintained leadership among their communities due to previous experiences.¹⁶ Some limitations exist from the previous findings since the interviewees who received opportunities for education and advancement are former refugees living in America rather than Cambodia and adhere to Buddhism. However, the information about

¹⁴ See Lawrence G. Calhoun and Richard G. Tedeschi, *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995), for research about posttraumatic growth.

¹⁵ Yuki Okubo and K. Kara Uy, "Reassembling a Shattered Life: A Study of Posttraumatic Growth in Displaced Cambodian Community Leaders," *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 9, no. 1 (2018): 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

PTG among Cambodians can prove extremely beneficial to my research in Phnom Penh. Confident attitudes, growth following challenges, healthy relationships, and healthy decision-making are important traits for leaders and disciples among Khmer Christians in urban settings. As for those areas, I incorporate studies about personal history and cultural influences connected to effective leadership and discipleship among people directly impacted by trauma and distress.

Cultural themes in Southeast Asia provide insights for producing more effective ways to apply contextualized evangelism methods among Buddhists. Using these cultural themes is significant when researching a secondary religion, such as Christianity and its distinction from the predominant religion of Buddhism. Collectivism, hierarchy, holism, and honor-shame create a dialogical methodology relating to biblical themes and appropriate contextualization processes.¹⁷ Group practices, relationships, and responses to leadership display the necessary patterns for portraying an accurate cultural picture. Moreover, it is possible to survey cultural themes within ethnographic research involving leadership and discipleship in urban settings. Due to the nature of my research, which places a heavy emphasis on culture, a close examination of the Khmer Christian subculture offers greater insight into ministerial practices. My research differs from previous studies as it focuses on established urban churches rather than on evangelistic approaches among Buddhists. However, participant observation of culture and interviews

¹⁷ Eric C. Mullis, “Contextualizing the Gospel for Southeast Asian Buddhists: Recovering the Critical Themes of Kingdom and Covenant in Evangelism” (Ph.D. diss, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 112.

with individuals having a Buddhist background can identify fundamental themes for effective ministry in Cambodia.

Educational Review

The history of education in Cambodia reveals a teaching/learning system repeatedly encountering challenges and obstacles. In more recent times, the years leading up to the civil war saw the establishment of universities by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Lon Nol, respectively. However, widespread violence eventually caused teachers and students to relocate and schools to close. Cambodia was ushered into another juncture in 1975 as the Khmer Rouge abolished traditional education by destroying universities and killing teachers. By the time the United Nations arrived in 1991 to conduct elections, students were allowed to study abroad during the unstable political scene. An area I closely research includes the final stage of education history, beginning in 1998 under current Prime Minister Hun Sen. Challenges continue due to a lack of qualified educators in various spectrums of society. Education issues are regularly compounded by government control and the lack of autonomy for students and institutions.¹⁸ My leadership and discipleship research areas connect to this scenario as that research involves education methods in urban churches. This dissertation depicts education purposes in urban AGC churches, yet I focus on a smaller scale by gathering data from expatriate missionaries and national pastors. Although previous research illustrates the

¹⁸ Hazri Jamil, Sam Rany, and Ahmad Nurulazam Md Zain, "Cambodia's Higher Education Development in Historical Perspectives (1863-2012)," *International Journal of Learning and Development*, 2, no. 2 (2012): 238.

overarching education system, my focus involves Christian education in churches not directly related to government entities.

The lack of funding and government support at universities, institutes, and trade schools has limited the advancement of educators and students in Cambodia. A qualitative case study based at the largest university in Cambodia, the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), researched capacity building at the university. Primary research data through interviews with faculty members, documents from meetings, and participant observation occurred on campus. Several negative aspects of the studies included the area of finances as shown by low salaries, lack of funding for research, and poor financial management. Despite the financial challenges and limitations at the university, the faculty showed unusual commitment to their academic work. My research at urban AGC churches surveys leadership commitment who may possess similar motivations to prepare students, assist colleagues, and enhance the education setting rather than acquire personal gain.¹⁹ This university study is significant to my research as it demonstrates the work of Cambodian instructors who persevere in teaching and training despite external challenges and limitations. Although previous research involved a large university rather than an urban church, gifted teachers may exist in all settings within Khmer society. The educational emphasis of my research surveys ministerial training in urban AGC churches in addition to adequately caring for leaders and disciples.

¹⁹ Ann Brooks and Ly Monirith, "Faculty Virtue and Research Capacity-Building in the Context of Poorly Funded Universities: The Case of the Royal University of Phnom Penh," *Human Resource Development International*, 13, no. 1 (2010): 95.

Efforts to reestablish a previously dominant religion and train new leaders in the early 1990s demonstrate the fragility of Khmer religious practices following the years of civil war, the Khmer Rouge genocide, and the Vietnamese occupation. A primary challenge involved rebuilding the state religion, Theravada Buddhism, to the preeminence it once held. One obstacle in the reform process was the lack of training available for monks. Although new Buddhist schools started in the 1990s, the absence of qualified teachers and resources led to assistance from non-government organizations.²⁰ Interestingly enough, Christian missionaries entered Cambodia to train Khmer leaders as Buddhism struggled to regain its former prominence. Analyzing these circumstances provides insight into the rebuilding of a religious state firmly established before the Khmer Rouge era. Inquiring about the lack of education among Buddhist leaders connects to my research regarding the lack of training among the initial AGC leaders since the Fellowship's inception occurred during the same years. Though the research addresses Buddhism as the dominant religion in Cambodia, my ethnography focuses on Khmer Christianity as a subculture in Phnom Penh. Also, my focus includes the establishment of leadership development and discipleship from a new religious entity instead of a religious structure already having deep roots within Khmer culture.

Although only 200 Christians remained in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge regime, new religious freedoms in the 1990s allowed Christianity to flourish to over 200,000 within the next two decades.²¹ The recent history of Cambodian Christianity

²⁰ Nadezhda Bektimirova, "The Religious Situation in Cambodia in the 1990s," *Religion, State, and Society*, 30, no. 1 (2002): 68.

²¹ Hoerschelmann, Thyu, and Juergensen, "Cambodia," 104.

shows that establishing churches and introducing theological education were crucial areas for Christians during an era of unprecedented growth. However, various challenges such as remaining small in comparison to Buddhism, dependence on foreign aid, and association with non-government organizations have limited Christianity. In addition to these areas, theological training remains a fundamental issue for Christian educators serving in Cambodia and is included as an aspect of my urban church research. Training is generally represented by either attending a formal Bible school for full-time studies or joining short-term seminars. This area has created internal issues since many pastors and leaders prefer seminar training in place of full-time studies due to financial limitations or non-ministry responsibilities. Overall, modern-day challenges continue for Christians in Cambodia, while strategies for long-term growth can assess historical crises, the sustainability of churches, and the lack of education. My research on history, culture, and education follows closely with the representation of Christianity in Cambodia and the current issues. The specific aspect of theological education raises an important question for leadership and discipleship in the urban setting of Phnom Penh.

Just as primary and secondary schools throughout Cambodia have endured numerous setbacks, Christian education has also encountered obstacles. Despite widespread Christian growth among the Khmer, teaching and training methods have been lacking or altogether ineffective. In 2019, case studies among AGC churches in urban and provincial locations examined models, roles, personnel, and context to provide data

regarding teachers and educational content.²² These studies describe the mode and focus of Christian education in existing churches with established ministries. Facets regarding the appointment of teachers, the general spiritual character, educational background, and new teacher involvement provide a valuable overview of education at AGC churches.²³ Training church leaders and incorporating discipleship methodologies through Christian education are areas to survey in light of the data from these recent case studies. Since urban AGC churches in Phnom Penh are included in the educational studies, my research examines Christian education in association with church leadership training and various teaching approaches in discipleship classes. Models, roles, personnel, and context can be used for aiding research among urban churches with multi-structured leadership development and long-term discipleship methodologies.

Leadership Review

Although numerous variables relate to the composition of leadership dynamics in Cambodia, perhaps the strongest influence comes from culture. Research about Cambodian leadership presents “a four-dimensional framework consisting of personal qualities, managerial style, the demands of the organization, and the influences represented in the political, economic, and social environment.”²⁴ Theories for the studies include the four dimensions while incorporating ninety-four value statements related to

²² Darin R. Clements, “A Multiple Case Study of Approaches to Nonformal Christian Education among Assemblies of God of Cambodia Churches” (Ph.D. diss, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2019), 138.

²³ Ibid., 263.

²⁴ Dy Davtuh, Denny Meyer, and Christopher Selvarajaha, “The Effect of Cultural Modeling on Leadership Profiling of the Cambodian Manager,” *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 18, no. 4 (2012): 652.

leadership functions and interactions. Results describe applied paradigms leading toward quality leadership among the Khmer people. In this dissertation, I closely investigate areas such as authority, roles, and activities through ethnographic studies. This research provides valuable insight into Khmer culture and its leadership connotations, which can assist church leaders in urban settings. From leadership and follower perspectives, the historical events and educational frameworks within the country relate to the general perception of the people, whether in corporations or churches. A distinct difference in my research includes evaluating leadership from Christian foundations rather than Buddhist beliefs.

Cambodian leadership dynamics at local levels explain how nationals work in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Deep-rooted traditions, authoritarian rule, hierarchies, and patronage systems overshadow the local scene. Comparisons among Cambodian leaders highlight distinctions between individuals, government positions, and NGO operations. Questions about leadership perceptions, challenges, and overall effectiveness address concepts such as choosing to invest in others or maintaining power by virtue of position. As noted by Richard Pratt and Sekson Yongavit, additional research remains necessary as some leaders “may not place as strong an emphasis on nonhierarchical relationships, facilitation, teamwork, and capacity-building.”²⁵ Although positive examples of leadership demonstrate assisting others, personal achievement and high standing remain common in Cambodia. Leadership studies in urban AGC churches can show how the process of selection, development, and performance yields positive or

²⁵ Richard Pratt and Sekson Yongavit, “Reflections on Leadership at the Local Level in Cambodia,” *Cambodian Journal of International Studies*, 2, no. 1 (2015): 26.

negative characteristics among congregants. Rather than focusing on NGO leaders attempting to shape culture in Cambodia, I intend to study how culture has shaped church leadership in a local setting. Using ethnographic research methods in an urban setting directs attention toward the Khmer Christian subculture and the functions among leaders and disciples.

Christian leaders in Buddhist contexts can emerge from higher education centers, mission agencies, and local churches. Cross-cultural workers in Southeast Asia have continually strived to make efforts for leadership development among church laity and seminary students in Buddhist contexts. Furthermore, the inability of Asian leaders to adequately produce additional leaders may cause a stronger emphasis on roles such as coaching, advising, and mentoring.²⁶ This approach follows the biblical model of learning by practice rather than relying on institutions as the means for producing leaders. Production and reproduction of lay leaders remain a goal for mission opportunities throughout Buddhist contexts. The three locations mentioned for producing leaders (Bible schools, mission agencies, and local churches) hold a significant place in my research. These areas can provide answers related to past and present leadership development in urban settings and offer indicators for the future. Although previous studies relate to educating leadership, which will eventually propel mission involvement, my research is directed toward the local church setting. Nevertheless, the content of leadership and discipleship with coaching, advising, and mentoring could prove noteworthy in the urban setting of modern-day Phnom Penh.

²⁶ Alex G. Smith, "Leadership Development for 21st Century Asian Mission: Buddhist Contexts," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association*, 51, no. 1 (2016): 18

Contextualized approaches regarding the spirituality of leaders can serve as a component for future leadership development among the Khmer people. Gil Suh's ethnographic research about spiritual formation among young leaders in Phnom Penh focuses on personal backgrounds, ministry opportunities, and social issues. The research reveals a primary need for individuals focusing on personal spiritual disciplines to allow more time to contemplate their effectiveness in leadership and their purpose in ministry. Moreover, additional needs include continued Bible/theology training, mentoring relationships, and accountability among leaders. Interaction among young leaders shows the significance of spiritual health and personal reflection, which prove valuable for individual effectiveness and productive leadership in Cambodian churches.²⁷ Leadership development among young Khmer leaders requires a holistic approach to personal and spiritual needs throughout educational training. This study relates to my research since it focuses on leadership in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. However, the primary focus outlines the present necessities for young leaders and their spiritual well-being rather than understanding how history, culture, and education in Cambodia have impacted leaders. I use a similar ethnographic approach including interviews and participant observation among urban churches in my research, yet I have a different focus since it includes Cambodian leaders of various ages.

Spiritual values and ministerial roles among Christian leaders in Cambodia portray an intentional desire to maintain historical-cultural dynamics. Grounded theory

²⁷ Gil Sung Suh, "Exploring a Contextualized Leadership Development Model Built on Spiritual Formation for Emerging Christian Leaders in Cambodia," (D.Miss. diss, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017), 122.

research reveals various church roles in conjunction with personal views of spirituality and culture. Leaders involved in the studies demonstrated the necessity of upholding biblical principles and honoring cultural values while serving in an indigenous manner.²⁸ Cambodian leadership methodology proceeds from values and principles through regular ministerial functions. As for the function of a head pastor in Cambodia, leadership and relational roles reflect positive notions in their ministerial decisions and interactions with the congregation.²⁹ These roles, perceptions, and definitions depicting Cambodian church leaders are important to my research concerning leadership in urban AGC churches. Since little research exists about the spiritual character and actions of modern Khmer Christians, understanding leadership intentions, values, and authority can demonstrate the association with cultural influence. Although research about leadership perceptions portrayed leaders from a different denomination, the principles and findings still prove valuable within my research connected to AGC church leaders. A primary area of examination in my dissertation relates to leaders' methodologies as influenced by culture and inspired by missionaries.

Discipleship Review

For implementing and maintaining contextualized discipleship, it proves necessary to evaluate education, structure, and culture. First, a contextualized integration situating education relevant to discipleship must take place by applying knowledge to the specific environment. Second, an established structure can facilitate necessary

²⁸ Philip R. Coppola, "Spiritual Leadership: Perceptions of Khmer Church Leaders in Cambodia" (Ph.D. diss, Biola University, 2016), 121.

²⁹ Ibid., 181.

discipleship needs through small groups for accountability and application. Lastly, church culture remains indispensable for the maintenance and progression of discipleship. The overarching result includes interaction among believers who identify and align in a distinct, culturally relevant manner.³⁰ As disciples connect through education, structure, and culture, they can engage their local settings with maturity and productivity. Since discipleship is a component of my research, the insights regarding a contextualized approach may provide answers and proposals for discipleship in Cambodia. A distinct difference between this information and my research is the focus on Asian Christians rather than on previous studies about churches in Africa. One meaningful area for research is the negative reference to hierarchies in discipleship among hierarchical cultures. This approach to contextualized discipleship could provide a greater perspective for Cambodian churches and their discipleship methodologies.

Among Christians in an Asian context, discipleship and self-theology within a particular group can be integrated to establish proper evangelistic strategies. Since theology relates to individuals knowing God, self-theologizing presents opportunities for enlarging biblical perspectives in congregations.³¹ Understanding the links between discipleship and self-theology may provide more effective strategies among denominations, fellowships, and mission groups. The focus on self-theology in Asian contexts can shape congregations by reproducing future generations of believers,

³⁰ Ermias G. Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship, and Mission*, (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 158.

³¹ S. David Park, "Developing Disciple Making Self-Theology Through Integrating Evangelism and Mission: Towards Shaping Christianity in Asia Truly Asian and Biblically Global," in *Globalization and Mission*, ed. Timothy K. Park and Steve K. Eom (South Korea: East-West Center for Missions Research and Development, 2017), 558.

improving local-minded evangelism, and connecting to global mission efforts.³² The information about discipleship as it relates to self-theology is significant to my research because it focuses on Asian contexts. One difference involves a generalized approach rather than a specific approach toward areas dominated by another religion, especially Cambodia with its Buddhist worldview. An absence of self-theology among urban churches in Cambodia may reveal weaknesses in discipleship methodologies and limit a congregation's substance, witness, and development.

In 2016, a discussion emerged concerning the possibility of an insider movement genuinely espousing Christian beliefs in a Buddhist context. Due to cultural values, Buddhists can face considerable barriers, yet can demonstrate openness to Christian theology. The concept of frontier theologizing relates to the theological recognition of Christian mission and consists of a relationship between believers from a different religious background and missionaries.³³ This type of theology stems from self-theology within a local setting and contextual theology from missionaries. Implementing this framework in a Buddhist context may provide more awareness for missionaries as they minister cross-culturally and enable foundational support for new believers as they advance theologically. Overall, the information about insider movements has definite potential for my ethnographic research, especially relating to the discipleship process of former Buddhists. Although this approach in Cambodia is not specifically addressed, the information about theologizing, both in self-theology and contextual theology, can be

³² Ibid., 569.

³³ Todd Pokrifka, "Prospects for Indigenous People Movements in the Buddhist World: A Call for Collaborative Local and Global Theologizing," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 33, no. 4 (2016): 152.

used to evaluate insider movements among the Khmer people. Research about discipleship at urban AGC churches can survey possible insider movements since little information exists about this area in Cambodia.

Whether in Western or Eastern cultures, making, nurturing, and maintaining disciples within local church settings presents ongoing challenges. While discipleship programs may provide quick results, a lack of long-term substance may limit individuals and their potential. A true reflection of effective discipleship methodology must include personal transformation. This focus on missional living provides change within an individual and demonstrates an external impact on one's environment. Research connected to the Faith in Action discipleship model shows how believers and churches can experience transformation. Focusing on actions and association enables participants to reach special levels of transformation and to influence others.³⁴

Although research connected to the Faith in Action approach is Western-based, the transformative implications may apply to a variety of locations and contexts. These concepts apply to my research as I endeavor to understand how discipleship personally impacts Khmer Christians and relates to group dynamics. Due to the collective cultural nature in Cambodia, I examine whether discipleship methodologies are effective with an individual focus on the personal transformation or with a collective focus to build stronger cohesion in groups. Performing research in urban AGC churches may determine the emphasis on individual or collective methods in addition to the measure of personal transformation occurring in discipleship.

³⁴ Vanessa M. Seifert, "Discipleship as a Catalyst to Personal Transformation in the Christian Faith" (Ph.D. diss, University of the Incarnate Word, 2013), 154.

The kingdom of God contains overarching themes spreading throughout all creation yet directly impacts individuals as disciples of Christ. Kingdom-based discipleship instruction can reveal necessary principles for emphasizing foundational Kingdom perspectives, the active mission of God, and believers' participation. Utilizing this teaching approach among disciples may provide a better understanding of how the kingdom of God functions in the life of a believer and his or her role within God's activities. The educational framework within this model includes ongoing discipleship studies for individuals embracing the teachings of Christ and grasping Kingdom truths in decisions and actions.³⁵

Applying a Kingdom emphasis within discipleship circles allows believers to maintain an awareness of God's active involvement in daily life. Four areas encapsulating the discipleship progression include essential Kingdom concepts, teachings of Christ, apostolic affirmations, and personal application.³⁶ Discipleship settings with these Kingdom areas will enable long-term progress in an individualistic manner. Initiating a Kingdom-focus discipleship method for teaching and training among Khmer Christians could prove beneficial. The emphasis on studying Kingdom concepts in the New Testament allows a better understanding of the teachings of Christ in the Gospels, apostolic activities in Acts, and content for personal growth in the Epistles.³⁷ Although

³⁵ Claudia S. Berry, "Development of a Conceptual Framework for a Biblically Derived Discipleship Model for Kingdom Education" (Ed.D. diss., Regent University, 2009), 108.

³⁶ Ibid., 110.

³⁷ Ibid.

originally intended for Christian education settings in American churches, Khmer pastors could implement the approach in an urban setting.

Literature Review Summary

The books, journal articles, and dissertations used in my literature review provide a historical, cultural, and educational foundation for researching leadership development and discipleship methodologies in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. I examine leadership and discipleship sources to test and compare the information in my research setting. Previous research, both religious and secular, provides a general overview to understand how events, behavior, and methodologies have shaped Cambodia. However, until this dissertation, specific areas of history, culture, and education have not yet been fully addressed by researching leadership development and discipleship methodologies within urban AGC churches. The examination of this precedent research has allowed me to conduct a thorough ethnographic study in Phnom Penh and answer critical questions related to history, culture, and education.

Statement of Methodology

Methodological Distinctives

Special attention is given in this dissertation to methodological distinctives within three disciplines. First, history is closely surveyed to describe the foundation of each church, missionary involvement, and initial approaches to leadership and discipleship. The significance of the historical discipline within the methodological process provides specific knowledge of individuals and past events applicable for future ministry

opportunities.³⁸ Second, culture includes a detailed concentration in this ethnography and provides anthropological and sociological details demonstrating how urban AGC churches function through leadership development and discipleship methodologies. A cultural portrait is presented to show how each congregation functions in its setting. Third, education principles are closely examined to understand the unique, common, or neglected methods at each location. As stated by Edgar J. Elliston, the focus in this discipline includes “value bases and delivery systems that will facilitate the holistic learning from a biblical perspective.”³⁹

Qualitative Research

In addition to bibliographic research into relevant literature, a qualitative approach is used in the research process due to the nature of inquiry, cultural context, and reflexivity in personal experience and explanation.⁴⁰ This approach serves best for my research since it allows personal involvement by incorporating various means within a specific setting and acknowledging the necessary interpretations. My qualitative research through historical, cultural, and educational disciplines demonstrates how these areas have impacted leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches.

³⁸ Pablo A. Deiros, “Historical Research,” in *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 138.

³⁹ Edgar J. Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 121.

⁴⁰ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 45.

The general disposition of qualitative research requires a researcher to have regular engagement among individuals in his or her environment. This accounts for an active commitment to field research, analyzing data, and demonstrating multiple perspectives while interacting in a unique social setting.⁴¹ I utilized this approach with approximately two years of field research while using methods consistently aligning with the research problem. Throughout this process, I gave special attention to ethical considerations to safeguard individuals involved in any part of the research.

Ethnographic Approach

To properly describe the relevant cultural factors and social patterns through qualitative research, I used an ethnographic approach. This focus allows a complete description of culture as it relates to group dynamics within a specific locale.⁴² Cultural concepts about leadership development and discipleship methodologies are examined to ascertain core values and behavioral patterns. Worldview assumptions are also carefully assessed throughout the research to uphold a valid ethnography in a cross-cultural setting.⁴³

As John W. Creswell notes regarding this approach, ethnographic criteria are used for identifying groups, investigating themes, providing descriptions, and explaining functionality.⁴⁴ These ethnographic details will be applied to understand cultural concepts

⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

⁴² Ibid., 91.

⁴³ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 60.

⁴⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 263.

and patterns related to leadership development and discipleship methodologies among AGC churches in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. Field research through these means will provide a comprehensive evaluation of a particular culture-sharing group with a focus on the functionality of leadership and discipleship. Overall, this approach has the most potential due to the detailed correlation between anthropology and sociology in addition to my direct involvement throughout the entirety of the research process.

Data Collection Methods

The first method for collecting data involves personal interviews with foreign missionary personnel in Cambodia and Khmer nationals who participate at the research sites. This approach serves as the primary means for collecting data and includes questions related to definitions, perceptions, and roles in leadership development and discipleship methodologies. I conducted research site interviews from churches meeting the criteria of having official recognition within the AGC, a pastor with ministerial credentials, and existing for ten years or more. In addition to the criteria for interviewees who are eighteen years old and have attended their church for one year, primary candidates for interviews included individuals with leadership roles. Initial access for on-site research began by obtaining permission from the head pastors to interview individuals at the research sites. Discussion from the interviews was written by hand and audio-recorded for analysis.

The second method for collecting data involved participant observation by examining activities at each site. Primary opportunities for observation included Sunday worship services, fellowship gatherings, small group discussions, and training classes

emphasizing either leadership or discipleship. Detailed notes were logged in each gathering to describe activities, behaviors, and responses among leaders and laity.

The third method for collecting data involved a focus group with my interaction as a moderator among a group of five missionaries. Previous information from personal interviews and participant observation was included for the group to provide additional insight. The purpose of the focus group was to serve in conjunction with interviews and participant observation for effective triangulation.⁴⁵ Detailed notes were taken, and the group discussion was audio-recorded. This information was stored and later analyzed with personal interview responses and participant observation notes.

Due to the cross-cultural setting, personal interview dialogue and participant observation interaction were conducted in the Khmer language. Data gained from each of the procedures was handwritten in English during the research process. Audio recordings from personal interviews were translated from the Khmer language to English by the author.

Data Analysis

Following each opportunity for interviews, participant observation, and focus group gatherings, all hand-written and audio-recorded data was stored in a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) database for analysis. Each data collection method was initially categorized according to each of the various locations in Phnom Penh. Furthermore, ethical considerations were considered as the identity of each

⁴⁵ R. Daniel Shaw, "Qualitative Social Science Methods in Research Design," in *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 146.

Cambodian national involved in interviews and participant observation was protected in the database.

After a thorough reading and adding any applicable notes to the data, a detailed description was used to develop themes.⁴⁶ Due to the ethnographic approach of the research, definitions, perceptions, and roles were carefully analyzed to identify themes in the research, specifically the repetition of words and concepts. This allowed a comprehensive perspective regarding each site's functionality as shown by leadership development and discipleship methodologies.

Interpretation and an overall representation of the data served as the final areas of the analysis.⁴⁷ The analyzed definitions, perceptions, and roles were interpreted through historical, cultural, and educational positions. Furthermore, personal viewpoints were given using an interpretive perspective to explain functionality and patterns as shown by historical, cultural, and educational distinctives.⁴⁸ I present tables and figures in this dissertation to provide additional information based on the field research data.

Chapter Breakdown

The introductory chapter of this dissertation provides an overview including the rationale and need for this research. The research problem and sub-questions explain the purpose to research leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban

⁴⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 184.

⁴⁷ Using description, analysis, and interpretation throughout each chapter of my dissertation follows Harry F. Wolcott's approach to qualitative research. See Harry F. Wolcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994).

⁴⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 198.

AGC churches. A literature review presents information from precedent research in the areas of history, culture, education, leadership, and discipleship. Methodological information is also provided to explain the qualitative and ethnographic approaches in addition to the process of collecting and analyzing data.

Chapter 1 focuses on the history of Christian mission in Phnom Penh from 1990 to 1999 and answers the question of missionary efforts among various groups and movements. Historical information is provided to explain cross-cultural ministry foundations. I give special attention to the influx of denominations, fellowships, and mission groups during the decade. Significant individuals, events, and issues describe trends shaping the current circumstances of Christianity in Cambodia.

Chapter 2 describes the missionary work of the AG during the Fellowship's first decade in Phnom Penh from 1990 to 1999. This focus directly relates to the question of initial leadership and discipleship. Historical records and missionary interviews explain training and development among the AGC's charter churches in Phnom Penh. Missionary methodology provides foundational information pointing toward the Fellowship's current trends and practices.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the culture in Cambodia. Interviews and participant observation provide insight into the cultural aspects of urban AGC churches in their respective locations. This approach answers the question by demonstrating the effect culture has on leadership and discipleship. Overall, a close examination portrays a cultural portrait of urban AGC churches and the relationship to leadership development and discipleship methodologies.

Chapter 4 answers the question about emphases and neglect in leadership development and discipleship methodologies due to missionary involvement and head pastor implementation. Education is the main emphasis of this chapter to explain its effect on leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches. Interviews with head pastors provide insights regarding hands-on training and pedagogy. This area assesses how missionary and head pastor endeavors have been either positive or negative.

Chapter 5 offers findings from the ethnographic research to present the significance of leadership development and discipleship methodologies as products of history, culture, and education. The final analysis and interpretation highlight strengths and weaknesses in urban AGC churches from 1990 to the present. I make comparisons among interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions. Moreover, the information presented also reveals areas needing additional research.

CHAPTER 1: CHRISTIAN MISSION HISTORY IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA FROM 1990 TO 1999

“How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!
How like a widow is she, who once was great
among the nations! She who was queen among
the provinces has now become a slave” (Lamentations 1:1).¹

The Phnom Penh Setting in the 1990s

A City of Desperation

Darkness hovers over the distressed city as cautious individuals quietly lock doors and windows. Dust and rubbish, the primary nocturnal residents, quietly blow down the empty streets and alleys as the sound of readied boots roams to dispel danger. One by one, radios begin to fill the void with the sound of cultural music, which narrowly survived years of oppression.² Emotions scurry through scarred hearts and minds as the endless repeat of mere survival echoes in symphony with the surrounding darkness.

Sleep is a curse rather than a blessing as haunting images come to life each night. Memories are too painful to bear as some defiantly sit alone and tremble with tears as their only faithful companion. Many yearn to start over while others desperately try to

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

² The Khmer Rouge regime executed musicians and eliminated music by replacing it with revolutionary songs to indoctrinate their subjects.

hide from the horrors plaguing their subconscious. The past, all too vivid in the present, only provides tormenting numbness.

Rapid Change Following Tragedy

Phnom Penh was no longer a gemstone,³ but a disarrayed city with mirages of hope clouded by an overarching restlessness. The city's inhabitants endured countless hardships for decades and returned with scars and uncertainties while longing for something genuine. Only time would tell if their situation would materialize into the greatness of ages past or simply become a fading whisper engulfed within the dark silences encapsulating every street.

The eventual return of the masses to the capital city in the 1980s was an enigmatic rite of passage for wearied souls seeking sanctuary. Déjà vu and irony marked their journey as each step flooded once-panicked minds about the forced migration from the previous decade.⁴ People desired a new era, yet the reality of the recent past brought a sense of present despair coupled with vague intuitions about future generations.

The individuals caught in the drama faced changes coupled with an upheaval of societal norms. Collectivism, forcibly erased by the Khmer Rouge regime, led to an individualistic survival mentality. Family, groups, cohesion, and togetherness no longer provided a secure covering for the Khmer people. Instead, the past chaos presented

³ Historically, Phnom Penh was recognized as “The Pearl of Asia” until the years of civil war and genocide in the 1970s.

⁴ The Khmer Rouge initiated a widespread evacuation of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975. This marked the end of the Cambodian Civil War and the beginning of a genocide lasting nearly four years.

disfigured collectivism coupled with ingrained fear and suspicion.⁵ Individual survival became the norm dictating no one could be trusted.

Political efforts aimed to usher out the Khmer Rouge vestiges previously gripping life and society. Hurriedly announced reforms indicated the notion of a war-torn country having moved forward.⁶ For many citizens, it was the first taste of freedom. Likewise, the perception of a new decade brought newness to a weary land.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the world witnessed vast political changes as the Berlin Wall fell, demonstrations spread throughout Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union dissolved. While numerous countries experienced governmental transitions in Europe and Asia, the Khmer people realized that their recent past gave little guidance for the days ahead of them.⁷ The established systems were eradicated, and previous collective methods to cope were lost. People found themselves trapped between obsolete traditions and an ambiguous future.

The environment in Phnom Penh was situated for new structures to flourish amid the needs of people who endured conflict and instability. Since change became the standard, outside entities were initially viewed as suspicious but ultimately welcomed to reestablish the country. Desperate people throughout the city, lacking and searching, displayed a willingness to receive consolation from anyone. The desire for peace and

⁵ Joshua J. Lovelace, "The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia: An Analysis of Beginnings, Continual Progression and Enduring Optimism for the Future" (Master of Arts Thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2016), 47.

⁶ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 8th ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 236.

⁷ David P. Chandler, *The Land and People of Cambodia*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 179.

stability brought a longing for non-radical systems to heal the pains of the past.

Moreover, societal and cultural upheaval yielded openness and stirred curiosity.

Khmer Christian groups reemerged despite oppression, uncertainty, and abuse. A remnant of Christians, surviving the years of conflict, searched for others of a common faith in the capital's chaos. They noticed new beginnings for the people and new cross-cultural workers from distant lands. The changes prompted government recognition in Phnom Penh of Christianity, which had been prohibited for nearly fifteen years.⁸

Globalization, Rebuilding, and Leadership Methods

Phnom Penh witnessed the end of the ten-year Vietnamese occupation in September 1989 and prepared to receive aid from Western countries. Although refugee camps remained in operation along the Thailand-Cambodia border, Cambodian-led initiatives in Phnom Penh commenced shortly after the departure of the Vietnamese. Furthermore, continued attacks from Khmer Rouge operatives in the provinces situated the capital city as a place of refuge.

The population of the Phnom Penh Municipality in 1990 was approximately 615,000 and comprised 6.8 percent of Cambodia's total population.⁹ Restructuring administrative regions shaped the rebuilt municipality as new residential areas quickly developed. The State of Cambodia (SOC), prominently situated in Phnom Penh, struggled to manage the frequent economic, military, and political issues.¹⁰

⁸ Don Cormack, *Killing Fields Living Fields*, (London, UK: Monarch Books, 2001), 393.

⁹ "Phnom Penh Population," World Population Review, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/phnom-penh-population/>.

¹⁰ Chandler, *History of Cambodia*, 238.

The SOC labored to prove its stability to the world in 1989 as Cambodia emerged from its numerous tragedies. Principal issues during the rebuilding efforts in Phnom Penh included military control of the city and basic provisionary welfare for the people. Leadership envisioned necessary internal stability for the common good of the people while portraying advancement in the eyes of potential foreign patrons. Legitimate post-war peace in the country and the guarantee of no future violence still loomed large in the early 1990s.

Conflict with Vietnam officially ended by signing the Paris Peace Agreements on October 23, 1991. The proceedings paved the way for a new constitution and authorized UNTAC to establish democratic elections. Initially, four contending political parties set aside armed competition to appease international requests for human rights and basic democracy.¹¹ UNTAC agreed to supervise upcoming elections by remaining on Cambodian soil from March 1992 until September 1993.

The peace agreements ultimately focused on insider political agendas limiting services and initiatives.¹² The discussions followed the historical norm of authoritarian leadership as the ultimate way to govern the country regardless of outside interaction with foreign powers and would-be investors. Cambodia joined the ranks of other countries rebuilding during the post-Cold War era as political and economic changes swept across Europe and Asia. Regardless, outside countries quickly realized the

¹¹ Chanto Sisowath, "Globalization and Generational Change: The Evolution of Cambodia's Social Structure," in *Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions: East Asia and Beyond*, ed. Jim Dator, Dick Pratt, and Yongseok Seo (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 302.

¹² *Ibid.*, 306.

complexity of replacing war-torn societies with new democratic foundations through financial aid.¹³

As globalization took shape, economic possibilities coupled with an awareness of human rights and democracy overshadowed doubts associated with rapid changes. The mission of UNTAC caused the world to externally view Cambodia's potential; however, internal power endeavors lurked within political rivals. Rather than the emergence of a new democracy in Southeast Asia, contending forces displayed their age-old penchant for authoritarianism. Sebastian Strangio summarizes UNTAC's involvement as "a slow-motion collision between the Kantian idealism of the post-Cold War era and the messy realities of Cambodian politics."¹⁴

Customary top-down leadership steered Phnom Penh into ongoing political contests. The United Nations efforts displayed intentions of democracy within a vacuum and refused to challenge the political misdeeds surfacing before and after the first election in May 1993.¹⁵ Democracy may have entered Cambodia in the 1990s, yet the Khmer people knew the routine of authoritarian leadership exhibited throughout all facets of society. Coercive political domination was the true nature of Cambodian governance with loyal support deeply rooted in patronage networks stretching from Phnom Penh to the remote villages in the provinces.¹⁶

¹³ Joakim Öjendal and Mona Lilja, eds. "Beyond Democracy in Cambodia: Political Reconstruction in a Post-Conflict Society?," in *Beyond Democracy in Cambodia: Political Reconstruction in a Post-Conflict Society*, ed. Joakim Öjendal and Mona Lilja (Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2009), 3.

¹⁴ Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 61.

¹⁵ Sophal Ear, *Aid Dependence in Cambodia: How Foreign Assistance Undermines Democracy*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 5.

¹⁶ Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, 50.

Religious Reforms

The government reinforced and corroborated its political efforts by reinstituting Buddhism as the State religion during Phnom Penh's transformation. Due to the historical relationship between Buddhism and the Khmer people, politicians sought a cohesive plan to unify their authoritative ambitions with religious underpinnings. State religion appeased the personal needs of the country during desperate times and provided a foundation for political ventures. Restoring Buddhism to its preeminence included two facets: assisting common people and validating authoritative figures. The Khmer people saw religion as the means for spiritual guidance and personal, spiritual merit while providing a balancing force for administrative progress. As the government associated religious reform with politics and the redeveloped monarchy, Buddhism displayed both "spiritual continuity and national consensus" to permit political stability.¹⁷

The legislative intertwining of the State religion in the 1990s made provision for religious education reform by establishing new Buddhist institutes in Phnom Penh. As Buddhism regained prominence, political connectedness to the religion granted favor by bestowing royal titles upon the highest-ranking monks and reinstituting the motto, "Nation, Religion, King."¹⁸ Politicians strategized blending political reform with traditional religious practices to support the common people without impeding the government's quest for control. Furthermore, politicizing Buddhism gave monks the right

¹⁷ Nadezhda Bektimirova, "The Religious Situation in Cambodia in the 1990s," *Religion, State, and Society*, 30, no. 1 (2002): 64.

¹⁸ John Marston, "Cambodian Religion Since 1989," in *Beyond Democracy in Cambodia: Political Reconstruction in a Post-Conflict Society*, ed. Joakim Öjendal and Mona Lilja, (Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2009), 227.

to vote for the first time in the country's history and appointed them to serve with political officials on the Royal Council selecting future monarchs.¹⁹

As Buddhism received priority as the State's religion, Cambodia's new constitution permitted freedom of belief and practice for other religions.²⁰ Before the ratification of the constitution in 1993 to solidify religious freedoms for the Khmer people, Christianity in Phnom Penh slowly rebounded despite lingering persecution. The SOC made concessions for places of worship, especially in Phnom Penh, and recognized the Bible's importance in the lives of Khmer Christians.²¹ Easter weekend in 1990 was monumental as Christians joined together in fellowship. Over 1,500, both Protestant and Catholic adherents, celebrated the event in front of government officials.²² The occasion proved pivotal as more Christians, not only Khmer and Vietnamese but also expatriates, would soon join their fellowship and ecclesiastical endeavors. Permanent missionary involvement in Phnom Penh was about to begin.

Description of Mission Groups' Interview Data

The Entrance of Mission Groups

Humble beginnings depict the cross-cultural workers who graciously volunteered to serve the Khmer people. Religious prohibitions, nightly curfews, supply shortages, frequent power outages, and unsettled urban environments brought obstacles during the

¹⁹ Ian Harris, "Buddhist Sangha Groupings in Cambodia," *Buddhist Studies Review*, 18, no. 1, (2001): 77.

²⁰ "The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia," World Intellectual Property Organization, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/kh/kh009en.pdf>.

²¹ Don Cormack, *Killing Fields Living Fields*, (London, UK: Monarch Books, 2001), 394.

²² Ibid.

early days of rebuilding the Church in 1990. However, the needs of the people represented the necessity for relief and development.

Missionaries immersing themselves in a new land bring new language studies, new cultural comprehension, and new strategies. Some confront struggles for a short duration before returning to their homeland while others faithfully endure the pivotal pioneer years to personally witness the fruit of their labors. Their fruit begins by simply building relationships with those they serve. Relationships between missionaries and nationals are the stepping stones for achieving the goal of viable church ministries. Pioneer missionaries to Cambodia know firsthand their labors progressed within a new era in the 1990s to address the scars, pain, horrors, uncertainties, sufferings, and longings of the people.

I arrived in Phnom Penh twenty years after the entrance of the missionaries in 1990. My initial days did not disappoint with eye-opening experiences. A brief stroll through one of the many open-air markets reveals sights and smells causing apprehension and nausea in the strongest minds and stomachs. Grilled dog meat, fried bugs, and fermented fish sauces tinge nasal membranes with awe and wonder. Simple, short drives through the bustling capital city afflict the body with on-edge emotions while repeatedly bracing for impact in a swarm of slow-moving vehicles. Scarce traffic lights, the lack of protective road medians, and four-way-go's rather than four-way-stops introduce a new pandemonium to daily life.

Despite the market scene and traffic gauntlet, the vast number of mission groups, non-government organizations, and parachurch ministries is overwhelming. I eventually learned how to pace my breaths around the smells of the open-air markets and found jazz

music the most soothing amid the traffic carnage. As for keeping track of missionaries in Phnom Penh and their respective groups, it is still an ongoing challenge. The number of church denominations and fellowships, not including parachurch and relief groups, was approximately 100 by the time I arrived in Phnom Penh.²³

Frequent trips during my initial years in Cambodia provided opportunities to practice language skills and experience the many sides of the country. Viewing Angkor Wat in Siem Reap made history come alive as I stepped back in time to consider the grandeur of the Angkor Empire. Walking the dusty trails at Choeung Ek flooded my soul with overwhelming emotions while standing in The Killing Fields. Riding across the Tonle Sap Lake to the Meachrey floating village allowed me to see students receive education inside a floating school building. Crossing the Mekong River by ferry boat at Neak Loeung revealed an area heavily bombed during the Vietnam War.

While my travels were carefully planned with assistance from seasoned veterans, uncertainty surrounded those who sojourned before me. Numerous mission groups took short-term exploratory trips in 1990 to secure a beachhead for long-term service in Cambodia. The eye-opening encounters for the initial groups surpassed my personal experiences due to their firsthand contact with individuals displaced, orphaned, maimed from landmines, and suffering from a myriad of post-war issues. They persevered by overlooking surface tensions throughout the country and initiated new ministries to

²³ “A Discussion with Rev. Heng Cheng, Evangelical Fellowship Cambodia,” Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-reverend-heng-cheng-evangelical-fellowship-of-cambodia>.

provide relief, development, fellowship, and evangelism to broken people. All indicators related to change and openness in 1990 pointed toward their fortuitous arrival.

Background Information of Four Mission Groups

I have been privileged to acquaint myself with numerous mission groups during my service in Phnom Penh. Countless relationships provide insight into urban cross-cultural ministry as it relates to history, culture, and education. I chose four different mission groups to conduct interviews related to missionary history in Phnom Penh from 1990 to 1999. All four groups that arrived in Cambodia during the 1990s currently remain active in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. Each group uses similar strategies to facilitate leadership and discipleship ministries throughout the country. Furthermore, the Assemblies of God has existing relationships with each group and their respective missionaries.

Although previously acquainted with each of the individuals before the interviews, I do not have a working relationship with the interviewees. My only involvement comes from brief encounters at mission events, church services, or school functions. Furthermore, previous information about each respective mission group was typically gained from conversations with AG missionary colleagues. I approached each interviewee without bias for gathering data about their strategies related to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Phnom Penh.

Youth with a Mission (YWAM)

Loren Cunningham founded YWAM in 1960 providing opportunities for youth to serve through missionary endeavors. Their first ministry in Cambodia included teams of young people ministering to Khmer refugees along the Thailand-Cambodia border in the

1980s. After receiving permission from the Cambodian government in 1990, an exploratory trip allowed missionaries to survey the country and prepare for long-term ministry. Today, YWAM has over 18,000 workers serving in more than 180 countries and maintains over 1,100 locations.²⁴

Philip Scott joined YWAM in 1989 after serving with the United Nations in the refugee camps along the Thailand-Cambodia border during the 1980s. He led the initial trip to Cambodia in 1990 and moved to Phnom Penh in 1991 along with his family. In addition to serving in Phnom Penh, the Scott family lived in Stung Treng Province for ten years. Since 1991, he has served as the YWAM director for Cambodia and supervises their field staff.

Scott described how preliminary stages of learning the Khmer language and building relationships with nationals, worship services and fellowship gatherings at homes played an important role for YWAM.²⁵ Government restrictions before the 1993 elections forced Khmer Christians to avoid public gatherings; however, unity with other mission groups and missionaries came with ease as partnerships formed. As the YWAM missionary team grew, they recognized their role as pioneer missionaries to plant new churches throughout the country.

Throughout the 1990s, priorities addressed leadership development and discipleship training. YWAM established the University of the Nations in Cambodia providing biblical training for believers and those desiring to serve in leadership.

²⁴ “Where We Are,” Youth with a Mission, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.ywam.org/about-us/where-we-are/>.

²⁵ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

Moreover, medical mission efforts and job training centers assisted health needs and occupation opportunities.

Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA)

A. B. Simpson started C&MA's initial ministries in 1881 for assisting people in New York City. From its inception, the denomination has maintained a strong emphasis on facilitating mission and outreach opportunities. C&MA currently has over 6,000,000 members with approximately 1,300 missionaries serving in over eighty countries.²⁶

Despite sporadic Protestant missionary involvement in Cambodia before 1900, the first long-term mission effort included C&MA missionaries in 1923 with the arrival of Arthur Hammond and David Ellison. Hammond labored for nearly thirty years and translated the Bible into the Khmer language in Phnom Penh while Ellison focused on pastoral training and established a Bible school in Battambang.²⁷ The C&MA mission continued in numerous locations until missionaries withdrew from Cambodia for safety reasons in 1975. Following the Khmer Rouge genocide, C&MA sent workers to minister among refugees along the Thailand-Cambodia border in the 1980s. The denomination received government permission in 1990 to obtain visas for language studies with the plan to re-establish their previous mission efforts.

David Manfred arrived in Cambodia with his family in 1995. He joined the existing C&MA team of twenty missionaries who had official recognition as a non-government organization. They served together through various opportunities within their

²⁶ "Alliance World Fellowship," Alliance World Fellowship, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://awf.world/>.

²⁷ Cormack, *Killing Fields*, 57.

NGO, yet their team continually moved toward sustained church ministries by planting self-governing local churches.²⁸ Their ministries experienced more freedom following the 1993 elections and the final closure of refugee camps.

Following an initial year of intensive Khmer language studies in Phnom Penh, the Manfred family moved to Battambang in northwest Cambodia to continue language and cultural studies. Their ministry included church planting, teaching, training, and assisting with local church ministries. Manfred returned to Phnom Penh in 2001 after being appointed as the field director for the C&MA mission team and continues to serve in the capital city.

A strong commitment to the national church has continually defined the C&MA efforts in Cambodia. After new religious freedoms in 1993, the denomination developed a partnership with the Khmer Evangelical Church (KEC) to expand ministry opportunities throughout the country among the Khmer people and other people groups. The C&MA has planted more than 150 churches and has over 10,000 adherents in Cambodia.²⁹

Overseas Mission Fellowship International (OMF)

Hudson Taylor established the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1865, and the Fellowship later changed its name to OMF in 1964. Their mission work reached Cambodia in 1974 to assist Khmer pastors for nearly one year before the Khmer Rouge

²⁸ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

²⁹ “Cambodia,” The Alliance, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.cmalliance.org/field/cambodia>.

regime captured Phnom Penh. OMF currently has over 2,000 workers from forty nations who serve approximately 100 people groups throughout East Asia.³⁰

OMF returned to Cambodia in 1991 with exploratory trips for future long-term mission service. Originally grouped with the Mekong Region Field in Thailand, the OMF team in Cambodia received recognition as a mission field after receiving government endorsement in 1993. Due to the necessity of balancing social projects and ministry, relief and development encompassed half of the field operations while the other half devoted its efforts to church ministries.

Simon Porter arrived in Cambodia in 2008 and served as the OMF field director for Cambodia from 2015 to 2020. His role as director coordinated ministry operations from Phnom Penh for training leaders and enhancing congregations.³¹ Porter also serves with the Fellowship Churches of Cambodia (FCC) to network with local Khmer churches.

OMF maintains its ministry in Cambodia by providing evangelism and discipleship in both urban and rural settings. Their focus on Khmer Christians includes church planting, business as mission enterprises, and counseling with an emphasis on mental health awareness. Furthermore, their mission continues with an emphasis on church ministries while also continuing to provide relief and development among the Khmer people.

³⁰ “East Asia’s Peoples,” OMF International, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://omf.org/asia/>.

³¹ Simon Porter, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 3, 2020.

World Team

World Team is a global mission agency with over 200 years of overseas ministries. The agency reorganized in 1995 following the merger of two mission groups.³² Their mission principles include an emphasis on holistic and incarnational cross-cultural ministry practices. World Team currently has over 350 workers serving in twenty-eight countries.³³

Shortly after the agency merger and restructuring in 1995, World Team arrived in Cambodia in 1996. Ministry among the people carried an emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and house church ministry. Also, collaboration and relationships developed with various denominations, fellowships, and parachurch ministries in Phnom Penh.

Jeff Hogue and his family began serving with World Team in Cambodia in 2000. Following language and cultural studies in Phnom Penh, he served as a rural church planter in provincial areas such as Preah Vihear and Koh Kong. Hogue's current ministry emphasis includes local church ministries in addition to working with new team members in Phnom Penh as a facilitator for cross-cultural ministry preparation.

World Team currently has mission projects in both the provinces and the urban setting of Phnom Penh. World Team's ministry focus entails an emphasis on facilitative church planting and arena-type ministries including medical services, dorms for students, and education programs.³⁴ Their missionaries regularly serve with various parachurch ministry operations.

³² "About World Team," World Team, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://us.worldteam.org/about/>.

³³ Ibid., accessed March 25, 2020.

³⁴ Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

Analysis of Mission Groups' Interview Data

Initial Mission Focus in Cambodia from 1990 to 1999

I interviewed leaders from the four groups to obtain information regarding their mission history in the 1990s. In addition to the general history of their respective mission work among the Khmer people, questions focused on practices related to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Phnom Penh. The questions also brought discussion regarding missionary preferences, cultural distinctives, and results from education modes. Figure 1 depicts the themes and subthemes from the interview data to analyze and interpret the mission groups' participation during the 1990s.

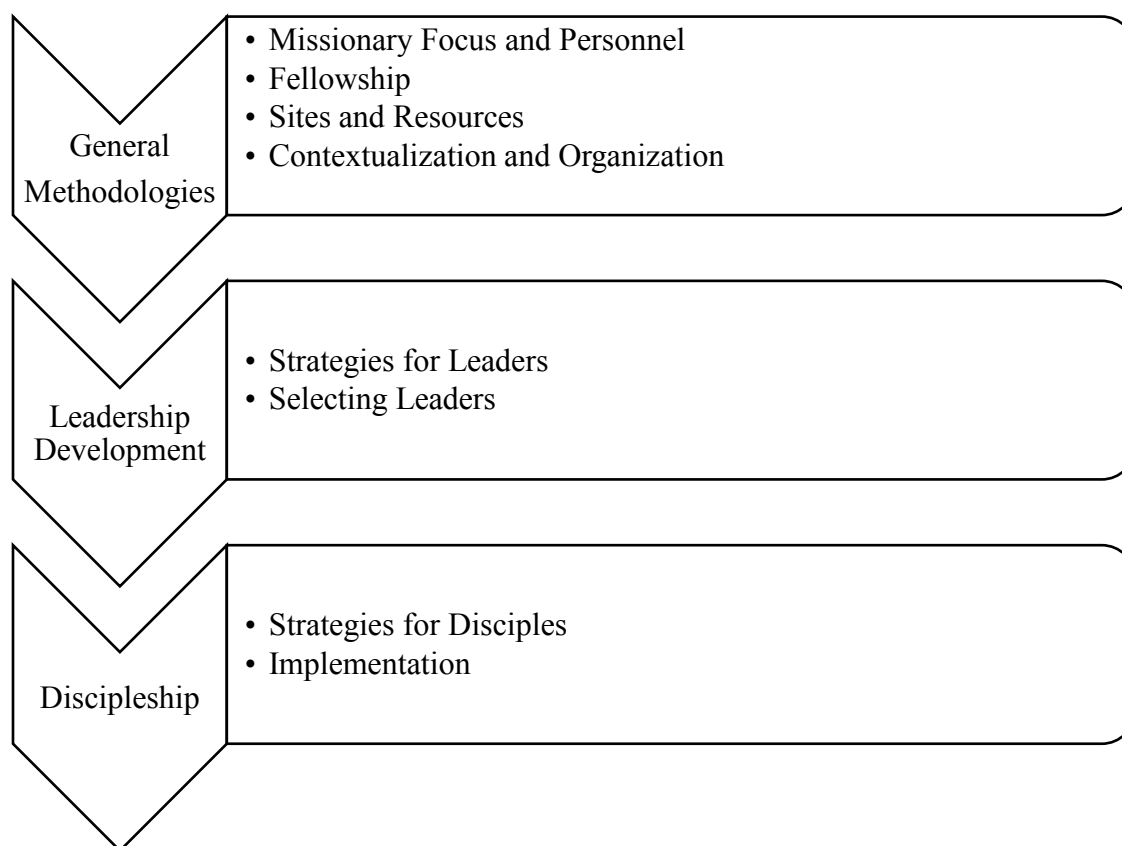


Figure 1. Themes and Subthemes from the Four Mission Groups

General methodologies include the focus on new personnel, participating in fellowship, launching new sites with training resources, and contemplating contextualized and organized approaches. Leadership development reveals the incorporated strategies for selecting and training future leaders. Discipleship shows the strategies used for organizing and implementing successful programs for new believers.

YWAM

The earliest YWAM missionaries saw their role as pioneer missionaries. Emphases on church planting and training leaders laid the foundation for YWAM's ministries in Cambodia. Personnel immersed themselves in language and cultural studies upon arrival. As missionaries continued their studies and strategized for future opportunities, building relationships with nationals allowed their efforts to reach further.

YWAM began its mission work in Phnom Penh through house meetings and worship services. Relational fellowship times allowed their missionaries opportunities to acquaint themselves with potential national workers. Religious restrictions limited the organization to house gatherings but expanded ministry potential as Christian groups received recognition from the government in 1993.

Church planting continued as the focus with the intention of training leaders from new locations. As open travel and religious freedom became less of a concern, the organization expanded from Phnom Penh and engaged in frontier mission work. Relief ministries assisted the basic needs of the people while planting new churches remained the long-term objective.

C&MA

C&MA initially gained entrance into Cambodia by obtaining visas to study the Khmer language. Missionaries not only had an open door to enter the country but also created a high standard for learning language and culture. By the time their denomination received government permission to create an NGO, ministry opportunities emerged by attending to the basic needs and provisions of the Khmer people. However, the primary goal included all means to establish indigenous churches.

C&MA's strong commitment to church ministries characterized Christianity's rebuilding years in Cambodia. NGO opportunities led to the establishment of churches and viable church ministries. Continual focus on language studies and fellowship with other mission groups contributed to establishing ministries in Phnom Penh.

As ministry expanded from Phnom Penh into the provinces, the denomination planted churches and strategized new ways of discipling converts and training leaders. Discipleship was the initial priority within C&MA churches followed by leadership training. Missionaries directed teaching and training efforts while keeping these ministries based within each respective church in urban and rural settings.

OMF

OMF returned to Cambodia in 1991 after a sixteen-year absence following the Khmer Rouge genocide. Although facing religious limitations imposed by the government, OMF's approach allocated 50 percent of staff to serve via relief and development and 50 percent of staff to serve within local churches. The Fellowship's focus enabled continual ministry among the needs of the people and ecclesiastical endeavors throughout the country.

OMF initially focused on church planting during the 1990s in Cambodia. Missionaries vigorously studied the Khmer language in preparation for establishing new congregations and remaining active in local churches. Strategies for planting churches in Phnom Penh kept a focus on future self-sustaining churches in both urban and rural settings.

As ministries expanded amid more Christian freedoms, church plants experienced growth as leaders received training. Various methods, depending on missionary preferences, included institutional and modeling approaches. Enhancing local congregations through discipleship progressed among OMF church plants as missionaries instructed new believers.

World Team

World Team began its ministries in Phnom Penh by building relationships with nationals and other mission groups. Fellowship and group orientation established a foundation for their future work in urban and rural settings. The mission agency also placed high importance on language and cultural studies while utilizing an incarnational approach in its mission strategies.

Initial facets of World Team's ministry in Cambodia included evangelism, discipleship, and house church ministries. Group events allowed opportunities for individuals to connect as part of a secure, active partnership. Established trust among missionaries and nationals aided the commitment to friendship and fellowship. A practical way to gather people and encourage participation comprised the ministries at house gatherings.

Group settings offered occasions for bringing interested people together, having Bible study sessions, proclaiming the gospel, and enjoying fellowship. These methods led to seminars for training leaders and providing discipleship among new believers. World Team continued with these strategies in Cambodia as ministry opportunities grew in urban and rural areas.

Leadership and Discipleship from 1990 to 1999

In addition to the initial focus of each group, general questions for collecting data relate to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in the 1990s. The questions associate basic methodology for training leaders and discipling believers in churches and house fellowships. Due to the direct involvement of establishing ministries during the 1990s, interview questions include the personal participation of missionaries.

YWAM

The initial focus of church planting propelled YWAM's missionaries as they trained capable, future leaders within new places of worship. Individuals prepared for ministry by modeling other leaders with intentional life focus and utilizing Train and Multiply resources. The process included biblical and ministerial training, yet leadership development was less academic. A short-term intensive approach included training individuals who possessed competent leadership skills.

YWAM missionaries coordinated discipleship through informal teaching at local churches, structured training schools, mentoring in daily life issues, and placing new believers in missionary homes for modeling Christian propriety. Firm Foundations was the primary curriculum used by missionaries for urban discipleship ministries. YWAM

established the University of the Nations in Phnom Penh during the late 1990s and later established multiple locales in urban and rural settings for on-site discipleship training.

C&MA

Leadership development within C&MA churches followed teaching and training in discipleship ministries. The primary methods for future leaders included Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and a training series based on Matthew 6. C&MA missionaries incorporated both curriculum programs as church-based training. Furthermore, some Khmer leaders had the opportunity to relocate to the capital city and study vocational ministry at Phnom Penh Bible School.

Discipleship interaction before initiating leadership training allowed discipleship to have priority in churches. TEE, Abundant Life curriculum, and Firm Foundations resources within local churches assisted new believers. Using hymnals also assisted discipleship efforts as believers learned doctrine by singing during worship services.³⁵

OMF

Mentoring and less institutional approaches in new churches aided OMF missionaries in their training efforts. Missionaries had a direct influence on future ministers and kept a hands-on approach within each church. Although training individuals through TEE fulfilled curriculum needs in local churches, some Khmer leaders enrolled in formal educational settings such as vocational ministry training at Phnom Penh Bible School.

³⁵ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

Discipleship in local churches resembled OMF's strategy of leadership development. Missionaries and existing church leaders mentored new believers in a less institutional format. Various curriculums used included the Train and Multiply discipleship series and TEE. Missionaries used similar curricula and methods in churches, yet the discipleship process could vary according to each missionary and their preference.

World Team

World Team approached leadership development through their group-oriented mission approach. Group settings allowed frequent interaction between missionaries and nationals during home events and seminars. The curriculum used during the process included TEE, Train and Multiply, and Firm Foundations. Training and developing leaders facilitated a strategy for building a network of leaders who could serve in indigenous churches.

Discipleship in World Team ministries primarily occurred by missionaries mentoring and teaching Khmer believers. Missionaries regularly met with either one or two nationals at a time for discussion. Resembling their leadership development approaches, World Team utilized a variety of resources for discipleship including TEE, Train and Multiply, and Firm Foundations.

Interpretation of Mission Groups' Interview Data

Perceptions and Experiences

I greatly admire the pioneer missionaries who arrived in Cambodia during the 1990s and assisted Khmer believers with the daunting task of rebuilding Christianity. Their endeavors cause me to wonder if it is more challenging to launch new mission

efforts in a region where the Church does not exist or reestablish the Church following the near extinction of Christians. Both present unique complexities, yet the political and social environments in Cambodia thrust missionaries into a perplexing decade of change and limitations, needs and wants, steps forward and backward, and the primary task of advancing the gospel.

Denominations, fellowships, and mission groups serving in Cambodia during the 1990s faced the dilemma of choosing a primary focus for their mission work. Should the foremost emphasis embrace church planting, indigenous church ministries, leadership development, discipleship training, or NGO social projects? Other paramount questions faced each group arriving in Cambodia. What approaches and resources must be implemented? Who are the best practitioners in the most essential locations? Once again, more questions followed the overall approach to effectively minister among the Khmer people.

Listening to numerous veterans throughout my years in Cambodia has taught me the value of trial-and-error strategies leading to the process of intense evaluation. The goal of succeeding the first time, regardless of consequences, and the expectations of financial supporters can be menacing. Irrational tendencies often lead to rushing toward the results we envision and basing tasks upon our heuristic understanding. Cross-cultural ministry, especially in Cambodia, beckons a call that can contradict personal ambitions and donors' anticipations.

Strategies and expectations must be weighed in conjunction with the most significant variable: nationals in contact with missionaries. Will their culture, worldview, language, and voice be integrated into the situation, bypassed, or blamed as mission

methodologies emerge? From their very first step on the dusty tarmac at Phnom Penh International Airport, pioneer missionaries came face-to-face with nationals' innumerable cultural components determining their next steps in ministry.

Themes and Subthemes from Interview Data

Missionary Focus and Personnel

Primary strategies among the four mission groups included church planting, group-based ministries, and local church ministries. Leadership development and discipleship methodologies emerged from these initial efforts. The missionaries serving in Cambodia during the 1990s, regarded as pioneers by current missionaries, labored to create new prospects. Before establishing new ministries, priorities on language and cultural studies prepared individuals for long-term service.

Although many workers came for the purpose to serve as pioneer missionaries following cross-cultural training, others came to assist in relief and development projects. The prohibitions placed on Christianity from 1990 to 1993 led to the formation of NGOs as mission groups began strategizing for future church ministries and visas for long-term ministry. A unique dichotomy emerged as some mission groups maintained two distinct approaches, i.e., ministry in/outside churches. Moreover, some personnel, trained to serve in medical or education capacities, lacked proper missiology for planting churches in a cross-cultural environment.

Fellowship

Despite the number of denominations, fellowships, and mission groups inundating Phnom Penh in the 1990s, mission workers found camaraderie and common ground as fellow laborers. Evangelical groups had regular gatherings for building relationships and

establishing trust. Providing like-minded assurance during the initial years of ministry aided cooperation among the vast number of groups.

Ministry Sites and Resources

The earliest mission work in Phnom Penh during the 1990s occurred primarily in house fellowships. Limitations on religious freedoms forced all mission groups to meet in homes for worship and training. As prohibitions were lifted after the 1993 elections, church planting flourished and led to the emergence of new sites for leadership development and discipleship. However, local churches remained ideal as hands-on training was more about modeling missionaries rather than institutional approaches.³⁶ House fellowships were continually used as a platform to conduct worship services or educational seminars as missionaries, rather than nationals, oversaw leadership training and discipleship. Enhancing leadership development and discipleship in the 1990s gradually transpired at Bible schools and training institutions.

The most common resources for leadership development included TEE and Train and Multiply. Some leaders received full-time vocational training at Phnom Penh Bible School for future pastoral ministry. Leadership development also occurred through seminar format conducted in either local churches or house fellowships.

Discipleship practices included TEE and Train and Multiply, yet the most common was Firm Foundations originating from New Tribes Missions. Local churches and homes served as venues for teaching and training new believers. Programs varied

³⁶ Simon Porter, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 3, 2020.

depending on each facilitator as some missionaries allowed nationals to live with them for daily modeling and interaction.

Contextualization and Organization

Missionaries carefully strategized and shared the gospel in a contextualized manner during the 1990s. Early integration avoided a Western emphasis; therefore, Khmer Christians embraced the gospel without losing their cultural identity. Pragmatic approaches helped missionaries realize possibilities for teaching and training. Since missionaries led most of the leadership development and discipleship initiatives, contextualization was tactfully considered throughout the 1990s.

As plans emerged for more involvement among national leaders, various Evangelical groups joined together to create missionary-national partnerships for future ministry. New organizations included the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC), Khmer Evangelical Church (KEC), and the Fellowship Churches of Cambodia FCC). Fellowship and partnership among non-denomination and independent groups also expanded mission efforts.

Leadership Development

The return of missionaries to Cambodia signified a new opportunity to start indigenous churches with Khmer leadership. Although various ministries emerged in the 1990s, leadership development retained substantial attention.³⁷ Mission groups innately

³⁷ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

understood the necessity to train future leaders and place them in positions of authority. Continuation of the ministries started by missionaries would depend upon nationals.

The ultimate goal of training Khmer believers for leadership included the prospect of nationals teaching and training other nationals. An initial generation of Khmer leaders, trained exclusively by missionaries, can impart their instruction to other nationals in a reciprocal manner. Moreover, the incorporation of nationals guiding other nationals and equipping ministers without dependency builds a necessary foundation for indigenous church practices.

Leadership Development Methodologies

Most leadership development during the 1990s occurred in local churches and house fellowships. Missionaries anticipated the emergence of leaders throughout urban and rural settings. While TEE and Train and Multiply courses provided basic theological training, the core of leadership development involved missionaries bonding with nationals and maintaining personal influence in life and ministry.³⁸

Missionaries carried the responsibility of teaching and training. Classes, seminars, and workshops in churches and homes provided the necessary education for biblical studies, theological comprehension, and pastoral ministry. Mentoring and direct influence with nationals ensured proper training not only for educational purposes but also for becoming viable practitioners in local churches and house fellowships.

³⁸ Ibid.

Selecting Leaders

Churches provided a community focus allowing leaders to naturally arise from within a congregation.³⁹ Missionaries, especially those who planted churches, made careful efforts for recognizing individuals who can be trained and developed. Motivation from mission groups coupled with seminars and training sessions established a system for locating new leaders for the upcoming years.

Personal investment into the core of a new church or house fellowship allowed missionaries opportunities for choosing potential leaders. Noticing leadership aptitude rather than academic competence could determine the correct individuals. Furthermore, Khmer believers who appeared born and minted for leadership would be obvious for missionaries to notice in the training and mentoring process.⁴⁰

Discipleship

As Christianity flourished in Cambodia during the 1990s, mission groups prioritized discipleship efforts. Planting new churches provided immediate opportunities to teach new believers. Both informal and structured approaches resulted as missionaries maintained regular interaction.

Discipleship utilized collective and individualistic strategies throughout the teaching processes. Proactive discipleship coupled with a community focus allowed local churches to grow in substance.⁴¹ Individual focus recognized the importance of

³⁹ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

⁴⁰ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

⁴¹ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

missionary-national mentoring in informal settings. Overall, establishing discipleship ministries as a foundation for churches and house fellowships conveyed the importance of nationals continuing the practices among other nationals.

Discipleship Methodologies

Discipleship programs in churches and house fellowships became a common alignment between missionaries and nationals. The organization of methods for groups and individuals pertained to missionary preference. Class settings with curricula such as Firm Foundations allowed basic biblical and theological education. One-on-one mentoring between missionaries and nationals provided encouragement and oversight for daily life.⁴²

Discipleship Implementation

Missionaries emphasized teaching and mentoring from the earliest stages of ministry for ensuring discipleship among believers in various locales. As Khmer leaders received training within new church plants in the 1990s, missionaries anticipated a reciprocal movement of discipleship from leaders to new believers. The continuation of discipleship in each church and house fellowship could naturally flow as an integral component of regular ministry.

⁴² Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

Final Remarks About the Mission Groups' Historical Data

Three Consistent Patterns within the Themes

The initial focus and methodologies of the four groups' mission work in the 1990s are similar. After coding data from the interviews about the four mission groups with their respective history, initial focus, and methodologies, consistent patterns emerged providing insight into the mission work in Cambodia during the 1990s. Figure 2 shows patterns relating to group-individual tendencies, transformation and tensions in the mission process, and characteristics among national leaders.

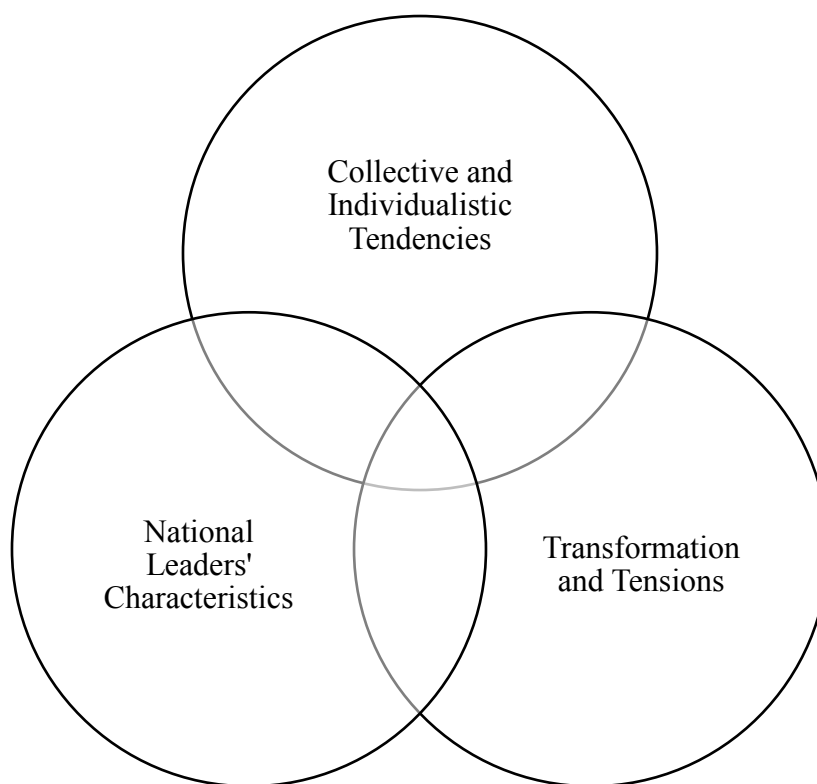


Figure 2. Patterns within the Themes from the Four Mission Groups

Leadership development and discipleship methodologies data from the themes depict participation among groups and individuals, expanding projects and ministries, and investing in national leaders. Fellowship and training throughout the 1990s joined groups

together, which aligns with Khmer culture. As ministries expanded, urban and rural sites were strategic for a base of operations during a time necessitated by relief and development projects. Ongoing strategies toward organization gravitated toward national leaders for implementing future ministries among the mission groups.

Collective and Individualistic Tendencies

Discussion related to cross-cultural ministry typically includes dynamics identified as collective or individualistic. Missionaries frequently refer to the value of group ministry among the Khmer people as it gives a collective focus within local churches and house fellowships. Being part of a Christian group is noted as a significant milestone providing encouragement and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, leadership development and discipleship transmitted from missionaries to nationals proceed naturally through groups. As for individualistic focus, especially through one-on-one discipleship, missionaries emphasize personally imparting wisdom and experience into the life of a new Christian. Locations for direct interaction during the 1990s normally included house churches and project sites.

Despite the value of being part of a group and the attention an individual can receive directly from a missionary, both areas prove to have weaknesses. Groups, although good for gathering people together, do not provide individual progression as a leader or disciple. Individualistic approaches are recognized as good for building relationships, yet the missionary is depicted as directing the ministry and future of an individual rather than a Khmer influencing another Khmer in a one-on-one relationship. The missionary-national relationship also carries the possibility of other nationals becoming critical or judgmental.

Transformation and Tensions

Each of the four mission groups faithfully served during the 1990s and persevered to see long-standing, positive change within people. However, true transformation is a long process and is not always found. Leadership and discipleship courses often carry the content component, yet the curriculum does not bring the necessary inner change. Mission groups often progress by taking steps forward only to realize national workers lapse as transformation does not occur.

The pioneer stage in Cambodia demonstrates a challenging era and requires continual evaluation within the initial focus and methodologies. Tensions within mission groups occur as some missionaries favor relief and development while others believe all mission efforts should remain in the local churches. Amid questioning methodologies and ministerial philosophies, the tendency to move swiftly and minister in many places can plague missionaries' minds. A rush to succeed may become prevalent and initiate progress followed by regression.

Relationships among missionaries and nationals faced numerous tensions throughout the 1990s. Aside from methodologies and ministerial philosophies, the area of financial concerns commonly obstructed transformation. Although salaries were not paid to national leaders for developing indigenous churches, dependency issues and lack of financial trust brought strain and frustration.

National Leaders' Characteristics

A common cultural aspect of the analysis includes the characteristics and tendencies of national leaders. The most prevalent depiction includes charismatic, dynamic nationals selected as leaders in the early 1990s. Rather than leadership based

upon giftings, obedience, or faithfulness, missionaries chose nationals who simply demonstrated influence and allure.

Cultural influences may cause leaders to follow the traditional models exemplified throughout Khmer culture. As missionaries trained potential leaders in the 1990s, they saw nationals approach church leadership as a government leader in Phnom Penh, a military commander in the provinces, or a Buddhist monk at the temple.⁴³ Authoritative tendencies led national leaders to question mission groups' general methodologies and handling of finances.

Conclusion

The entrance of mission groups in Phnom Penh during the 1990s provided a necessary foundation for rebuilding Christianity among the Khmer people. Leadership development and discipleship commenced in urban and rural settings for future ministry opportunities. Mission efforts could not be fully utilized due to rushed missiology and methodological differences. However, Christianity relaunched in Cambodia and current mission groups continue to build upon the work of the pioneer missionaries.

Leadership development and discipleship still encounter challenges in Cambodia resembling the situation from three decades ago. Authoritative leadership based upon cultural tendencies produces results, yet ministry in the local church can be limited as a result. Further investigation of leadership principles and discipleship initiatives in urban settings may provide insight by assisting today's missionaries as they train future leaders and disciple believers.

⁴³ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

As Philip Scott notes, discipleship in the 1990s was missed because missionaries should develop disciples to get leaders rather than begin with a focus on leadership development.⁴⁴ The primary reason for my research seeks to answer questions about leadership development and discipleship in Phnom Penh. Understanding the historical patterns and current methods in urban Assemblies of God Cambodia churches may determine if proper leadership development and true transformational discipleship among the Khmer people will occur in the future.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MISSION HISTORY IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA FROM 1990 TO 1999

“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where
Christ was not known, so that I would not be building
on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20).

Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM)

Focus and Structure

How do modern-day missionaries follow the Apostle Paul’s example to start a new ministry in an area with few or no followers of Christ? Who will take the first steps to cross the geographic, linguistic, and cultural barriers to lay a proper foundation? What approaches will be used for evangelism, church planting, training, and serving? Who will be chosen to serve as national leaders to continue the ministry and provide additional structure for the future?

Each denomination, fellowship, and mission group must address the preceding questions to serve effectively in a global mission. On many occasions, this includes a process of prioritizing regions, discussing methodology, implementing training, and envisioning long-term goals. However, the primary questions remain closely connected to contextualizing the gospel, establishing new places of worship, and maintaining a lasting presence through national leaders.

The Assemblies of God began as a fellowship in 1914. By emphasizing worldwide evangelism, worship in local churches, and discipleship, the Fellowship directed its attention to sending and supporting missionaries around the globe. The efforts of evangelism, church planting, leadership training, and compassion ministries enabled the AG to become the world's largest Pentecostal denomination having over sixty-nine million members and over 372,000 places of worship.¹

Assemblies of God World Missions is the mission arm of the Fellowship consisting of seven regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Eurasia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Asia, and International Ministries. The AGWM vision for mission work within its regions is known as Reaching, Planting, Training, and Serving (RPTS). This includes strategies for taking the message of Christ to the spiritually lost, planting churches in 255 countries, territories, and provinces, training, and equipping believers, and serving the poor and suffering through compassion.²

Field Personnel

AGWM organizes its field personnel into three statuses: Appointed General, Missionary Associate, and Mission Abroad Placement Service (MAPS). Appointed General missionaries are considered career personnel who serve mission terms of three to four years followed by a time of furlough in the United States. Missionary Associate personnel serve mission terms of one to two years and can have the opportunity to apply

¹ AGWM, "Vital Statistics," Assemblies of God World Missions, accessed on October 3, 2020, <https://warehouse.agwm.org/repository/flipbook/vital-statistics/>.

² "Our Mission," Assemblies of God World Missions, accessed on September 4, 2020, <https://www.agwm.org/purpose/>.

for Appointed General status at the end of their assignment. MAPS workers serve in specialized ministries such as education, healthcare, and construction for shorter durations of time. AGWM also has annual mission teams from universities and congregations to assist missionaries and serve at existing mission projects.

In 2019, AGWM had 1,837 Appointed General missionaries, 852 Missionary Associates, 338 MAPS workers, and 15,269 short-term personnel.³ The oversight of all mission efforts among missionaries and workers is centralized in the AGWM Executive Committee based in Springfield, Missouri. Area directors within each region provide additional supervision while field coordinators oversee the day-to-day operations of each country or territory.

National Church Emphasis

A primary goal of AGWM is establishing a national church as it enters a new country or territory. During the 1921 General Council in St. Louis, Missouri, the AG declared it would seek to create self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches in its mission endeavors.⁴ These indigenous church principles continue 100 years later as missionaries evangelize new areas, plant churches, train leaders, and serve through compassion ministries.

There are 144 autonomous AG national churches and general councils in addition to other participants from over 196 countries, which are part of the World Assemblies of

³ AGWM, “Vital Statistics.”

⁴ “Combined Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God,” Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, accessed on October 3, 2020, <https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Minutes%20General%20Council/Unregistered/1921/FPHC/1914-1921.pdf#search=%221921%20minutes%22>.

God Fellowship.⁵ AGWM continues to serve alongside ministers from the national churches by strengthening existing local churches and strategizing methods for creating new national churches in locations without AG adherents. Indigenous principles of creating self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches serve as the foundation of its mission partnership.⁶

Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship (AGMF)

Mission History in Cambodia

As AG missionaries enter a country to initiate a mission presence, forming a missionary fellowship is one of the preliminary priorities. Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship is the general name used in each country to identify and distinguish AG missionaries from other mission groups. The Fellowship includes AG personnel representing the various sending nations who serve as their primary base for financial and logistical support.

American AGWM leadership entered Cambodia in March 1990 and began discussing residence options at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Phnom Penh. Missionaries Bob Houlihan and Ron Maddux explained the willingness of field personnel to serve in any necessary capacity and received visas for five separate trips in 1990.⁷

⁵ “Participating Countries,” World Assemblies of God Fellowship, accessed on October 3, 2020, <https://worldagfellowship.org/Fellowship/Participating-Countries>.

⁶ Missiologists acknowledge Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) and Henry Venn (1796-1893) for creating the “three-self” mission concept of planting self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting churches.

⁷ Joshua J. Lovelace, “The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia: An Analysis of Beginnings, Continual Progression and Enduring Optimism for the Future” (Master of Arts Thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2016), 25.

Maddux made the trips throughout the year surveying opportunities and strategizing long-term missionary residence.

As other mission groups entered Cambodia in 1990, the AG solidified its presence by establishing an AGMF office in Phnom Penh. Randy and Carolyn Dorsey transferred their missionary assignment from Thailand to Cambodia and entered the country in June 1990.⁸ Other missionaries would soon follow to fulfill the necessary government protocols by serving in relief and development projects.

Expanding the AGMF Base in Cambodia

Psychological evaluations, cultural studies, language aptitude exams, finance sessions, and orientation meetings with veteran field personnel are necessary for missionaries who serve in cross-cultural settings. How do you prepare missionaries who arrive in their place of service to learn about surviving grenade attacks, locking doors for evening curfew, maintaining composure while hearing frequent gunfire, assisting refugees in the repatriation process, providing care for orphans who are also amputees, and starting new ministries within a prohibited religion? These issues became common experiences for AG missionaries arriving in Cambodia during the 1990s. Training for these scenarios came only by living in a country enduring a rebuilding process following civil war, genocide, and occupation.

Shortly after the Vietnamese occupation ended in 1989, AG missionaries entered Cambodia to assist the government in relief and development projects. Numerous needs existed: refugees returning from border camps, orphans aimlessly searching for family

⁸ Ibid., 26.

members, and rampant malnutrition throughout the country. Quality of life was far-removed following the years of war as shown by life expectancy at fifty-three years of age,⁹ the mortality rate of children under age five at 115/1000,¹⁰ and the prevalence of civilian landmine accidents averaging over four each day.¹¹ Even though AG personnel had served worldwide for nearly eighty years, the scenarios in Cambodia had never been experienced. Despite those circumstances, families and individuals arrived in Cambodia during the 1990s to meet the needs of the people and lay the foundation for a national church.

An Enduring Legacy

During missionary fellowship gatherings in Cambodia, I frequently attach myself to veterans who experienced Phnom Penh during the 1990s. I find myself admitting I could not have served in their place but always expressing my thankfulness for their intrepid attitude during life-threatening situations while maintaining composure to serve those in need. The stories of seeing landmines and hand grenades for sale in markets, displaying a large AG flag on their vehicles to avoid being shot by Khmer Rouge cadres, enduring daily shortages of electricity and water, and encountering armed soldiers and civilians along the streets depict a country much different from what I have experienced as a missionary.

⁹ “Life Expectancy at Birth-Cambodia,” The World Bank, accessed on October 5, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=KH>.

¹⁰ “Country Profiles-Cambodia,” UNICEF, accessed on October 5, 2020, <https://data.unicef.org/country/khm/>

¹¹ “Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board,” Council for the Development of Cambodia, accessed on October 5, 2020, http://www.cdc-crdb.gov.kh/cdc/cmdgs_en.pdf.

The AG veteran missionaries who have served in Cambodia since the 1990s have not only poured their lives into nationals but have also mentored new missionary personnel. Their patient guidance from chaotic circumstances to a secure environment makes the journey easier for the scores of individuals who follow in their footsteps. Demonstrating a continual “can do” attitude seems to come naturally after serving both with and without limitations in the 1990s. Their example, as shown by kindness and patience, has directly impacted my ministry in Cambodia.

The paradigm within AGMF in Cambodia has been to do whatever is necessary to remain in the country and use various platforms as a means for sharing the gospel. There are fewer restrictions in Cambodia since the first AG missionaries arrived in 1990. However, the same focus remains by using compatible methods for meeting needs in the country and contextualizing efforts while evangelizing, planting churches, training leaders, and serving with compassion.

Country Representation in AGMF

Since 1990, twenty countries have represented AGMF in Cambodia. Missionaries from these countries are commissioned by a national church mission agency or faith-based mission organization. As of 2020, fifteen of these countries currently have missionary personnel serving within AGMF. Although most of the countries have AG mission agencies, some have affiliation with AGMF through a Pentecostal fellowship rather than an AG national church.¹²

¹² Examples of Pentecostal fellowships serving with AGMF in Cambodia include Australia, Canada, Finland, and Sweden. Australia’s fellowship is the Australian Christian Churches (CCC), Canada’s fellowship is the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), Finland’s fellowship is Fida International, and Sweden’s fellowship is the Pentecostal Alliance of Independent Churches (Pingst FFS).

Table 1. Countries Associated with AGMF in Cambodia

* Australia	* Bolivia	Brazil	* Canada
* Ecuador	* El Salvador	* Fiji	* Finland
France	Guatemala	Japan	* Malaysia
* Mexico	* New Zealand	* The Philippines	* Singapore
* South Korea	* Sweden	* The United States of America	Vietnam

* Denotes Countries Represented in Cambodia as of 2020

The Assemblies of God Cambodia

Establishing a National Church

Government protocols for resident visas and restrictions on religious gatherings steered the earliest AG missionaries toward relief and development initiatives during the early 1990s. Although the AG envisioned a national church, field personnel directed their efforts toward the many needs of the Khmer people while building credibility with the government. Following the 1993 general election in Cambodia, new religious freedoms led to church planting opportunities connected to the existing relief projects already establishing relationships in communities through health clinics, schools, and orphanages.

Building relationships and mentoring national leaders in relief projects provided the necessary foundation for an AG national church in Cambodia. The Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia¹³ officially acknowledged the Assemblies of God Cambodia in 1997, and the AGC held its initial meetings the same year to recognize its first churches and ministers.¹⁴ As missionaries assisted in the early stages of its development, the AGC

¹³ The Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia was created as a partnership among denominations, fellowships, and mission groups in 1996. It is recognized by the Ministry of Cults and Religions and maintains relationships with government officials. See Darin Clements, Ken Huff, and Nyotxay, “The Development of Pentecostalism in Cambodia and Laos,” in *Asia Pacific Pentecostalism*, ed. Denise A. Austin, Jacqueline Grey, and Paul Lewis (The Netherlands: Brill, 2019), 129-149.

¹⁴ Clements, Huff, and Nyotxay, “Development of Pentecostalism,” 136.

began to demonstrate its autonomous purpose by holding elections and creating new ministries throughout the country in the late 1990s.

AGC Leadership and Structure

The AGC's first general council meetings convened in 1997 to elect a chairman to serve a one-year term. Following the election, the chairman chose four additional committee members.¹⁵ The current AGC leadership committee has seven members: general superintendent, assistant superintendent, secretary, treasurer, and three additional at-large committee members. The term length for each position is three years, and all potential officers, including both men and women, must be ordained by the AGC to serve on the committee.

By creating six regional districts in 2010, the Fellowship maintains a more geographic structure in the country. Each district is comprised of three to five provinces and has a leadership committee for providing oversight to the ministers in those provinces.¹⁶ Six of the national committee members, including the assistant superintendent, secretary, treasurer, and the three at-large members, oversee one district each to maintain close relations between national leadership and district leadership.

Growth in the 1990s

The formative years of missionaries building relationships with future ministry leaders and chartering the AGC during the 1990s set the Fellowship in motion for growth during the subsequent decades. Moreover, the creation of a ministerial training school in

¹⁵ Lovelace, "History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia," 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

1994, Cambodia Bible Institute (CBI), was instrumental for church planting throughout the first decade of the Fellowship. A total of twenty-seven AGC worship sites existed in Cambodia by 1999, with seven sites located in Phnom Penh. In addition to the continuation of existing relief projects throughout the country, community health evangelism (CHE) began in 1999 through a partnership between missionaries and pastors. As Table 2 indicates below, statistics in 2019 reveal how the partnership between missionaries and nationals, Bible school training, and ministry projects facilitated significant growth during the Fellowship's initial decades.

Table 2. 2019 AGC Statistics¹⁷

Head Pastors	79
Other Church Leaders	183
*Total Number of Worship Sites	205
Total Adherents	14,114

* Includes Recognized Churches, Organized Churches, House Churches, Cell Groups, and Stunted Churches

Description of AG Mission Historical Interviews

Interview Sampling and Methodology

I conducted AG missionary interviews to obtain data related to the Fellowship's mission history during the 1990s. Seven AGMF missionaries having over twenty years of experience, including both men and women currently serving in Cambodia, participated in the interviews. Countries represented by the interviewees include Australia, the Philippines, and the United States. These considerations for the historical interviews

¹⁷ National Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia, "Report of Churches of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia 2019," Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2019.

include mixed sampling and triangulation describing AG mission history in Cambodia during the 1990s.¹⁸

Each interview lasted approximately one hour and included questions related to the Assemblies of God's mission focus, strategies, and organization during the 1990s. I directed questions toward the missionaries' involvement with leadership development and discipleship methodologies within relief projects and church ministries. An overall emphasis on methodology illustrates how the missionaries focused their efforts on leadership development and discipleship during the first decade of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia.

Serving as a missionary allows me to have firsthand knowledge of how the AG functions in Cambodia. Having existing relationships with the AG interviewees and my personal missionary experience among the Khmer people greatly enhanced the methodology process.¹⁹ These factors allowed me to maintain an observer status during the interviews while also functioning as an insider within AGMF. Preparing basic questions about history connected to leadership development and discipleship allows each interviewee an opportunity to share without any coercion. Positioning myself to minimize bias during interview preparation, dialoguing with interviewees, and analyzing data is best enhanced by having reflexivity as the foundation of the interviews. Although I have a prior understanding of the Fellowship and its ministries, the data from each

¹⁸ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 155.

¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

interview broadens my personal experiences in Cambodia and any interpretation based on those experiences.²⁰

The seven interviewees possess a long history of cross-cultural ministry experience among the Khmer people in Cambodia. Their arrival during the 1990s positioned them in a unique time as denominations, fellowships, and mission groups sent personnel to launch relief and development projects with the hopes of establishing long-term ministries in local Khmer congregations. Each of the interviewees encountered the challenges of balancing both relief projects and church ministries while delegating responsibilities to the nationals who developed into pastors and church leaders. As ministries continued to progress, and new field personnel arrived in the subsequent decades, these seven individuals aided the Fellowship by continually investing in the AGC and its leadership. Furthermore, their understanding of leadership development and discipleship methodologies expressed itself in the following ways: church planting, personal evangelism, Christian education, school administration, relief and development projects, pastoral leadership, youth and children's ministries, and media ministries.

Interviewee Biographies

Sarah Ardu is an Australian missionary who received ministerial credentials with the Australian Christian Churches fellowship in 1986.²¹ She began her ministry in Australia by serving in discipleship and campus ministries at the University of

²⁰ Ibid., 216.

²¹ The Australian Assemblies of God officially changed its name to Australian Christian Churches in 2007. "Our History," Australian Christian Churches, accessed on October 12, 2020, <https://www.acc.org.au/about-us/>.

Melbourne. Following a short-term mission trip to Cambodia from 1995 to 1996, Ardu started her full-time ministry in Cambodia in February 1998. Aside from living in Stung Treng Province from 2003 to 2004, most of her ministry has been in Phnom Penh. Ardu is currently serving in a multiplication movement of disciples making disciples in the Cambodian culture.

Nora Catipon is a Filipino missionary serving with the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. After receiving her ministerial credentials in 1980, she ministered throughout the Philippines in personal evangelism, crusades,²² Bible teaching, worship ministries, and youth leadership. Catipon arrived in Cambodia in October 1994 to serve at Cambodia Bible Institute and plant churches in Phnom Penh. She was instrumental in planting two of the AGC's oldest churches in Phnom Penh during the 1990s. Her current ministry includes serving as the director of Cambodia School of Missions (CSM), an AG ministerial training school in Phnom Penh, and pastoring the English-speaking congregation at one of the churches she started in 1996.

Ann Greve currently has the longest tenure of any AG missionary in Cambodia by arriving in August 1991. Her background in Christian schools and education in the United States allowed her to enter the country amid the time of numerous restrictions. During her first assignment, she worked alongside other educators to start International School of Phnom Penh (ISPP) in 1991. After serving at ISPP until 2000, Greve worked in teacher training and development at Sala Mom, an education project connected to One

²² Although AG missionaries with evangelistic crusade experience entered Cambodia during the 1990s, large-scale crusades are prohibited due to an incident occurring in November 1994. See Brian Maher with Uon Seila, "*Cry of the Gecko*" for additional historical information about Christianity in Cambodia.

Child, from 2000 to 2008. A credentialed minister since 1995, she has served as pastor of International Christian Assembly (ICA) since 2008 and continues to work in various educational opportunities in urban and rural settings.

Ken Huff serves as the AGMF field coordinator in Cambodia by overseeing the missionary activities among field personnel from fifteen countries in addition to maintaining relationships with other denominations, fellowships, and mission groups. By representing AGMF in Cambodia, he is the primary spokesperson for the AG and its relationship with various government offices. Before his arrival in January 1999, Huff served in youth and college ministries in Oregon from 1985 to 1998 and received his ministerial credentials in 1991. He serves as an advisor to the AGC and sits on numerous boards and committees such as Cambodia Bible Institute, Teen Challenge, Cambodia Bible Society, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia.

Dareth Ly was born in Cambodia, survived the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s, and was adopted by a Christian family in Minnesota. He returned to Cambodia in 1992 during a six-week exploratory mission trip. While serving in Minnesota as a counselor for mentally-challenged adults, he received his ministerial credentials in 1993. Ly and his family returned to Cambodia as appointed AG missionaries in August 1996 and oversaw an orphanage in Kampong Som Province for three years. After serving in Phnom Penh and Battambang, he moved to Siem Reap in 2005 to serve in a non-government organization as the project director for schools.

Kelly Robinette started his missionary career in Thailand and transferred to Cambodia in May 1992. He received his ministerial credentials in 1986 and served as an assistant pastor in Tennessee before his missionary appointment. Robinette began

ministering among the Khmer people in Kampong Cham Province where his work included various relief projects and church ministries. He has served two separate tenures as director of Cambodia Bible Institute in Phnom Penh and continues to serve on its administrative board. Robinette's present ministry is in Battambang where he is the director of a school, director of sponsorship for One Child in Cambodia, and a representative of Global University.

Troy Tabor began his missionary service in Cambodia in January 1994. He received ministerial credentials with the AG in 1990 and his ministry background in the United States includes leadership positions as a youth pastor and assistant pastor in New Jersey. Tabor's first ministry focus in Cambodia was in Kampong Cham Province where he directed an orphanage. In addition to serving on various boards and committees, he currently serves in Phnom Penh and is the AG media ministries director for Cambodia. Tabor also has a significant role with new field personnel by training and mentoring missionaries in Cambodia and internationally.

Interviewee Ministerial Philosophy

Regarding the seven interviewees and their ministerial philosophies, six of the seven interviewees associate with CBI as a training center for vocational ministry. The other interviewee favors a more organic ministerial focus having an emphasis on grassroots training and discipleship methodologies. AGMF field leadership members continually discussed these approaches during the 1990s to understand the most effective way to train potential pastors and leaders within the AGC. Although opinions and ministerial philosophies continue to differ, most current AG missionaries favor Bible

schools as primary training centers rather than leadership development and training approaches in non-formal settings.

Analysis of AG Missionary Interview Data

Primary Themes from Data

Because the interview questions focused on the involvement of the AG in leadership development and discipleship methodologies, responses revealed the efforts and results through relief and development projects and church ministries in the 1990s. An overall description of the Phnom Penh setting, and the initial urban ministries, portrayed the Fellowship as one of several evangelical mission groups establishing a long-term focus as it invested in nationals. Moreover, the interviewees conveyed strengths and weaknesses throughout the process of serving among nationals while overseeing leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Figure 3 provides a flowchart depicting the results from the interview data as shown by primary themes and subthemes.

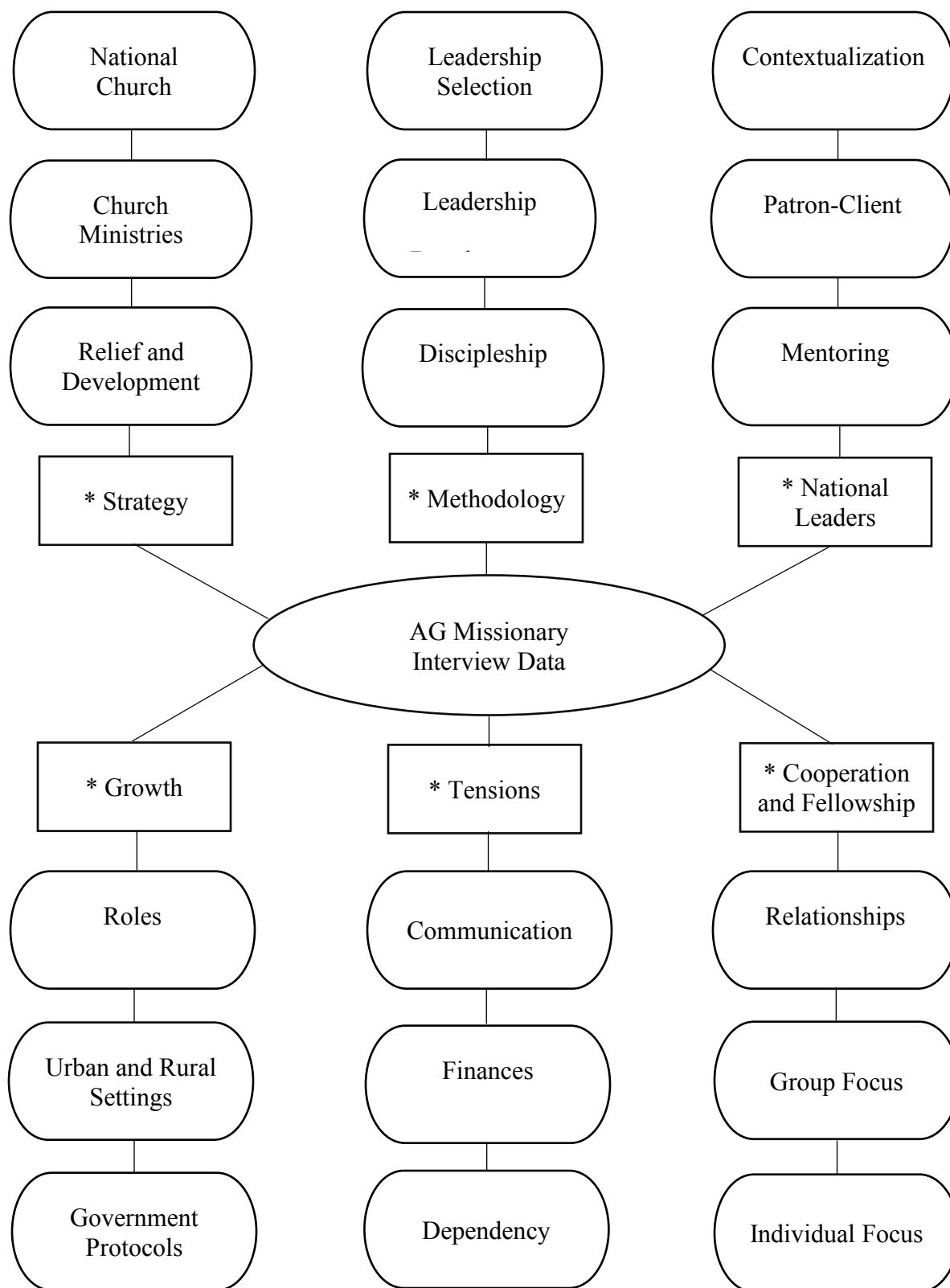


Figure 3. Themes and Subthemes from Assemblies of God Missionaries

* Denotes a Primary Theme

The data from the AG missionary interviews provided a composite description of the Fellowship's activities during the 1990s. Six primary themes emerged from the AG missionary interview data: strategy, methodology, national leaders, growth, tensions, and cooperation/fellowship. Each of the six primary themes is categorized by having three subthemes.

Although the mission strategy of the AG was the most often mentioned theme by the interviewees, the methodology theme contained the most content due to its subthemes. Subthemes within methodology relating to discipleship, leadership development, and leadership selection provide an overarching relationship between the AG missionaries and Khmer believers in the Fellowship. Furthermore, final data interpretations of the six primary themes point toward the Fellowship's interaction with leadership and discipleship.

Strategy

Government protocols involving relief and development required field personnel to remain diligent by teaching English, providing medical services at health clinics, and maintaining orphanages. Fulfilling the relief and development protocols was both necessary and beneficial as it met the government's requirements and established credibility.²³ Any deviation from the obligatory relief work would have jeopardized the missionaries' legitimate reputation with the government. Moreover, receiving visas to remain in the country required the Fellowship's direct involvement in relief and development projects.

²³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

Following the general election in 1993, the government lifted religious restrictions allowing Christian groups to develop church ministries in addition to continuing relief and development projects. The new freedoms generated new opportunities in Cambodia, yet the Fellowship did not create a consolidated field strategy for church ministries. Most AG missionaries generally worked according to their plans rather than participating through group efforts.²⁴

The earliest AG missionaries who arrived in Cambodia during the early 1990s envisioned the possibility of creating an AG national church. Field leadership acknowledged serving through relief and development projects duly fulfilled the AG method of creating a national church.²⁵ The chartering of the AGC in 1997 achieved the Fellowship's fundamental goal in Cambodia.

Methodology

AG missionaries rather than Khmer pastors and leaders took the initiative to lead discipleship efforts: however, challenges and struggles existed in discipleship.²⁶ The missionaries possessed competency at building relationships and taking time to disciple new believers while remaining hopeful that national pastors and church leaders would continue this approach. Discipling believers continued in the 1990s by each missionary's personal preference by utilizing any available curriculum in either one-on-one or small

²⁴ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

²⁵ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

²⁶ Ibid.

group formats.²⁷ By the end of the 1990s, discipleship weakened as missionaries questioned the best method. Moreover, the national church was not able to effectively use resources for continuing the discipleship process due to the limited existence of materials from other mission groups and ongoing plans for AG translation efforts.²⁸

Available resources for leadership and discipleship included The Bridge, Firm Foundations, Lay Leadership Institute (LLI), Theological Education by Extension, and Train and Multiply.²⁹ Field leadership did not mandate a specific training method during the 1990s, leading missionaries to choose materials based on their preference. Ongoing translation attempts in the 1990s introduced plans for AG resources to provide a unifying set of leadership and discipleship training series.³⁰

The creation of CBI in 1994 provided an AG Bible school for potential church leaders to receive vocational ministry training. Just as AG missionaries in other countries frequently used Bible schools for primary leadership training, CBI accomplished this method through U.S. and Filipino missionaries overseeing the school.³¹ Missionaries used existing relief and development projects to generate church ministries, select individuals to study at CBI for training, and encourage them to continue in vocational ministry upon the completion of their studies.³²

²⁷ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

²⁸ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

²⁹ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

³⁰ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

³¹ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

³² Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

National Leaders

When AG missionaries arrived in Cambodia in 1990, few Christians remained in the country, and mission groups served through relief and development projects rather than church ministries. The AG incorporated the existing leadership of both Khmer and Vietnamese leaders who served secretly at the Fellowship's first church in Phnom Penh.³³ During the following years, missionaries worked in various locations through relief and development projects while having new opportunities by building relationships with potential leaders. Missionaries in the 1990s demonstrated their capability of sharing the gospel among the Khmer people, serving in difficult places in the provinces, and investing in lives.³⁴

Missionaries faced cultural challenges as they looked for potential church leaders at relief and development sites. Patron-client issues arose as nationals saw opportunities to serve alongside missionaries and receive compensation while providing reciprocal benefits.³⁵ There are examples in the 1990s of long-term relationships between missionaries and nationals having a patron-client understanding; however, most AG missionaries did not enter patron-client relationships or use their money to influence interactions. The decision ultimately brought disappointment since Khmer culture tends to lean toward patron-client methods.³⁶

³³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

³⁴ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

³⁵ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

³⁶ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

Contextualization issues occurred through the process of establishing the national church and serving through discipleship. Missionaries, rather than nationals, oversaw the creation of the AGC framework in 1997, which led to a structure not fitting the culture in the best way.³⁷ Also, the lack of a centralized strategy led to contextualization issues among missionaries serving in various parts of the country. Inexperienced field personnel and those new to cross-cultural ministry did not understand cultural intricacies or act in the most culturally appropriate ways in relief and development projects or church ministries.³⁸

Growth

Upon the arrival of AG missionaries in 1990, no AG Christians or churches existed, yet missionaries used relief and development opportunities to build relationships and invest in people.³⁹ AG missionaries understood their primary role during the 1990s by fulfilling governmental requirements and using humanitarian projects as a platform for meeting needs and sharing about Christ.⁴⁰ Although missionaries served in various locations and worked independently, growth and progress continued throughout the 1990s.

Most AG missionaries lived in the provinces in the early 1990s and oversaw relief and development projects. After Christians had more freedom in 1993, worship sites

³⁷ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

³⁸ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

³⁹ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁴⁰ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

became closely connected to clinics, orphanages, and schools.⁴¹ As for urban ministries in Phnom Penh, missionaries conducted worship services in their homes to provide good fellowship.⁴² Prohibitions on Christian gatherings in the early 1990s and limitations on renting facilities caused missionaries to continue this approach yet led to the formation of the Fellowship's charter churches.

When AGWM leaders Bob Houlihan and Ron Maddux met government officials in March 1990, they asked about urgent needs and volunteered to send field personnel to fulfill any necessary government protocols.⁴³ AG missionaries arrived in June 1990 and directed their attention toward fulfilling the protocols to remain in the country. The relief and development projects gave credibility to the AG and maintained relationships with government officials and people in need. Although missionaries encountered challenges to fulfill protocols rather than start church ministries, assisting basic needs, providing medical care, and educating children justified any hindrances.⁴⁴

Tensions

Communication issues commonly resulted in tensions among AG missionaries during the 1990s. During the early 1990s, poor infrastructure throughout the country led to communication limitations via ham radios.⁴⁵ Furthermore, most missionaries worked independently and did not follow a detailed plan of action. The absence of a centralized

⁴¹ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁴² Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁴³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁴⁴ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

field strategy caused communication issues in the strategies related to relief and development, church ministries, and the purpose of having CBI as a Bible school.⁴⁶

Following years of war and hardship, the Khmer people searched for economic gain and tried connecting to foreigners and NGOs.⁴⁷ This scenario during the late 1990s caused tensions in relationships between missionaries and leadership in the national church. While intended indigenous projects began as church ministries, national pastors and leaders focused on the potential of financial gain.⁴⁸ Since missionaries had resources for directing relief projects and creating church ministries, the national church instinctively connected to the financial scenario.⁴⁹

Although national pastors and leaders in the provinces received salaries through relief and development projects, the overall structure in the early 1990s did not create dependency.⁵⁰ Dependency issues occurred in the late 1990s after the AGC commenced. Nationals who planned to serve in ministry deemed it necessary to follow the initial strategy of AG missionaries by using relief projects to launch church ministries. It took Khmer leaders many years to believe they could plant churches without starting a relief project.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁴⁹ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁵⁰ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁵¹ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

Cooperation and Fellowship

An essential aspect of ministry during the 1990s included cooperation and fellowship between AG missionaries and other mission groups. Due to the chaos following the genocide, stressful cultural situations, and frequent gunfire in the streets, missionaries needed one another for friendship.⁵² As missionaries served through relief projects and church ministries, they formed vital relationships among the Khmer people. The unity and partnership between AG missionaries and nationals led to the creation of the AGC. Although numerous projects and institutions commenced during the 1990s, relationships are acknowledged as the most important component and made an impact well beyond the work of projects and institutions.⁵³

Working as a unified fellowship presented challenges for AG missionaries during the 1990s. Some missionaries believed a unified group approach would be effective, yet differences in personalities and ministry philosophies led to field personnel working independently.⁵⁴ However, as new churches started in homes, individual missionaries used group-focused ministries. Missionaries also used small group formats for teaching and training purposes as churches originated in urban and rural areas.

AG Missionaries focused on relationships, mentoring, and discipleship through individual, one-on-one training. Individual settings worked well in these areas and provided quality time for teaching opportunities.⁵⁵ Utilizing this process in relief projects

⁵² Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

⁵³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁵⁴ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁵⁵ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

and church ministries produced enriched relationships between missionaries and nationals. However, not all nationals had the opportunity to receive one-on-one training and nurturing while having a missionary walk alongside them during the discipleship process.⁵⁶

Interpretation of AG Missionary Interview Data

Perceptions and Experiences

The stories from the AG veteran missionaries who lived in Cambodia during the 1990s still fascinate and inspire me. Traveling along National Road 4 has taken me from Kampong Som Province to Phnom Penh numerous times, although I have not driven that route while being shot at during a coup d'état. Encountering my share of outlandish traffic scenarios is common in Phnom Penh, but I have yet to see people running for their lives while a tank pushes its way through the street and causes chaos. Assisting children's ministry programs has been rewarding; however, I have never raised impoverished orphans who witnessed the death of their parents due to a landmine explosion. Conversing while walking alongside staff members is an enriching time of sharing life together, yet never have I assisted a staff member injured by shrapnel from a grenade explosion while walking in Phnom Penh.

Those who went before me, men and women encountering events almost seemingly fictional, persevered while never fully knowing what would happen due to the political and military instability during the 1990s. Whether in the urban setting of Phnom Penh or distant areas in the provinces, they gave their best effort to make a difference in a

⁵⁶ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

country experiencing tragedy upon tragedy. Listening to the stories and scenarios of the 1990s causes me to appreciate the individuals God chose for a specific place like Cambodia, in certain times after war and genocide, and for a unique group like the Khmer people so they could hear the message of Jesus Christ.

During this time, a desperate Communist country searched for answers to rebuild its country. Leaders welcomed relief workers who would brave innumerable challenges to help broken, desperate people. Hardships, obstacles, and limitations greeted every relief worker who served in Cambodia during the 1990s. The country could even be called a meat grinder during those challenging years due to internal and external pressures.⁵⁷ All of the scenarios, both intentional and accidental, connect to God's orchestration of an enterprise through relief and development projects. Veteran AG missionary, Kelly Robinette, summarizes the situation by noting, "We came into a Communist country opening its doors and skeptical of Christians. They were not looking for anyone to come and start the Church, but in that climate, we came and started the Church."⁵⁸ The Lord's divine intervention allowed these open doors for future opportunities.

After serving as a missionary in Cambodia for over a decade, I can attest that there are no such things as perfect mission fields, flawless missionaries, or unblemished cross-cultural ministries. However, the AG missionary stories of faithfulness and perseverance in Cambodia demonstrate a region experiencing many successes. Triumphs

⁵⁷ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁵⁸ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

came through men and women who gave their lives on behalf of Khmer families and individuals unknowingly waiting to receive the gospel. Going the extra mile through personal sacrifice became the standard operating procedure for establishing the AG fellowship in the country. Moreover, this commitment is represented by the first AG family to live in Cambodia in 1990. Their family experienced sacrificial loss as their beloved father and husband, Randy Dorsey, died unexpectedly of a heart attack while on furlough after completing their first mission term in Cambodia.

The legacy of AG missionaries continues in Cambodia to this day due to their work in the 1990s. Khmer nationals went to health clinics to receive medicine for their bodies and received healing in their souls. They sent their children to schools to receive education and received salvation from the Savior. They went to unfamiliar locations with large crosses on the property to receive rice and received the Bread of Life. The foundations laid in the 1990s through AG relief and development projects turned into church ministries impacting future generations of adults, youth, and children.

Overview of Data Interpretation

The data interpretation describing each of the six primary themes is supported by three subthemes. Strategy data includes relief and development, church ministries, and the national church. Methodology data includes discipleship, leadership development, and leadership selection. National leaders' data includes mentoring, patron-client, and contextualization. Growth data includes roles, urban/rural settings, and government protocols. Tensions data includes communication, finances, and dependency. Cooperation and fellowship data include relationships, group focus, and individual focus.

Strategy

Relief and Development

The lack of a unified field strategy posed a significant challenge to AG missionaries during the 1990s. Each AGMF field coordinator in Cambodia tried to develop an overarching strategy while exhibiting their ministry philosophy as the most vital component for future ministry trends.⁵⁹ For example, one strategy meeting in the 1990s involved the field coordinator calling all missionaries to meet in Phnom Penh and develop a unified strategy. He used a large whiteboard illustrating relief and development projects and church ministries in both urban and rural settings. He placed his ministry and mission philosophy in the center as the primary base for field operations.⁶⁰ This immediately caused an uproar since he listed his ministry as the principal focus, and the other missionaries felt their philosophy should be the starting point. Other field coordinators continued similar approaches in the 1990s by trying to unify the field and use their ministry at the center rather than a mutual agreement for strategies in urban and rural settings.

Church Ministries

The AG missionary presence during the 1990s can be described as a loose confederacy without a consensus.⁶¹ The AG field leadership team, generally consisting of

⁵⁹ The AGMF field coordinator is the leading AG missionary who represents the Fellowship and maintains relationships with the national church in addition to other denominations, fellowships, and mission groups. Each AG field coordinator from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam is chosen by the AG area director who oversees these five countries.

⁶⁰ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁶¹ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

the field coordinator and three other missionaries elected by field personnel, often had strong personalities and varied ministry philosophies. Other missionaries functioned by avoiding the leadership team, serving according to their ministerial interests, and distancing themselves from creating core principles for the missionary fellowship.⁶²

Whether serving in relief and development projects or church ministries, missionaries remained independent in their work and not closely connected to other missionaries due to distance or ministry philosophy disagreements.

National Church

Relief and development projects paved the way for initial ministry opportunities to establish an AG national church. Missionaries decided they should create the scaffolding of a national church using existing pastors and leaders, selecting national leadership, and ultimately allowing the structure to oversee church ministries.⁶³ However, the framework lacked pragmatism within an Asian culture possessing authoritarian leadership dynamics. Missionaries fashioned the national church through their perspective and minor involvement from nationals. The overall framework fails to reflect the power structure in Khmer culture and is a tool used by those chosen as national leaders.⁶⁴ Furthermore, authority in the national church transferred quickly to nationals, most of whom had been Christians for a relatively short time, and caused isolation

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

between missionaries and nationals.⁶⁵ An unbalanced approach without recognizing authoritarian structures in the cultural context permitted nationals to govern the Fellowship with limited feedback from missionaries.⁶⁶

Methodology

Discipleship

Discipleship is the missing link persisting in Cambodia due to a lack of modeling and implementation in local churches.⁶⁷ Missionaries in the early 1990s effectively built relationships and disciplined new believers. However, by the end of the 1990s, local churches merely instructed new believers by requiring church attendance, listening to sermons, and interacting at fellowship gatherings.⁶⁸ Overall, structured discipleship, implemented through a centralized methodology or curriculum, did not occur in the 1990s.

Leadership Development

Missionaries raised questions regarding the most effective way to train leaders and the best methodology for leadership development. Two groups represented AG missionaries: those who felt CBI should be the primary means for training leaders and those who wanted to replace CBI with another hands-on curriculum such as Train and

⁶⁵ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁶⁶ It is common for AG missionary fellowships to attend important national church events. For example, in the Thailand Assemblies of God, missionary leadership is still directly involved in national church meetings by having the missionary field coordinator in attendance to represent the missionary fellowship and assist the national leaders.

⁶⁷ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁶⁸ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

Multiply.⁶⁹ Although the Fellowship faced limited resources and no standardized AG materials in the Khmer language, a blended methodology of both classroom instruction and relational connectivity would have been advantageous in leadership development.⁷⁰ The following years caused missionaries to either implement training principles used by American and Filipino missionaries at CBI or train leaders through a non-formal, mentoring approach.

Leadership Selection

AG missionaries selected national pastors and leaders from relief and development projects during the 1990s. The selection process involved choosing any available individuals due to the small number of Christians in the country. Missionaries searched for anyone who might have potential and could attend CBI for ministerial training.⁷¹ Although leaders received formal training after the chartering of CBI in 1994, the limited availability of Christian nationals led to individuals serving in pastoral leadership while lacking competency and integrity. Moreover, instances occurred where enthusiastic individuals received ministerial training at CBI, yet their congregation did not see the necessary leadership characteristics.⁷²

⁶⁹ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁷⁰ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

⁷¹ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

⁷² Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

National Leaders

Mentoring

In the early 1990s, AG missionaries mentored potential leaders, and this initial method continued through some of the first Christian nationals. During the subsequent years, those who received mentoring and training did not invest in others.⁷³ Missionaries demonstrated a constant concern about building and cultivating relationships through ongoing mentoring; however, the groundwork for the process did not continue through the national church. The eventual results revealed that pastors and leaders did not experience nurturing to maturity and failed to receive consistent one-on-one attention.⁷⁴

Patron-Client

The possibility of receiving economic incentives rather than serving in ministry led nationals to form relationships with missionaries.⁷⁵ Initial working relationships between missionaries and nationals in relief and development projects had the potential of creating patron-client relationships. Pastors and leaders who entered these relationships gravitated toward connecting to a specific missionary, modeling the missionary's ministerial philosophy, and separating themselves from other field personnel.⁷⁶ Although missionaries tried to avoid an overarching patron-client network

⁷³ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

⁷⁴ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

⁷⁵ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁷⁶ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

through relief and development projects, some nationals wanted this type of relationship and felt the AG did not properly fulfill the patron role.⁷⁷

Contextualization

The fundamental issue related to contextualization involved the establishment of the national church. Although missionaries provided just as many Western democratic ideas as biblical ideas, the framework did not fit the Cambodian structure of leadership.⁷⁸ The leaders with authority used the national church as an object for demonstrating and maintaining superiority. A thorough, methodical process permitting a cross-pollination of ideas could have allowed an informal structure, thereby facilitating progressive growth.⁷⁹

Growth

Roles

The primary role of AG missionaries during the 1990s included overseeing relief and development projects while preparing to establish a national church. Nationals misunderstood this particular role because they thought the missionaries favored relief and development projects instead of church ministries.⁸⁰ After chartering the national church in 1997, missionaries continued to serve through existing projects and, aside from the AGMF leadership team, had limited interaction with national leadership.

⁷⁷ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

Urban/Rural Settings

Positive aspects of growth represented both urban and rural settings during the 1990s. Urban house churches in Phnom Penh began in missionary homes and developed into the Fellowship's charter churches. Rural settings in Kampong Cham Province, Kampong Speu Province, Takeo Province, and Kampong Som Province had relief and development projects producing churches and national leaders. Despite the growth during the initial decade, the Fellowship lacked discipleship. If there had been a practical discipleship system in the country, the Fellowship might have grown steadily throughout the following decades.⁸¹

Government Protocols

Not only did missionaries and nationals have misunderstandings about roles, but AGMF also had conflict issues due to each missionary's role. AG missionaries are similar in operation to a sovereign church, permitting each missionary to have his or her cooperative fellowship approach in ministry.⁸² This scenario depicted missionaries working independently while fulfilling governmental requirements. Although AGMF did not have a centralized field strategy, the only necessity included maintaining relief and development projects. By following government protocols, missionaries could determine their role while surveying opportunities for creating church ministries.

⁸¹ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

⁸² Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

Tensions

Communication

Since the 1990s included a significant number of efforts directed toward relief and development projects, tensions arose as missionaries attempted to complement their work at projects and ministry in local churches. Missionaries faced issues balancing required government protocols while planning for future ministry opportunities. Close communication in AGMF might have provided a more suitable approach for the missionaries engaged in both areas. This weakness led to communicating something attractive through projects rather than evaluating growth from church ministries.⁸³

Finances

Financial issues caused tensions among missionaries from various countries in addition to relationships between missionaries and nationals. As missionaries continued to assist relief and development projects, non-American missionaries noticed that the substantial number of monthly contributions designated for projects could have been even more useful for church planting sites.⁸⁴ Also, the relationship between missionaries and nationals became complicated as community health evangelism programs started in 1999. AG missionaries from various countries began to promote the new programs by using large amounts of financial support to direct the national church toward other financial endeavors rather than indigenous ministerial opportunities.⁸⁵ These approaches

⁸³ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

caused contending strategies in Cambodia between missionaries and nationals during the succeeding decades.

Dependency

The notion of starting relief and development projects before launching church ministries caused more long-term, non-indigenous financial programs to enter the national church's focus in the late 1990s. Nationals felt they needed money from AG missionaries to plant new churches rather than formulating a well-developed, indigenous plan to minister throughout provinces, districts, and villages.⁸⁶ This strategy caused a rift as some missionaries partnered with the national church's projects while other missionaries who refused to participate fell out of favor.

Cooperation and Fellowship

Relationships

Successfully building relationships exemplifies the most important aspect of AG missionaries serving in Cambodia during the 1990s. Forging relationships provided opportunities leading nationals to Christ, selecting leaders from relief and development projects, training and developing ministers, and establishing a national church. AG missionaries cultivated and maintained loving, healthy relationships with the Khmer people, as shown by credibility and growth in the Fellowship.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁸⁷ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

Group Focus

Ministry approaches focusing on fellowship, leadership development, and discipleship demonstrated effectiveness in small group settings. Before churches rented facilities or constructed a building, new church plants met in homes and illustrated a basic yet successful ministry approach throughout the 1990s.⁸⁸ The AGC's charter churches in Phnom Penh matured from this approach as missionaries maintained close relationships through house fellowships. Also, rural churches connected to relief and development projects experienced effective ministry and meaningful relationships within the groups.

Individual Focus

Relief and development projects provided countless opportunities for AG missionaries to develop one-on-one relationships and train potential pastors and leaders. As Christians had more religious freedoms after the 1993 general election, missionaries labored through intentional leadership development and selected individuals who would receive formal training at CBI. The relief and development projects showed significance during the early 1990s because the AG prioritized projects with long-term potential, ultimately providing pastors and leaders serving in national leadership positions.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁸⁹ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

Final Remarks About AG Historical Data

Leadership Development

AG missionaries faced limitations in the leadership selection process throughout the 1990s due to small numbers of Christians. The necessity to fulfill government protocols through relief and development projects required constant attention rather than having the freedom to focus solely on church ministries. Furthermore, initial training efforts involved selecting nationals who lacked a genuine call to ministry or had character issues.⁹⁰

The process of selecting and developing national leaders revealed the intricacies of Khmer culture. Missionaries acknowledge there are few avenues to train people for leadership in Cambodia because leaders are born rather than developed, and they already possess charisma and self-confidence.⁹¹ Moreover, those who have authority might use all means to keep their position even if it means eliminating surrounding aspects they cannot control.⁹² These cultural facets proved challenging for AG missionaries during the late 1990s as national leaders directed the Fellowship and its ministries.

By the end of the 1990s, seven urban worship sites represented the AGC in Phnom Penh. AG missionaries from the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States planted five of the seven churches and selected pastors to oversee weekly church ministries. The two exceptions included a Cambodian-Vietnamese church existing before 1990, later aligning with the Fellowship in 1992, and a parent-affiliated group

⁹⁰ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁹¹ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

⁹² Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

partnering alongside a church planted by an AG American missionary. Missionaries from the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States continued to mentor the new pastors, and CBI played a significant role by training the majority of the original urban AGC pastors.

Discipleship Methodologies

Discipleship in AGC churches during the 1990s existed solely because of missionary efforts. Small group ministries and one-on-one training sessions proved effective as missionaries mentored the initial national pastors. Building meaningful relationships, leading individuals to Christ, and taking the necessary initiatives to disciple believers depict a long process, yet the efforts provided growth throughout the Fellowship.⁹³

The lack of discipleship transmission from national to national caused persistent challenges in the Fellowship.⁹⁴ Growth occurred throughout the 1990s as individuals responded to the gospel and made decisions to follow Christ. However, no long-term discipleship program or process existed within the national church. If there had been strategic efforts to disciple believers through small groups and individual approaches, the national church could have evolved more efficiently and fit the culture more appropriately.⁹⁵

⁹³ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

⁹⁴ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

⁹⁵ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

Due to urban worship services conducted in homes during the 1990s, small group ministry settings allowed fellowship and discipleship for urban AGC adherents. Most urban AGC worship sites continued to meet in homes or small rental facilities through the end of the decade. The proximity of AG missionaries who started the churches in their homes maintained close relationships by leading both group and individual discipleship ministries. Although only seven of the Fellowship's twenty-seven worship sites in Cambodia gathered in Phnom Penh by 1999, missionaries' discipleship efforts fostered growth in urban AGC churches.

Conclusion

Data from the AG missionary interviews reveals a final summary of positive results, negative results, and general needs taken from primary and subthemes. Positive results from the 1990s include serving through relief and development opportunities, a genuine commitment from missionaries, viable relationships with nationals, training future pastors and leaders, and establishing a national church. Negative results from the 1990s include lacking a unified strategy, field personnel having strong personalities, financial tensions, rushing to establish a national church, and weaknesses in discipleship. General needs addressing both the 1990s and the present situation include having a team focus, balancing relief and development projects alongside church ministries, using proper contextualization, evaluating the Fellowship, and demonstrating a Pentecostal emphasis. Results and needs will be further examined in chapter 4 regarding the emphases and neglect of leadership development and discipleship methodologies through missionary and head pastor efforts.

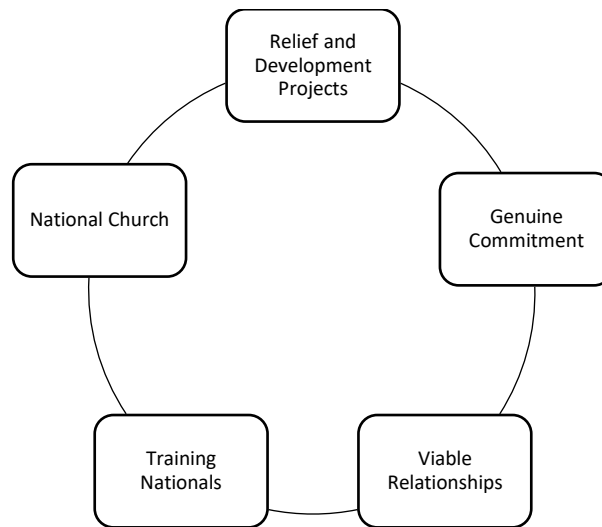


Figure 4. AG Positive Results in Cambodia During the 1990s

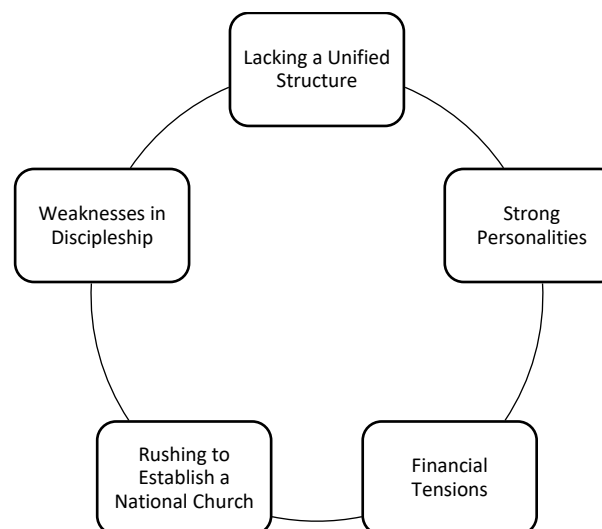


Figure 5. AG Negative Results in Cambodia During the 1990s

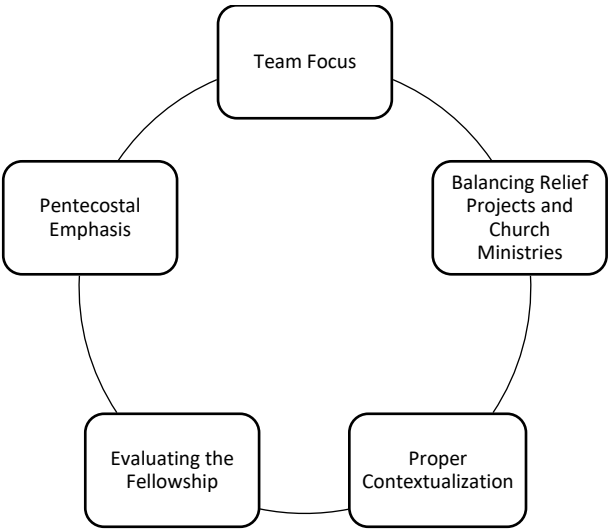


Figure 6. AG General Needs in Cambodia from the 1990s to Present

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT AND DISCIPLESHIP METHODOLOGIES
AT URBAN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES
IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set
eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what
God has done from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Urban Christianity in a Khmer Context

Sunday Morning in Phnom Penh

I make my way to a location I have never visited during the six years Phnom Penh has been my Asian hometown. Although the streets are usually overwhelmed with cars, passenger vans, motorcycles, bicycles, and foot traffic, it is Sunday morning, which means the roads are somewhat subdued. While many of the city’s 2,000,000 residents rest from their busy week of work, studies, and traveling, the Khmer Christian minority gathers for worship services.¹

Turning off a major north-south road leads me to a series of narrow side streets, a common occurrence in the capital city. The lack of traffic allows me to take my time as I

¹ Joshua Project estimates 3.4 percent of the population in Cambodia adhere to Christianity, including 2.05 percent who worship at evangelical churches, while 82.2 percent adhere to Buddhism, respectively. “Country: Cambodia,” Joshua Project, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/CB>.

gaze upon the shops' awnings to read the street numbers and find my bearings. Urban streets, quiet and lazy like most communal areas on a Sunday morning, show their frequent weekly activity with plastic bags, empty containers, and discarded rubbish covering the sidewalks.

There is a coolness in the air as I park near the church location. It is easier to breathe due to the low humidity and pleasant temperature because the rainy season recently ended. A motorcycle scurries down the narrow street as vendors present their street-food delicacies of fresh fruit and fried rice dishes. After pacing near the numerous alleyways, my eyes do not connect with anything resembling a place of worship. It is time to use the most reliable source for finding an unfamiliar place in Phnom Penh: ask a local.

“*Gonlaing Prayah Jesu nou ai nah?*” During my first year in Cambodia, I learned asking for the Jesus Place is a great way to find a church. The shop owner understands my sentence in the Khmer language but does not know if a church is close to her place of business. As she gives a response, I realize this could be the wrong street. Moreover, the church may be nearby, yet she has never interacted with a follower of Jesus Christ.

I quickly glance at my watch to realize it is nearly 9:30, and the worship service will begin soon. Another alleyway seems inviting, so I stroll between the chasms of concrete and see people entering a narrow, three-story *ptayah lwayng* with music quietly emanating from the building. I raise my hands together with my fingertips pointing upward to show the traditional Cambodian *sompeah* greeting to the strangers as they smile and address me as “*lokru*,” the word used for a male pastor or teacher. It is time to begin the service with my Khmer Christian brothers and sisters.

Worship time includes familiar songs I enjoy singing during Bible school chapel services. Since it is the first Sunday of the month, we celebrate Holy Communion: a common practice for Khmer churches at the beginning of each month. Pastor Mon Bopha² acknowledges me taking part in the service due to my field research, and I stand and greet everyone with another *sompeah*. It is a special day as we have guests from Singapore who are highly honored because it was Singaporean missionaries who started the church and trained the initial church leaders. The brothers and sisters firmly fix their attention on the guest speaker while listening to Pastor Bopha translate the message from English to Khmer. I quietly wonder if they possess the same focus as the Berean believers who weighed words spoken by the Apostle Paul.

It feels like home among the twenty-six Khmer believers who labor to make Christ known in their urban pocket of Phnom Penh. There is even a familiarity of a church where I served in my hometown since the congregation strongly shares the viewpoint about each member having ministry responsibilities. My heart is always filled with joy to visit urban Assemblies of God Cambodia churches, especially one like this tucked in a narrow alley, and participate in worship services within a Khmer context. The service ends shortly before 11:00, yet many of us linger for over an hour to enjoy fellowship and talk about the congregation's history. I bid everyone farewell and leave with gratitude, thinking about our fellowship's three decades of existence in Phnom Penh.

² Cambodian names include the family name followed by the given name. All Cambodian names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms to protect identities.

AGC Church History in Phnom Penh

During Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in the 1980s, believers gathered secretly in Phnom Penh due to the prohibition of Christianity. One church founded in 1985 held services in Khmer and Vietnamese while maintaining a close watch on anyone who might report unlawful Christian activities to the government.³ The church later became affiliated with the Assemblies of God and was recognized as the Fellowship's first Cambodian church in 1992. As AG missionaries arrived in Phnom Penh during the early 1990s, they joined with the Khmer and Vietnamese believers in secret by entering through an obscured walkway leading to the rooftop of a hotel near the Central Market.⁴

A second AG church in Phnom Penh was also planted in 1992 by American missionaries. Due to religious restrictions, the missionaries held Bible studies, prayer services, and fellowship gatherings at home to avoid conflict with the government. Other AG missionaries from Asia, Australia, and Europe used similar approaches during the proceeding years by using their homes as worship sites. Although only two AG churches existed in Phnom Penh before the national elections in 1993, the Fellowship experienced growth and pursued possibilities to start churches in various parts of the capital city.

After establishing Cambodia Bible Institute in 1994, newly trained leaders assisted missionaries in the ongoing church planting process in Phnom Penh. During the second decade of the Fellowship's existence in Cambodia, CBI graduates planted new cell groups and churches. These efforts aligned with a Filipino church planting model at

³ Joshua J. Lovelace, "The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia: An Analysis of Beginnings, Continual Progression, and Enduring Optimism for the Future," (Master of Arts Thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2016), 29.

⁴ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

CBI requiring students to plant a cell group or church before completing their studies. Moreover, the missionaries who started house churches during the 1990s handed over pastoral leadership to Khmer pastors after spending years training and mentoring capable replacements. By the end of the Fellowship's third decade in 2019, there were twenty-three active worship sites in Phnom Penh.

Table 3. AGC Church Statistics in Phnom Penh

AGC Churches/Worship Sites in Phnom Penh Established from 1992 to 1999	7
AGC Churches/Worship Sites in Phnom Penh Added from 2000 to 2009	9
AGC Churches/Worship Sites in Phnom Penh Added from 2009 to 2019	6
Total of AGC Churches/Worship Sites in Phnom Penh in 2019	23
Total of Recognized AGC Head Pastors in Phnom Penh in 2019	15
Total of Recognized AGC Church Leaders in Phnom Penh in 2019	9

Foundations for an Ethnography with Urban AGC Churches

Ethnographic Research Considerations

My experience as a missionary in Cambodia provides a foundation for conducting ethnographic research due to my familiarity with Christianity in a Khmer context. While living in Phnom Penh from 2010 to 2012 and again from 2014 to 2018, prior occurrences of visiting, preaching, teaching, and building relationships arranged an overview to select research sites. Although these experiences were plentiful by the time my field research commenced in September 2019, there was little to no previous interaction at the churches chosen for ethnographic research.

Reflecting upon my previous experiences in urban Khmer churches allowed me to prepare general questions about culture, leadership development, and discipleship methodologies. I chose basic questions to guide the interviews within the overarching context of my research question while providing opportunities for open dialog with each of the interviewees. Directing my attention toward data collection through interviews and

participant observation within a Khmer subculture group confirmed the best means to conduct qualitative research in urban AGC churches.⁵

The cultural component carries the most significant amount of research data due to extensive time at each site. Providing a cultural portrait of an urban subculture group in Cambodia presents additional considerations stemming from the ethnographic research. The interviews and participant observation from the cultural field research led to further questions utilized at later stages in the research process.⁶ These additional questions from the initial interviews and participant observation generate the data collection and analysis of education in chapter 4 and focus group discussion in chapter 5, respectively.

Research Site Selection Criteria and Sampling

Upon returning to Cambodia in July 2019 following a year of furlough, I contacted the AGC national office for information about the Fellowship's churches. The secretary provided paperwork from church reports and statistics presented by the executive committee at annual fellowship meetings. I described my intentions to conduct ethnographic research at some of the churches by interviewing leaders and laity in addition to attending worship services, fellowship gatherings, and training sessions. Moreover, speaking with the AGC general superintendent provided an opportunity to discuss the research project and obtain his permission.

⁵ R. Daniel Shaw, "Qualitative Social Science Methods in Research Design," in *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 141.

⁶ Ibid.

Due to the necessity of selecting sites for interviews and participant observation, I met with Ken Huff who serves as the Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship field coordinator in Cambodia. His two decades of missionary experience and insider status with urban AGC churches qualify him to serve as a gatekeeper by assisting in the site selection process.⁷ We discussed the necessary criteria to select urban churches officially recognized by the Fellowship, existing as an AGC church for ten years or more, and having a head pastor with ministerial credentials.

Seven churches met the necessary criteria, and I began contacting the head pastors at each site to obtain their permission for conducting field research. After initial visits to each site, I was warmly welcomed by the head pastor, church leaders, and congregation. I interviewed twenty-four individuals between September 21, 2019 and February 6, 2021. One church declined to participate during the research process, leaving six available sites for interviews and participant observation.⁸

Interviewee Criteria and Sampling

Individuals who participated as interviewees are at least eighteen years of age and have been part of their local church for more than one year. Interviews generally lasted approximately one hour with questions about Khmer culture, leadership development in urban churches, and discipleship methodologies in urban churches. Interviews were conducted on the church's property, on the CBI campus, at the home of interviewees, or in coffee shops. All interviewees signed a document consenting to the interview and

⁷ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 154.

⁸ All church names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

received details stating the purpose of my research, the means involved in the research process, and “the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time.”⁹ The consent document also included information about using pseudonyms in the final research product.¹⁰

In addition to interviewing two men and two women from each site, I selected leaders and laity for mixed sampling purposes.¹¹ Generational variation was utilized to provide a point of view from those who lived during the Khmer Rouge era, those born during the Vietnamese occupation, and those born after the country was restructured in 1989. The interview process covered various family statuses including individuals who are single, widowed, married with children, and married without children. Besides the inclusion of these family statuses, three of the six sites contained interviewees who are relatives such as husband/wife, parent/child, and brother/sister. Ministry roles involving the head pastor at each site, other staff pastors, church leaders over a specific ministry, elders, administrative committee members, and general congregants incorporated a variety of church personnel. The educational backgrounds of the interviewees included those who did not finish high school, high school graduates, college graduates, and those with graduate degrees.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 153.

¹⁰ See Appendix D, “Interview Consent Form and Questions.”

¹¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 157.

¹² Some of the interviewees’ degrees at the undergraduate or graduate levels are locally recognized but do not have international accreditation standards.

Description of the Research Sites in Phnom Penh



Figure 7. Surrounding Area at Faith Church

Faith Church's General Information

Faith Church began as a daughter church of Life Church in 1999. The original congregation met at the head pastor's home on the south side of Phnom Penh and transitioned to a different area following a communal fire in 2004. The church continued meeting at the head pastor's home in an undeveloped community in the northwest area of Phnom Penh. American and Canadian missionaries provided funds to purchase land and build a facility near the head pastor's home. The building was dedicated in 2012 and continues to serve as the current location. As shown by land for sale and unpaved roads throughout the community, the surrounding area is still under development.

Pastor Heng Dara received initial discipleship and ministerial training from Pastor Nak Ponleu at Life Church, in addition to training and encouragement from the American missionary who planted and developed Life Church. Pastor Dara was appointed to lead the church in 1999 after two years of in-church training and later started part-time studies at CBI in 2014. He does an extensive amount of preaching, teaching, and training at the church; however, he also delegates responsibilities to various church leaders, including his wife, who serves as the assistant pastor.

Children and youth in the surrounding area are the primary focus of the church's ministries. Sunday worship services begin at 2:30 PM to accommodate the children and youth who live near the church. Families in the community favorably view the church and permit their children to attend Sunday services and other special events. Other focus ministries include Bible study classes, visitation ministries, prayer and fellowship gatherings, preschool classes for children, and English classes.

Table 4. Faith Church's Schedule of Ministries¹³

Sunday	AM – Prayer, Fellowship, and Youth Service PM – Sunday Worship Service
Monday to Friday	AM/PM – Preschool Classes PM – English Classes
Friday	AM – Visitation Ministries
Saturday	AM – Group Ministries PM – Christian Life Program Discipleship Class
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include general Bible classes every three months, fellowship gatherings, and youth events.

¹³ The ministry schedules at all six sites experienced disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Although government mandates caused temporary closures at religious sites, some church activities have continued.

Sunday Services at Faith Church

The Sunday afternoon worship service begins at 2:30 and ends before 4:00. As shown by the focus on children and youth, most attendees are under twenty years of age. Various church leaders, including male and female, assist with opening the service, lead the congregation in worship, and receive offerings. There are typically four or five songs during the service with short Scripture readings for starting the service and receiving offerings. Pastor Dara always sits on the back row of chairs with older adults so the children and youth can sit near the front. His primary roles for the service are preaching and closing the service in prayer.

There has been a significant decrease in attendance at Faith Church due to the COVID-19 situation in Phnom Penh. During a visit on September 22, 2019, there were sixty-six individuals in attendance, with fifty of them under twenty-five years of age. After churches were permitted to have worship services, another visit on September 27, 2020, included forty-three individuals with twenty-five children and youth. The congregation continued meeting for Sunday services in 2021 but suspended most of its weekly ministries due to COVID-19.¹⁴

Table 5. Interviewee Information from Faith Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Heng Dara	57	Male	Married 3 Children	High School	Head Pastor	1997	Head Pastor
Vong Sophea	57	Female	Married 3 Children	High School	Vendor	1997	Assistant Pastor
Chon Kanya	28	Female	Married 1 Child	Bachelor of Arts	Secretary	2000	Elder and Leader
Seng Tola	22	Male	Single	High School	University Student	2005	Youth Leader

¹⁴ Further research is needed about leadership development, discipleship methodologies, and growth in urban AGC churches following the COVID-19 pandemic.



Figure 8. Surrounding Area at Hope Church

Hope Church's General Information

Hope Church began through Khmer leaders who previously served in church leadership at Peace Church. After educational studies in Singapore, Pastor Phan Sokha received encouragement and support from Filipino missionaries to start a new church in the north-central area of Phnom Penh in 2007. The congregation rented a facility until the church moved to its current location in 2012. Malaysian missionaries provided funds for the church to purchase the building for worship services and preschool classes. The area adjacent to the church is developed with residential and commercial buildings.

Pastor Sokha grew up in an AG orphanage in Kampong Cham Province. He moved to Phnom Penh and studied at CBI for two years of ministerial training. Because of his English comprehension and educational abilities, Pastor Sokha was encouraged to continue his ministerial studies in Singapore. Before studying abroad, he served as the

first Khmer head pastor for Peace Church from 1997 to 2002. Pastor Sokha has served on the AGC's executive committee and represents the Fellowship by directing a non-government organization.

Hope Church places a high emphasis on doctrine and theological teaching. Various conversations with leaders and laity describe the importance of remaining true to doctrinal purity and keeping the congregation aware of false doctrines and cults. Pastor Sokha uses theological and ministerial preaching themes throughout the year and invites church leaders and missionaries to preach during Sunday services. There is also a strong emphasis on planting new churches in Phnom Penh and Kandal Province. Six daughter sites were planted with assistance from Khmer church leaders and Filipino missionaries.¹⁵

Most of the congregation is under thirty-five years of age. The church also has the unique characteristic of having seven former orphans who grew up in an AG orphanage in Kampong Som Province. The former orphans moved to Phnom Penh to study at universities and now have their own families and careers. The church has a preschool during weekdays and ministry groups during evenings and on weekends. Partnership with American and Filipino missionaries enables the church to have English worship services on Sunday in addition to the service in the Khmer language.

¹⁵ Further research is needed for second-generation and third-generation Christianity in Cambodia. AGC churches starting new ministry sites among the Khmer people is beyond the scope of my research.

Table 6. Hope Church's Schedule of Ministries

Sunday	AM – Sunday Worship Services in Khmer and English PM – Youth and Young Adult Fellowship
Monday to Friday	AM/PM – Preschool Classes
Wednesday	PM – Prayer Service
Friday	PM – Bible Study Class
Saturday	AM/PM – Group Ministries
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include children's ministries meetings, prayer and fasting events, and leadership meetings. The church also partners with six church plants and has ministry outreach at those sites.

Sunday Services at Hope Church

Sunday worship services in Khmer begin at 8:30 and usually last for one hour and thirty minutes. The assistant pastor and other church leaders direct most of the service. Pastor Sokha sits on the front row and sometimes makes announcements and leads the congregation in special prayer times. Worship typically consists of three or four songs followed by an additional song during the collection of offerings. Lay leaders will occasionally share Scripture verses before prayer times or while receiving offerings. It is common for Pastor Sokha to invite guests to preach according to the current preaching theme or series.

A comparison of Sunday services before and during the COVID-19 pandemic shows a slight decrease in attendance. During a visit on October 6, 2019, there were forty-three individuals in attendance, and the majority were young adults, including those raised in the AG orphanage along with their spouses and children. A visit one year later on October 11, 2020, included thirty-five individuals. During the early months of 2021, the church continued having regular Sunday services and suspended some of its ministries. Furthermore, the church uses online streaming when religious gatherings are prohibited in Phnom Penh due to COVID-19.

Table 7. Interviewee Information from Hope Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Son Phally	26	Female	Married 0 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Organization Staff Member	2004	Children's Leader
Van Narith	28	Male	Married 0 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Assistant Pastor	2006	Assistant Pastor
Ros Kunthea	29	Female	Married 1 Child	Bachelor of Arts	Accountant	2001	Church Member
Phan Sokha	45	Male	Married 3 Children	Master of Arts	Head Pastor and NGO Director	1993	Head Pastor



Figure 9. Surrounding Area at Peace Church

Peace Church's General Information

A Filipino missionary started Peace Church in 1996. During the following years, the missionary trained and mentored believers, including the three men who served as the church's head pastor. The church moved to its current location in 1998, located on one of

the busiest streets in north-central Phnom Penh. With assistance from AGMF, the church purchased and renovated the facilities in 2004 to 2005. The church has a good relationship with the surrounding area since it offers preschool classes, English classes, and music classes.

Pastor Bun Vithu became a Christian as a teenager and received mentoring from the Filipino missionary who planted the church.¹⁶ He studied at CBI for three years and moved to Malaysia to complete a Bachelor of Theology degree. After returning to Phnom Penh in 2007, Pastor Vithu became the third Khmer pastor to lead the church and later completed graduate studies in Malaysia in 2011. In addition to serving multiple terms on the AGC executive committee, he served as the academic dean at Cambodia School of Missions (CSM), an AG ministerial school led by Filipino missionaries. He currently serves as the director at CBI.

The congregation is well-blended with children, youth, young adults, middle-aged, and elderly. In addition to a Khmer worship service, a Filipino missionary leads an English worship service. The church has weekly ministry groups led by a staff of pastors who oversee the responsibilities. Overall, the church highly regards Christian education by providing training workshops for church leaders and small group classes for all attendees.

¹⁶ Missionary relationships and mentoring are disclosed in chapter 5.

Table 8. Peace Church's Schedule of Ministries

Sunday	AM – Small Groups and Bible Study AM – Sunday Worship Services in Khmer and English
Monday to Friday	AM/PM – Preschool Classes PM – English Classes PM – Music Classes (3 Days)
Wednesday	PM – Prayer Service
Friday	AM – Small Groups and Prayer
Saturday	AM – Leadership Workshops and Seminars PM – Leadership Meetings
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include prayer and fasting each month, fellowship gatherings, spiritual emphasis services, mission emphasis services, and other ministry group events.

Sunday Services at Peace Church

The Sunday Khmer worship service begins at 8:00 and dismisses by 10:00. Each service is marked by smooth transitions by those leading the various parts. The head pastor or church leader who opens the service in prayer leads the first song before the worship leader takes responsibility for the remainder of worship time. There are usually four or five songs followed by Scripture readings, announcements, and receiving offerings. Pastor Vithu preaches most Sunday services, yet he invites guest speakers a few times each year. Sermons have practical, theological content followed by time for personal reflection during a closing song.

The church has experienced a noticeable decrease in attendance due to COVID-19. A visit to the church on October 20, 2019, had eighty-eight individuals in the worship service, not including primary ages attending children's church ministries. Another visit on October 18, 2020, shows the worship service attendance at sixty-one individuals, not including children. In early 2021, some activities were suspended, but the church uses online streaming as needed.

Table 9. Interviewee Information from Peace Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Hok Nimol	39	Male	Married 3 Children	Master of Arts	Director of Organization	1998	Worship Pastor
Seang Chenda	64	Female	Married 4 Children	Grade 3	Cook	1990	Church Member
Yen Seyha	38	Female	Widowed 1 Child	Bachelor of Arts	Staff Pastor	2002	Prayer Pastor
Bun Vithu	36	Male	Married 3 Children	Master of Arts	Head Pastor and Director of Bible School	1998	Head Pastor



Figure 10. Surrounding Area at Life Church

Life Church's General Information

Life Church is one of the Fellowship's oldest churches in Cambodia, started through missionary home gatherings in 1992. Holding Christian events before 1993 required the church to carefully and strategically plan times to worship. After renting facilities at a school and house, the congregation moved to its current location in 1998.

The church is located on the south side of Phnom Penh in an area surrounded by houses and businesses in addition to its proximity to a foreign embassy and large market. Special provisions through AGMF helped the church to purchase land and build its facilities.

Pastor Nak Ponleu grew up in Takeo Province during the Cambodian Civil War and Khmer Rouge era. As a child, he was shot while chaos swept across the country, survived many hardships, and later became a Christian in his mid-twenties. While working as a teacher during his conversion to Christianity, he had many questions about surviving the horrors of the 1970s and 1980s; however, he believed God had called him to serve as a minister. An American missionary poured into Pastor Ponleu's life through training and mentorship; he also received ministerial training at CBI. He was appointed as Life Church's original Khmer pastor in 1999 and has served on the AGC executive committee for multiple terms.

The congregation has a large group of core leaders, including individuals who have served at the church since the 1990s. Although the American missionary who planted the church trained some of the current leaders, many individuals received mentoring from the head pastor. The church places a strong emphasis on faith, baptism, and the personal testimonies of its attendees. Weekly ministries and annual evangelistic events provide the necessary assistance for individuals growing in their faith and maintaining a witness for Christ.

Table 10. Life Church's Schedule of Ministries

Sunday	AM – Group Ministries AM – Sunday Worship Services PM – Outreach Ministries to Children and Youth in Kandal Province
Tuesday	AM – Leadership Meetings
Wednesday	PM – Christian Life Program Discipleship Class
Friday	AM – Leadership Meetings
Saturday	PM – Bible Study Class
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include elders and leaders serving in Takeo Province, leadership meetings, and worship team meetings. The church also has evangelistic programs in June and December.

Sunday Services at Life Church

Sunday worship services typically last about one hour and forty-five minutes. A leader or worship team member opens the service with prayer. Following the opening prayer, the congregation stands for prayer and worship with music played through the sound system. It is a time for congregants to loudly declare prayers and charismatic worship without any structure or guidance. Pastor Ponleu goes to the stage at the end of the prayer and worship time by declaring, “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!” in unison with the congregation. A leader or worship team member then leads in prayer and Scripture readings before singing three or four worship songs. Scripture readings are used during worship, receiving offerings, and other parts of the service. Various leaders are active during the service while the head pastor sits near the front of the church. Some guests receive invitations to preach each year; however, Pastor Ponleu preaches most Sunday services. Worship services conclude with a final worship song for a personal response to the sermon, prayer by the head pastor, announcements from a church leader, and a closing prayer.

Life Church has made some adjustments to its weekly ministry schedule due to COVID-19 in Phnom Penh. However, the overall attendance has remained nearly the same. The church has transitioned to multiple morning services to follow social

distancing guidelines with services at 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM. A visit to the church on November 24, 2019, had 111 individuals in attendance, while a visit on November 22, 2020, had sixty-four individuals during the 8:00 AM service and a similar amount during the 10:00 AM service.

Table 11. Interviewee Information from Life Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Kun Rithy	68	Male	Widowed 5 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Staff Pastor	1996	Assistant Pastor
Huot Malis	45	Female	Single	Master of Arts	Organization Staff Member	1993	Church Leader
Nak Ponleu	55	Male	Married 2 Children	Master of Arts	Head Pastor	1991	Head Pastor
Dom Chantrea	28	Female	Single	Bachelor of Arts	Secretary	2006	Worship Team



Figure 11. Surrounding Area at Praise Church

Praise Church's General Information

A Singaporean missionary planted Praise Church in 1999. The missionary served as the head pastor until 2005 when another Singaporean missionary began leading the church. The initial strategic process included discipling believers, training potential leaders, and installing a Khmer pastor. During the tenure of the second missionary, a Khmer leader was appointed as head pastor in 2009. After renting facilities on the south side of Phnom Penh, the church moved to its current location in 2018. The congregation purchased the facility without missionary support by agreeing to take a bank loan.

Pastor Mon Bopha became a Christian while she was a teenager and received training from a Singaporean missionary. Shortly after her baptism, she served in various ministries for a year and then started serving part-time at the church. Although Pastor Bopha did not attend a Bible school in Cambodia,¹⁷ she received training through in-house instruction and mentoring from the missionary. Her ministry emphasis for the following years was on discipleship and closely working with small groups. At age twenty, she accepted leadership responsibility from Singaporean missionaries as the church's first Khmer pastor.

Much of the congregation is under age forty, including families with children and single young adults. There is a strong emphasis on everyone serving in ministry roles such as preaching, teaching, and leading small groups. The congregation maintains relationships with AG churches in Singapore, has great admiration for the missionaries who started the church, and hosts missionaries or pastors from Singapore about once a

¹⁷ Pastor Mon Bopha received some ministerial training through classes at a Bible school in Singapore.

year. However, the congregation places significant value on standing alone without missionary assistance. A focus on being reproducible within itself has continually driven the church since Singaporean missionaries handed leadership to the head pastor.

Table 12. Praise Church's Schedule of Ministries

Sunday	AM – Sunday Worship Service PM – Prayer Gathering and Children's Ministries
Thursday	PM – Leadership Group Meeting
Friday	PM – Small Groups and Bible Study Classes
Saturday	AM/PM – Small Groups, Leadership Group Meeting, and Worship Team Meeting
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include small group meetings at homes and Church Development Program for Bible study and discipleship training.

Sunday Services at Praise Church

The Sunday worship service begins at 9:30 AM and concludes by 11:00 AM. Pastor Bopha opens each service and usually leads the congregation in prayer and other parts of the service. Worship consists of about four songs and is followed by receiving offerings, announcements, and the sermon. Pastor Bopha believes in having various people preach, and she regularly includes the church leadership and outside guests on the preaching schedule.

The church has changed some methods due to COVID-19 in Phnom Penh. Because the church has a strong focus on small groups, they use small groups to meet at various times during the weekend in place of a regular Sunday service. A visit to the church on December 1, 2019, had thirty-one in attendance, while a visit on November 15, 2020, had eight in attendance due to meeting in multiple locations. The church suspended some ministries and gatherings, yet small group ministry continues as the primary focus with most congregants participating.

Table 13. Interviewee Information from Praise Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Mon Bopha	30	Female	Married 0 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Head Pastor and Business Staff Member	2005	Head Pastor
Sut Veasna	38	Male	Married 0 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Organization Staff Member	2000	Mission Leader
Lan Phearun	34	Male	Married 2 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Business Staff Member	2004	Worship Leader
Tep Neary	37	Female	Married 2 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Accountant	2005	Prayer Leader



Figure 12. Surrounding Area at Grace Church

Grace Church's General Information

Grace Church was started by missionaries from South Korea in 1996. The church rented a facility before moving to its current location in 2009. The Korean missionaries provided financial support for the church to purchase its facility in the central part of

Phnom Penh. Shortly after the church moved, the missionaries appointed Khmer leadership to oversee the church and its ministries.

Pastor Ti Samnang became a Christian in his mid-twenties and received training from Korean missionaries. In addition to mentoring at the church, he studied for two years at CBI. The missionaries appointed him as the church's first Khmer head pastor in 2010, and he has served on the AGC executive committee. Furthermore, Pastor Samnang remains active with responsibilities outside his church, including a partnership with church plants in the northeastern provinces of Cambodia.

The congregation includes youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, and some elderly, with over half of the attendees under forty years of age. Regular involvement, participation, and commitment to the church and its ministries are significant aspects of the congregation. A morning prayer gathering is held Monday through Saturday at 5:00 AM and has a regular attendance of about twenty individuals. The church has three worship services held on Sunday morning, Wednesday evening, and Friday evening, in addition to other weekly gatherings for small groups and Bible study. The church maintains relationships with Korean missionaries, and some of them attend worship services; however, church ministries are led by the head pastor and other church leaders. Congregants acknowledge their congregation's ability to stand on their own and are thankful for the missionaries who led the church during its first decade.

Table 14. Grace Church's Schedule of Ministries

Sunday	AM – Sunday Worship Service AM – Small Groups and Bible Study
Monday to Saturday	AM – Prayer Gathering
Monday	AM/PM – Training and Classes for Leaders from Provinces
Tuesday	AM – Small Group for Wives of Leaders
Wednesday	PM – Worship Service
Thursday	AM/PM – Visitation Ministry
Friday	PM – Worship Service
Saturday	PM – Ministry Groups and Bible Study
Various	Other ministries scheduled periodically include Bible study classes.

Sunday Services at Grace Church

The Sunday morning service begins at 8:30 AM and lasts approximately one hour and forty-five minutes. A well-structured liturgy begins with an opening prayer led by a worship team member, followed by four songs. After the worship time, Pastor Samnang reads a Scripture passage and then leads the congregation in singing the Doxology and reciting the Nicene Creed. The service continues with an additional worship song, prayer led by a church leader, and receiving offerings. When the pastor reads the sermon text, the congregation stands for prayer and declares, “The Lord! The Lord! The Lord!” followed by the pastor preaching his sermon. The service concludes with a final worship song and the congregation praying the Lord’s Prayer from Matthew 6 in unison. Although numerous individuals are involved in each service, Pastor Samnang does most of the preaching.

The church has experienced a slight decrease in attendance due to COVID-19. A visit to the church on December 8, 2019, had eighty-three individuals, while another visit on January 10, 2021, had sixty-five individuals. Some of the church’s ministries have changed, yet most of the services and gatherings have continued as regularly planned.

Table 15. Interviewee Information from Grace Church

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation(s)</i>	<i>Christian Since</i>	<i>Church Role</i>
Ti Samnang	47	Male	Married 3 Children	Master of Divinity	Head Pastor	1999	Head Pastor
Lay Rathanak	28	Male	Married 2 Children	Bachelor of Arts	Teacher	2009	Admin. Committee
Yan Kolab	29	Female	Married 0 Children	Grade 7	Vendor	2010	Church Member
Hin Makara	46	Female	Married 4 Children	High School	Organization Staff Member	1999	Women's Ministries

Head Pastor and Missionary Summary of the Churches

All six head pastors have served as the primary church leader for over ten years. There has been only one head pastor transition at the sites (Peace Church), while five of the six are the original Khmer head pastor at their respective churches. Two head pastors are the only Khmer pastor in the church's history because missionaries did not serve in a pastoral leadership role. As for the other pastors, missionaries appointed three, while Peace Church's pastor began serving after other Khmer pastors. Moreover, four of the six head pastors have served on the AGC executive committee.

Missionary influence and relationships are part of the history at each site. Countries directly connected to the churches through either mentoring or providing financial support for land/buildings include Canada, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States. Faith Church and Hope Church are unique because they began through Khmer leadership rather than missionary leadership. However, both pastors received training from missionaries who planted Peace Church and Life Church, respectively. Peace Church, Life Church, Praise Church, and Grace Church have great admiration for their founding missionaries and remain in cordial communication with them.

Table 16. Biographical Details About the Head Pastor at Each Church

<i>Head Pastor</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Original Khmer Pastor</i>	<i>Studied at a Bible School in Cambodia</i>	<i>Year Pastor Became a Christian</i>	<i>Year Became Head Pastor</i>	<i>Year Church Began Meeting</i>
Heng Dara	57	Male	Yes	Yes	1997	1999	1999
Phan Sokha	45	Male	Yes	Yes	1993	2007	2007
Bun Vithu	36	Male	No ¹⁸	Yes	1998	2007	1996
Nak Ponleu	55	Male	Yes	Yes	1991	1999	1992
Mon Bopha	30	Female	Yes	No	2005	2009	1999
Ti Samnang	47	Male	Yes	Yes	1999	2010	1996

Analysis of Research Site Interviews

Structure and Premise

Conducting the twenty-four research site interviews through a semi-structured approach ensured feasibility in the data collection process. Interview questions emphasized Khmer culture, Khmer Christians as a subculture, leadership development, and discipleship methodologies. Interviewees provided general definitions for cultural areas and more specific information about leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches.

In addition to the four fundamental words used for defining traits among the culture group and subculture group (leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving), themes emerged corresponding to leadership development and discipleship methodologies. The basis for the data analysis and interpretation are the themes and subthemes created during the coding process. Furthermore, two brief life stories are

¹⁸ The current head pastor at Hope Church was the first Khmer head pastor at Peace Church (1997 to 2002) followed by an additional Khmer head pastor (2002 to 2007).

illustrated in the interpretation section to provide additional analysis and expound upon the themes and subthemes from urban Khmer Christian viewpoints. Each life story serves as an example to describe insights and roles within a Khmer Christian subculture.¹⁹

Culture and Subculture Comparison

The four words used for obtaining definitions within the Khmer culture and Khmer Christian subculture are leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving. Each interviewee responded by describing the four words about Khmer culture followed by definitions based on scriptural interpretation. The four words emphasize traits in Khmer culture and their biblical application among urban Khmer Christians.

The most common references describing the traits in Khmer culture typically correlate to power and dominance. Individuals with authority are viewed in an elevated sense due to their roles and are free to act in any way. On the other hand, discipleship and serving have lower values and are associated with common individuals. Frequent references about the traits relate to a high/low standing in society with a distance between leaders and followers.

Khmer Christian perspectives reveal differences from the cultural viewpoint. Leadership and authority are demonstrated more positively, such as leading by example while thinking of others. Discipleship and serving also relate to emulating good examples while doing what is appropriate and necessary. Overall, the traits are interrelated as they tie into the biblical foundation of an urban Khmer Christian group.

¹⁹ Shaw, "Qualitative Social Science Methods," 149.

Similarities appear in the definitions of Khmer culture and Khmer Christian subculture. Leadership definitions include being situated at the front as an example. Discipleship definitions focus on principles related to students applying themselves while remaining devoted to teachers. Authority definitions emphasize individuals who use a leadership position for working purposes. Serving definitions indicate working and helping other individuals. The following tables show the most frequently used and repeated answers from the interviewees' descriptions of the traits.

Table 17. Descriptions of Khmer Culture according to Urban Khmer Christians²⁰

<i>Leadership Traits</i>	<i>Discipleship Traits</i>	<i>Authority Traits</i>	<i>Serving Traits</i>
Ability	Exams	Above Everything	Different from Christians
Above Others	Following the Teacher	Big Person	Doing for Those in Authority
Age is Important	Knowledge	Boss	Doing Work to Receive Something
Boss	Learning	Different from Christians	Helping
Different from Christians	Levels of Classes	Doing Whatever You Want to Do	Low People
Doing Whatever You Want to Do	Obedience	Forceful	People Do Not Enjoy Serving
Instilling Fear	Research	Giving Orders and Commands	Role in Society
Knowledge	Respect for Teachers	Leader	Serving Big People
People Follow	Students are Fearful of Teachers	Other People are Below	Small People
People Respect	Studying	Power	Working
Power	Submission	Self	
Self	Teachers are Always Right	Working	

²⁰ The twelve most common responses about Khmer culture definitions overlapping the four areas include the following traits: above everything/everyone, big people, boss, different from Christians, doing whatever you want to do, fear, following, knowledge, power, respect, self, and working.

Table 18. Descriptions with a Biblical Perspective according to Urban Khmer Christians²¹

<i>Leadership Traits</i>	<i>Discipleship Traits</i>	<i>Authority Traits</i>	<i>Serving Traits</i>
Being an Example	Applying	For Believers	Caring
Encouraging	Example from Teachers and Others	Given by God	Casting Off Things
Example of Christ	Following	Leadership in the Church	Example of Christ
Helping	From Teacher to Student	Leading	Following
Leading by the Right Way	Learning	Not for Self	From the Heart
Leading People to Know God	Making Disciples	Over Evil Spirits	Helping
Listening to God's Direction	Obedience	Power and Empowerment	Humility
Love	Studying	Prayer for the Sick	Love
Making Disciples	Submission	Relationship with God	Serving God
Serving	Walking and Doing Accordingly	Teaching/Preaching	Serving the Church
Teaching/Preaching		Through the Holy Spirit	Submission
		Working/Doing	Walking and Doing Accordingly

Table 19. Matching Descriptions about Khmer Culture and Khmer Christian Subculture

Leadership Traits	Doing, Example, and Front Position
Discipleship Traits	Learning, Obedience, Studying, and Submission
Authority Traits	Leading and Working
Serving Traits	Doing, Helping, and Working

Primary Themes from Data

Cultural questions opened each interview, while most of the discussion focused on leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban churches. Analyzing the cultural definitions alongside leadership and discipleship depictions allows for comparisons by directing attention toward patterns in the data.²² Final interpretations of

²¹ The ten most common responses about Khmer Christian subculture definitions overlapping the four areas include the following traits: examples from others, the example of Christ, following, helping, love, making disciples, serving, submission, teaching/preaching, and walking/doing accordingly.

²² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 198.

the data provide further explication through cross-pollination of definitions and depictions.

Six primary themes, emerging from coding interview data, create the foundation for analysis and interpretation. The leadership development themes comprise leadership selection, leadership programs, and roles to assist. The discipleship methodology themes are discipleship foundations, discipleship programs, and roles to assist. In addition to the six primary themes, eighteen subthemes are used, with three subthemes for each primary theme.

The subthemes about leadership development containing the most content focus on training, service, and administration. These areas provide the foundation for the urban AGC churches and their approaches regarding leadership implementation and continuance. As for the subthemes about discipleship methodologies, subthemes containing a vast amount of data include studying/learning, participation, and administration. These areas relate to the churches' involvement with ongoing discipleship processes and overseeing individuals. Figure 13 provides a flowchart representing the primary themes and subthemes from the research site interview data.

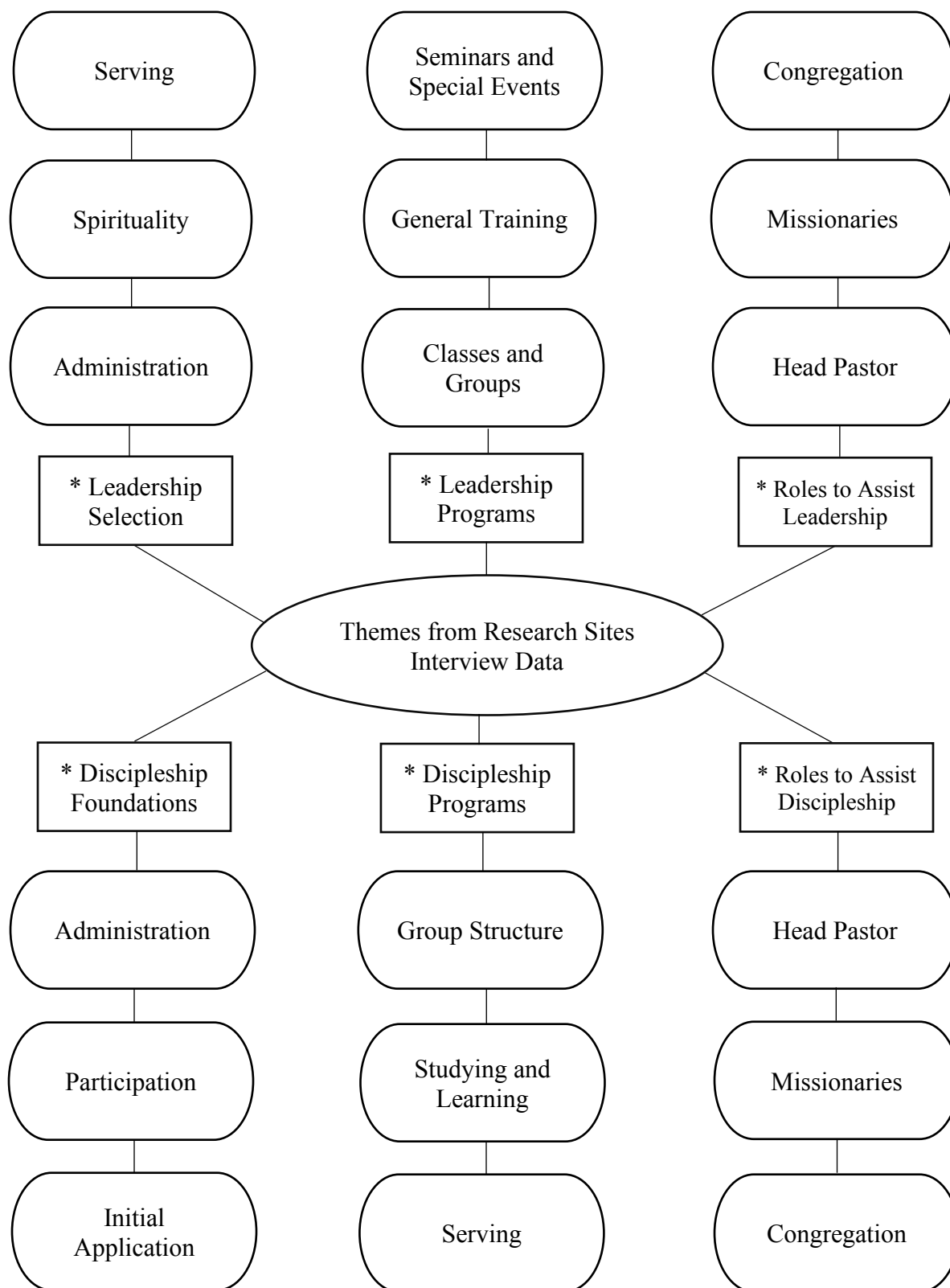


Figure 13. Themes and Subthemes from the Research Sites

* Denotes a Primary Theme

Leadership Selection

Selecting urban AGC church leaders includes evaluation of spiritual character and ability to serve faithfully. A balanced approach of individuals maintaining faith while remaining active contributes to selecting potential leaders in the Fellowship's urban churches. Faith and works in Christ demonstrate potential and assist in the process for current leaders to discuss the prospective selection.²³ Biblical knowledge and adequate training from classes and seminars also contribute to the process.

Urban AGC head pastors are a significant aspect of overseeing and teaching church leaders, especially new leaders. The head pastor's direct involvement situates a congregation for preparing its church leaders through a relationship with the primary leader. Partnership through leading and teaching allows the head pastor and current leaders to watch for individuals who are productive and can apply the instruction they receive.²⁴ Moreover, head pastors' experience extends into their ministerial vision producing encouragement for future leaders who will model Christian character and serve faithfully.

Leadership Programs

Training leaders in urban settings occurs through on-site classes, meetings with the head pastor and other church leaders, and special seminar courses. Regardless of the approach, regularly scheduled times for meetings and training are beneficial by allowing leaders and potential leaders opportunities for growth and advancement.²⁵ Fellowship in

²³ Kun Rithy, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 27, 2019.

²⁴ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 18, 2019.

²⁵ Ros Kunthea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 14, 2019.

group training sessions also allows individuals to cultivate relationships while continually developing their leadership abilities in specific ministries.

Aside from opportunities to meet and study in churches, possibilities exist for leadership training in other settings. Large-scale Christian seminars have become common in Phnom Penh and can be open to various fellowships, denominations, and mission groups. Because the AG has Bible schools such as CBI and CSM, formal ministerial training is possible. If individuals have a genuine calling from God to serve in full-time ministry, they can be encouraged to study at Bible school for well-structured leadership training.²⁶

Informal gatherings combined with casual discussions and times for encouragement can provide a strong foundation in the development process. These approaches can be directed both inside and outside churches along with a hands-on application. Furthermore, quality time while being intentional through fellowship can allow head pastors and experienced leaders to show positive examples in ministry while guiding individuals step by step.²⁷

Roles to Assist Leadership Development

Head pastors have a significant role in urban AGC churches to train and oversee leadership development. Some are proactive by planning leadership meetings at the beginning of the year to create a structured theme for vision, preaching series, and

²⁶ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 18, 2019.

²⁷ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

cultivating relationships.²⁸ Others have informal methods such as joining together in fellowship, having meals with church leaders, and focusing on basic Bible study and prayer.²⁹ Both structured and casual gatherings allow the head pastors to remain active in their role while engaging in their church's leadership development process.

Missionaries and congregants also have significant roles as urban AGC leaders receive training at their respective churches. Many churches place a high value on missionaries assisting through teaching and training due to their ministry experience. Furthermore, they can develop a partnership with local AGC congregations in Phnom Penh to encourage and empower head pastors in their roles.³⁰ Congregants can also be part of the leadership development process as they provide additional support to church leaders through application, responsibility, and helping in various ministries.³¹

Discipleship Foundations

Teaching and overseeing disciples at urban AGC churches typically involves head pastors, church leaders, elders, missionaries, and congregants with experience. Instructing believers is viewed as ongoing participation, including opportunities for studying with other individuals. Implementation can occur within urban AGC churches from an individual's conversion and continually provide occasions for meeting together according to levels and ages.³²

²⁸ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

²⁹ Lay Rathanak, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

³⁰ Huot Malis, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 26, 2021.

³¹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 27, 2021.

³² Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

Fellowship is another significant feature of discipleship ministries in urban AGC churches. New congregants who have not yet studied the Bible can meet together for discussion and personal testimonies, while individuals who have more understanding can incorporate fellowship and studying the Bible.³³ In addition to being part of discipleship groups or classes, encouragement within the congregation provides the necessary support and assistance for individual growth.

Discipleship Programs

Having a group structure provides a fundamental component within urban AGC discipleship ministries. Lessons, classes, and levels provide an arrangement for disciples of varying faith and experience to adequately learn, grow, and apply. Studying according to groups allows head pastors and church leaders to have valuable encounters with believers while patiently and methodically teaching them.³⁴

Studying and learning in group settings situates urban AGC churches' opportunities to teach specific areas such as Biblical studies, doctrine, and the life of Christ. Biblical teaching relates to Khmer Christians as they encounter real-life experiences, and it enables receiving practical guidance for application.³⁵ Regarding the fundamental beliefs of the AG, understanding doctrine through group studies can assist disciples as they comprehend more about God's character and attributes.³⁶ The concept of

³³ Hin Makara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 6, 2021.

³⁴ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

³⁵ Huot Malis, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 26, 2021.

³⁶ Son Phally, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 6, 2019.

emulating examples is also emphasized through groups and lessons as individuals learn about the life of Christ.

Urban AGC churches view personal application and Christian service as facets extending beyond classroom studies as congregants receive training. Intentional classes directed toward biblical studies and Christ's example equip individuals for ministry activities, including evangelism and serving in the discipleship process with others.³⁷ Progression of the classes toward Christian service and activities enables individuals to remain part of the congregation while receiving experience.³⁸

Roles to Assist Discipleship

The head pastor is regarded as a catalyst for urban AGC discipleship ministries through teaching, encouraging, and leading. Although some head pastors are not directly involved in teaching and mentoring, they still have a significant role as they inspire, cast vision, motivate, and celebrate with individuals growing in their faith.³⁹ Moreover, their influence on other church leaders allows the church's leadership structure to engage in the discipleship process as various individuals serve and make disciples.⁴⁰

Missionary relationships among urban AGC churches can provide valuable partnerships in discipleship ministries. Just as the missionary has a significant role in discipleship at the beginning of planting churches, they can continually interact by

³⁷ Kun Rithy, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 27, 2019.

³⁸ Chon Kanya, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 23, 2019.

³⁹ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

⁴⁰ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

advising, teaching, encouraging, and challenging congregations.⁴¹ Urban AGC churches receiving discipleship training from their founding missionaries can continue the progression due to head pastors, church leaders, and members having a principal understanding of the process. These fundamentals empower congregants to support new believers, assist in church activities, and provide necessary encouragement.⁴²

Interpretation of Research Site Interviews

Interview and Participant Observation Process

Interacting with interviewees at the research sites provided beneficial opportunities for learning and building relationships. Reading through field notes and organizing data caused me to have a new appreciation for individuals who survived hardships in Cambodia during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Their lives inspired me through hearing about ministry among the Khmer people, especially leadership development and discipleship methodologies. I left each interview admiring individuals who persevere as first-generation Christians in Cambodia and are passionate about making Christ known throughout their country.

Joining Khmer believers for worship services in Phnom Penh helped me see unique methods at each site. I witnessed great potential in the churches by observing different preferences during a Sunday morning service, hearing quality preaching from head pastors who treasure the Scriptures, and experiencing thankfulness among the congregants. After encountering delays and cancellations due to COVID-19, I understand

⁴¹ Lan Phearun, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

⁴² Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 18, 2019.

firsthand that the value of joining together with urban Khmer Christians every week is not something to take for granted.

Although cultural, leadership, and discipleship questions guided the interviews for collecting data, interviewees spoke openly about their life stories and testimonies. The research sites opened my eyes to see urban Khmer Christians embracing Christ and leading others in ministry. These stories include aspects from the primary themes and subthemes created during coding and personify the progression of a head pastor and layperson who faithfully serve in urban AGC churches.

Life Story of Pastor Nak Ponleu

“Why did God help me and choose me?” is a heartfelt question from a pastor after surviving the horrors of the Cambodian Civil War, the Khmer Rouge, and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. His life was on a career path; however, he believed in Christ and started a different journey. Calling and Christian service became his new motivations after receiving salvation in 1992 and leadership training at Bible school from 1995 to 1997.⁴³

Personal influence and inspiration came from the missionary who selected him and spent years mentoring him for pastoral ministry. Later, realizing that the trials he had endured while a mere young person had prepared him for future service, he became thankful for the challenges and helped others understand the value of serving through difficulties. The divine calling of ministry continues to guide his decisions and actions despite knowing firsthand about reoccurring issues and people leaving the congregation.

⁴³ Chapter 5 discusses calling and Christian service.

Maintaining a core of helpful leaders, including men and women who are faithful and responsible, provides the necessary foundation for their congregation. Personal gatherings each week with the church's leaders provide fellowship, accountability, and a vision for the future. His role as the spiritual shepherd situates him to watch over, advise, and delegate to the other leaders. The men and women who serve with him in ministry see faith, character, and calling as the main elements of Christian leadership in an urban church.

The congregation hears passionate sermons each week about the importance of vision and responsibility. Placing a priority on discipleship ministries, Pastor Nak Ponleu believes a church should close if discipleship does not exist. This declaration connects with the congregation's understanding of faith, baptism, and personal testimony as they experience growth in Christ and involvement in service.

Life Story of Tep Neary

"I had a desire to grow, and I prayed for a church so I could have a pastor." This prayer was offered by a Khmer girl in her early twenties while deciding to follow Christ. After receiving water baptism in 2006, she quickly realized new passions in her life: prayer, serving, and studying the Bible. Her life dramatically changed from a pervasive Buddhist background overshadowing her past as she embraced a new life.

Her missionary/pastor saw the change and evident growth demonstrated as she attended weekly services. The believers agreed to have a special prayer by placing their hands on her and then prayed over her for future service and ministry in the congregation. From then onward, she understood the value of having faith, remaining faithful, and growing through life-long learning. Her church family provided the encouragement and

assistance she needed throughout the journey of Christian service. By staying active and applying instruction from church leaders, she received more ministry responsibilities.

Deriving influence and inspiration from her Christian family members, she faithfully serves and leads the congregation's prayer ministry. Although she places a high value on remaining active in Christian service, there is a surpassing appreciation for the call to ministry coming from God. This awareness has created an understanding of all believers having spiritual gifts to use in their place of worship while experiencing growth through service.

Despite challenges encountered throughout her spiritual journey, she understands that her early years as a believer shaped a foundation through active involvement with the congregation. Her experiences have led to maturity and enables continual ministry regardless of circumstances. Moreover, the close association with other believers through small group ministries provides necessary unity within their numbers and serves as the means for outward evangelism.

Overview of Data Interpretation

Definitions of Khmer culture and Khmer Christian subculture have overlapping similarities. Interpreting the descriptions is based upon the most commonly repeated Khmer words, concepts, and themes taken from the data. Unique aspects about both the culture and subculture definitions are explained and contrasted within the interpretations. Special attention is given to the leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving traits within the Khmer Christian subculture. Table 20 shows significant words rarely mentioned from definitions having a Christian perspective.

In addition to culture and subculture descriptions, the data interpretation describing each of the six primary themes has three subthemes. Leadership selection data include administration, spirituality, and service. Leadership program data include classes and groups, general training, and seminars/special events. Roles to assist leadership data include head pastor, missionaries, and congregation. Discipleship foundations' data include administration, participation, and initial application. Discipleship programs data include group structure, studying and learning, and serving. Roles to assist discipleship data include head pastor, missionaries, and congregation.

Khmer Culture and Khmer Christian Subculture

Leadership Traits

Khmer culture definitions about leadership include three principal pairings: power/authority, fear/respect, and doing/orders. Interviewees described how Khmer leadership functions by frequently mentioning all three pairings. The areas cohesively exist by displaying power and authority for others to see, causing fear requiring respect, and doing whatever they want while issuing orders for others to follow. Definitions from the interviewees repeatedly described leadership patterns as demonstrative authority and administration while possessing an imposing persona other individuals desire to have.⁴⁴ The elevated position situates a leader as an all-encompassing individual who has multifaceted superiority. Regardless of formal academic achievements by Khmer leaders, those positioned below the leaders acknowledge wisdom and knowledge by being able to attain and maintain leadership. Numerous references to *nek tom*, meaning “a big person

⁴⁴ Sut Veasna, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

with influence,” depict leadership as an elevated eminence prominently removed from individuals who merely follow leaders.

Khmer Christian subculture definitions about leadership include actions through leading, serving, and relating to example. The three areas repeated by interviewees explain leadership in urban church settings. Because the characteristics relate to what a leader does, this appears to overshadow internal qualities. Descriptions signify church leaders concentrating on their work, serving through leadership, and providing an example while modeling Christ’s example. Although interviewees described Christian leaders as being in front, they contrast cultural leadership perceptions due to not forcing others and leading by example while serving in the congregation.⁴⁵

References to leaders being an example from the front were mentioned about Khmer culture and Khmer Christian subculture. In addition to those areas, most words describe leadership through doing and working. Interviewees provided definitions about leadership, including inside and outside churches, conveying a focus on actions rather than characteristics comprising a leader’s personal qualities. The overall portrayal includes an external leadership premise rather than an internal temperament.

Discipleship Traits

The foundation for discipleship from a Khmer culture point of view includes three pairings from the interview data: learning/studying, following/doing according to the teacher, and obedience/respect. Repeated descriptions refer to the relationship between teachers and students. Similar to leadership traits, discipleship shows a distinct separation

⁴⁵ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

between those who have authority and those who must follow, such as teachers over students. Frequent references to listening, obeying, following, and even loving the teacher, are mentioned.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the concept of doing according to leaders' words, even if the leader is wrong, depicts the cultural standard of understanding one's role and acknowledging superiority.⁴⁷

Answers about the Khmer Christian subculture emphasize similar expectations as Christians receive discipleship through studying, learning, obedience, following, and applying. Frequently repeated responses correlate with studying and learning continually without a fixed amount of time.⁴⁸ Other references to activities, including making disciples, also indicate the necessity for ongoing studies.⁴⁹ However, there are few definitions regarding discipleship multiplication due to accenting studying, obeying, and following.

Regarding all the traits, discipleship had the most frequent interrelation of repeated answers with importance on individuals studying and learning lessons from teachers while following and showing obedience. The concept of examples also indicates Khmer students following their teachers and Christians following church leaders.⁵⁰ One distinction is the fear and distance associated with Khmer culture. While this is not

⁴⁶ Kun Rithy, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 27, 2019.

⁴⁷ Lan Phearun, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

⁴⁸ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2021.

⁴⁹ Vong Sophea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 22, 2019.

⁵⁰ Son Phally, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 6, 2019.

present in definitions about subculture traits, there is still strong regard for Khmer Christians following and obeying church leaders possessing authority.

Authority Traits

Classifications about authority in Khmer culture are similar to words and responses describing leadership. The primary focus is about doing, while references to a commanding persona also portray the leader's mannerisms. As previously mentioned, people with authority are viewed as big, high, distinct, and focused on themselves rather than others.⁵¹ An outward demonstration allows people to see a leader's authoritative status. Moreover, individuals with authority display their actions by forcing and ordering the individuals situated below themselves.⁵²

Although Khmer Christian authoritative traits include definitions about working, the most common response connects to God's authority. Interviewees contrast authority in their culture with authority from God because individuals can receive it for spiritual purposes in their particular churches, not for personal usage.⁵³ Multiple answers have negative terminology indicating the lack of force or selfishness seen in authoritative depictions in Khmer culture.

Comparing authority within Khmer culture and Khmer Christian subculture demonstrates uniqueness on both sides. An outward authoritative display in Khmer culture is distinct from Christian leaders who use authority to minister within a

⁵¹ Seang Chenda, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 24, 2019.

⁵² See Jackson Wu, *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), for insights into relationships, hierarchies, and order.

⁵³ Seang Chenda, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 24, 2019.

congregation. Acknowledging the cultural depiction of using force, while possessing the freedom to act in any way, differs from those upholding biblical principles based upon God-given authority for unifying people.⁵⁴

Serving Traits

Definitions about serving in Khmer culture typically refer to an individual working at a job or performing tasks. However, many descriptions portray a negative connotation of the term. Serving is associated with individuals possessing a lower role in society and requires them to follow commands from people with higher status. There are few references with positive indications, such as helping others and gaining experience for work purposes.

Khmer Christian accounts about serving focus on actions from the heart while serving God and the Church. Trait definitions relating to an individual's heart are significant in the Khmer language. Many Khmer words about emotions and feelings contain the word “*jett*” (heart) explaining deep-rooted expressions and sentiments.⁵⁵ Khmer Christian subculture serving traits had the most references from the interview data about heart-connected words using *ah bpee jett*, meaning “to serve from one's whole heart.” Individuals who serve indicate characteristics such as being lovingly devoted to God, possessing spiritual gifts, and faithfully ministering in their congregation.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ros Kunthea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 14, 2019.

⁵⁵ Some examples of emotions and feelings directly related to “*jett*” (heart) include “*sabay jett*” (happy heart), “*brooey jett*” (sad heart), “*jett laor*” (good-hearted), “*kung jett*” (angry heart), and “*jett mayta*” (compassionate heart). Khmer people commonly use the phrase “*meeun jett*” (having heart) to describe someone who can do something in a good way.

⁵⁶ Seng Tola, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 5, 2019.

Khmer culture and the Khmer Christian subculture differ in serving due to a cultural emphasis on working and doing necessary tasks, especially for individuals following commands or instructions. Additionally, though serving may be viewed negatively in Khmer culture, Khmer Christians view it as a necessary and valuable function within the churches. Serving from the heart reveals a combination of one's character with actions assisting people and honoring God.

Summary of Leadership, Discipleship, Authority, and Serving Traits

Traits of the four areas show Khmer culture emphasizes individuals and their standing in society, including leaders, teachers, students, and people in general. Interviewees revealed insights about people acting through authority while fixating on themselves rather than others. Work within leadership signifies ability complementing an outward portrayal of authoritative standing. Repeated words such as “*nek tom*” (big person) or “*may*” (chief or head) differentiate between those with authority and those under authority. Individuals obeying, following, and serving people in leadership are seen as “*menew dteeup*” (low people) or “*menew toich*” (small people). The potential to demonstrate power whenever necessary, for reasons of self or merely for authoritative display, is clearly understood by those situated under someone's authority. Overall, Khmer leaders can exemplify these patterns due to their elevated status.

The Khmer Christian subculture responses emphasize doing and working. Interviewees described how Christians, including church leaders and congregants, focus on actions within their lives and ministries. Although initial definitions may have lacked detailed aspects, interviewees indicated broader interpretations at other times during the interviews illustrating leadership development or discipleship methodologies. However,

most interviewees spoke of the traits using words and phrases about outward action instead of internal qualities. Table 20 below includes descriptions rarely mentioned about Khmer Christian leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving.

Table 20. Traits Rarely Mentioned in Khmer Christian Descriptions

<i>Leadership Traits</i>	<i>Discipleship Traits</i>	<i>Authority Traits</i>	<i>Serving Traits</i>
Calling	Change	Calling	Character
Humility	Character	Correction	Growth
Learning	Mentoring	Humility	Leadership
Submission	Sacrifice	Influence	Volunteering

Leadership Selection

Administration

Most of the administration in the leadership selection process is about overseeing and training potential leaders. Head pastors serve as the primary authoritative figures by administering initial development and delegating responsibilities to other church leaders. However, few interviewees made any reference to an actual selection process.⁵⁷ This scenario indicates the possibility of both church leaders and congregants recognizing individuals serving and recommending them for leadership positions.

Spirituality and Service

A combination of both internal and external qualities describes the requirements for serving as a church leader. The most common response relates to an individual's faith in God followed closely by Christian service. Interviewees made frequent references to faith and character as necessary spiritual components in addition to service and

⁵⁷ Hok Nimol, Kun Rithy, and Lay Rathanak mentioned the possibilities of specific church leaders choosing individuals for leadership positions. Answers include current church leaders, elders, leadership teams, head pastors, or missionaries as those involved in the selection process.

faithfulness as important facets of an individual's ministry. Generally, demonstrating genuine faith and serving in ministry appear as the initial qualification for potential church leaders.⁵⁸

Leadership Programs

Classes/Groups and General Training

Training church leaders through classes and group studies are the most common practice at the six sites. Group gatherings allow for fellowship, encouragement, and receiving training about the Bible, theology, and leadership principles. Although the Bible is the primary training tool, some churches use translated materials or their teaching resources.⁵⁹

Seminars/Special Events

Due to religious freedom and Christian growth in Cambodia, seminars have become more common since the early 2000s. Although some annual conferences are in Phnom Penh, most leadership training occurs within each site. Some sites conduct smaller seminars for their congregation with a specific theme. Interviewees spoke favorably about the sites conducting in-church development for raising their leaders, training fellow congregants together, and helping individuals apply lessons in their church setting.⁶⁰ Furthermore, because the local church setting is the most beneficial

⁵⁸ Six interviewees mentioned selecting leaders with Bible knowledge. Five of these six interviewees also indicate a combination of character and service for selecting leaders, whereas one interviewee gave answers only about character.

⁵⁹ Examples of the curriculum include the Christian Life Program, Church Development Program, Intentional Moves, and Theological Education by Extension.

⁶⁰ Some interviewees stated their congregation does not participate in outside training, while others warned of potential dangers. Van Narith described how a seminar in a different Asian country asked

training location and the head pastor is the leading teacher/trainer, few interviewees discussed the potential for individuals studying at a Bible school.⁶¹

Roles to Assist Leadership

Head Pastor and Missionaries

The head pastor is highly esteemed for his or her role in leadership development by assisting current and potential leaders. Emphases from the data include teaching, planning, meeting, encouraging, and overseeing others. The missionary's role is similar to the head pastor's role and includes a partnership with the church leadership while providing a good example for others to follow. Missionaries are also valued for their ministerial experience and ability to train church leaders.

Congregation

Congregants are acknowledged for their role in the process due to coming together for services and events, helping and encouraging those who receive training, and applying what they hear from leaders. Their general role is following those who have authority within the congregation. However, there are references to congregants having the responsibility to become leaders themselves.⁶²

Khmer leaders to implement drastic changes. Yen Seyha mentioned seminars outside the local church are good, but leaders must be careful about the possibility of false doctrine.

⁶¹ One of the leadership development questions was about training programs outside churches. Pastor Heng Dara and Vong Sophea specifically mentioned studying at a Bible school. Other interviewees described seminars, conferences, general leadership training, and non-ministerial courses. Ten interviewees who previously studied at a Bible school in Cambodia or abroad did not mention Bible school training. Some answers about outside training programs redirected the discussion to emphasize local, in-church leadership development rather than programs outside churches.

⁶² The interviewees at Praise Church stressed the importance of congregants becoming church leaders.

Discipleship Foundations

Administration

Although head pastors oversee the administration of leadership development, there are various individuals involved in discipleship administration. Nearly half of the interviewees indicated teaching and training from others.⁶³ Church leaders are still involved in the overall process, yet there is an emphasis on congregants taking responsibility to teach and assist new believers.

Participation and Initial Application

Foundations for initial teaching and training vary by the site's preference. Regardless of churches favoring general Bible studies or a set curriculum, group studies are the standard approach within discipleship ministries rather than one-on-one mentoring.⁶⁴ Interviewees acknowledge the discipleship process should start after conversion; however, some direct their attention toward duration rather than continual studies.⁶⁵ Group settings create a positive environment for building relationships, learning from one another, providing encouragement, and preparing for service.

⁶³ Eleven of the twenty-four interviewees did not mention pastors when asked the question, "Who should teach disciples?" Answers for teaching disciples include other church leaders, elders, congregants with experience, and missionaries.

⁶⁴ Sut Veasna and Pastor Ti Samnang made the only allusions to one-on-one discipleship training. Other specific approaches for discipleship groups include starting with the Book of Genesis (Pastor Phan Sokha), teaching about water baptism (Pastor Nak Ponleu), Christian Life Program (Dom Chantrea), Church Development Program (Tep Neary), and Theological Education by Extension (Lay Rathanak).

⁶⁵ Six interviewees referred to duration or a fixed timeframe, while eighteen interviewees spoke about continual discipleship training.

Discipleship Programs

Group Structure and Studying/Learning

Group structure was often mentioned as the most suitable method for teaching and training disciples in church settings. Small group focus allows for individuals to study and learn together in addition to promoting fellowship opportunities. Teaching the Bible and doctrine are common means for group lessons and can be taught by church leaders or those who have received similar training.⁶⁶ Seminars and conferences were viewed as potential training approaches if a church chooses to provide additional opportunities outside its congregation. Likewise, Bible school classes were mentioned as a possibility for individuals studying away from their church.⁶⁷

Serving

Emphasizing responsibility and application can direct disciples toward ministry within the congregation. Combining group lessons while introducing serving opportunities creates awareness of needs inside the local church and an outward focus on evangelism and mission. Placing importance on an individual's ministry appears to cause a natural progression toward personal evangelism. As disciples receive training in Bible, doctrine, and serving, individuals are encouraged to apply lessons to those around them.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ While engaging in participant observation at Peace Church, Hok Nimol used the 16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God to teach practical doctrine about the Fellowship.

⁶⁷ Five interviewees mentioned Bible school training as a possibility for disciples.

⁶⁸ When asked about discipleship programs inside and outside the church, several interviewees described evangelism and mission as ways the congregation can serve.

Roles to Assist Discipleship

Head Pastor and Missionaries

Even though various church leaders can be involved in localized discipleship efforts, the head pastor is still viewed as the primary leader. The head pastor's role in discipleship is summarized by a triad of responsibilities: teaching, encouraging, and overseeing. Their involvement situates them to monitor both the progression of disciples and individuals who assist with teaching and training programs. Additionally, missionaries are acknowledged to have a similar role through their partnership at urban churches. Their involvement builds relationships with leaders and congregants all the while supporting the head pastor's role.⁶⁹

Congregation

Interviewees described the role of congregants in the discipleship process by helping and being part of their local church. The most mentioned include assisting evangelism, making disciples, and participating in the weekly services. Congregants supporting the head pastor, church leaders, and congregation provide valuable appreciation and encouragement in the church's ministerial efforts. Once again, this emphasizes individuals being active and doing ministry as a response to their involvement.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ References to missionaries supporting urban AGC churches suggest assisting the head pastor, supplying discipleship resources, and teaching classes rather than providing financial assistance.

⁷⁰ Vong Sophea and Ros Kunthea spoke about having knowledge and wisdom as part of the congregation's role in discipleship. However, other interviewees described doing something specific such as encouraging, evangelism, helping, inviting people to services, and making disciples.

Final Remarks About Cultural Data

Cultural Influences

Khmer culture places a high emphasis on the leader. Individuals with authority are elevated above the rest of society and have the liberty to heighten personal benefits rather than assist others. Those without authority are required to follow, obey, and respect leaders and their authoritative display.

The concept of doing is understood as a common basis for individuals operating in society. Whether it is demonstrating their actions by working at their job, studying at a university, or serving those who possess authority, the Khmer people are required to represent themselves by what they do. Although character traits have value, the concept of doing surpasses internal qualities.

Leadership Development in Urban AGC Churches

Urban AGC head pastors maintain the crucial role of leading congregations and overseeing ministries. Their involvement through teaching and training individuals includes an authoritative function. Although head pastors are highly regarded and maintain authority over congregations, their ministry emphasizes caring and serving rather than the demonstrative leadership commonly seen in the culture.

Because most leadership development occurs through on-site training, urban AGC head pastors supervise the implementation process. Their role of instructing, planning, meeting, encouraging, and overseeing provides the congregation with the necessary stability among current and future leaders. Functioning in the local church environment allows leaders to focus on effective ministry methods within their respective congregations.

Discipleship Methodologies in Urban AGC Churches

Discipleship ministries within urban AGC churches include the head pastor, other church leaders, and congregants. The head pastor oversees the structure, while the ministries function through groups meeting for class studies and fellowship. Although congregants have an active role in the discipleship process, the head pastor supervises while other church leaders assist by teaching.

The notion of doing remains a significant component of urban AGC discipleship ministries. Group-focused discipleship situates individuals in an environment to learn and apply along with other believers. The process enhances the congregation as disciples are interacting with others, studying, receiving encouragement, serving in the congregation, and assisting with evangelism and discipleship.

Conclusion

The AG remains active in local church ministry three decades after its inception in Cambodia. Progression from missionary-led relief and development ministries generated congregations with Khmer pastors who serve the Fellowship in urban and rural settings. Over 200 AGC worship sites currently exist in Cambodia as a testimony based on training leaders and investing in discipleship ministries among the Khmer people.

Urban AGC churches continue to train new leaders and teach disciples through the leadership of head pastors and congregations remaining involved in what they do. Focusing on leadership development and discipleship methodologies remains in the hearts of church leaders and congregants. Their current emphasis through capable leadership and active commitment moves the Fellowship forward from first-generation Khmer Christians to future generations.

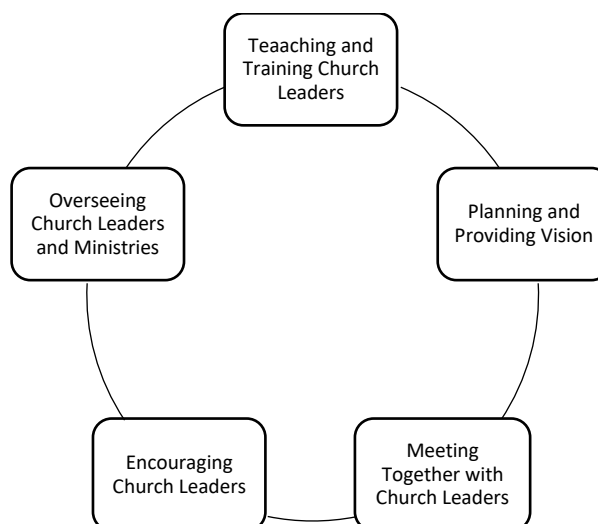


Figure 14. Urban AGC Khmer Head Pastors and Leadership Development

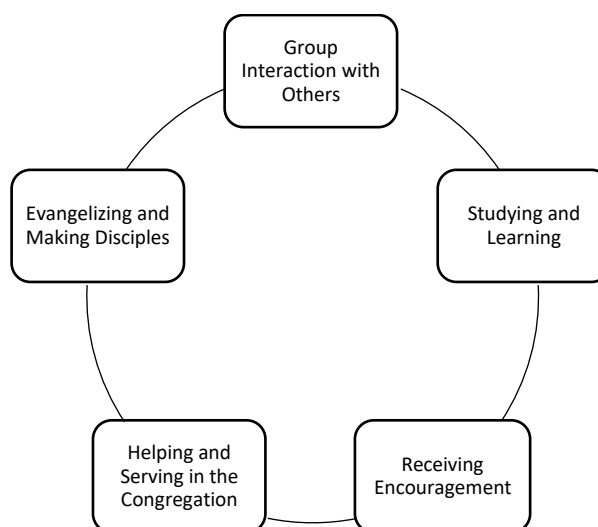


Figure 15. Urban AGC Khmer Christians and Discipleship Methodologies

CHAPTER 4: MISSIONARY INVOLVEMENT AND HEAD PASTOR
IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND
DISCIPLESHIP METHODOLOGIES THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT
URBAN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

“Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it
with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14).

**Christian Education for Leadership and Discipleship
in a Khmer Context**

Saturday Evening in Phnom Penh

I arrive at Faith Church on Saturday evening shortly before 6:00 to observe a discipleship class. Being September, it is the peak of the rainy season in Cambodia. While quickly exiting my truck to cross the muddy, non-paved road, Pastor Heng Dara stands at the entrance. Drenched yet smiling, I raise my hands firmly together with the traditional *sompeah* and ask how he is doing. We enter the building and position two plastic chairs facing each other so we can converse.

Once again, the monsoon rains show they are victorious by delaying the students' arrival. Pastor Dara and I enjoy the opportunity to talk about life and ministry before class begins. Thunder shakes the church structure as pulsing sounds emanate from the tin roof causing a reverberating echo throughout the sanctuary. While waiting for the students, we discuss the recent death of a Bible school student and share thoughts about the student's life and ministry. Eventually, we begin talking about the reason for my

presence: participant observation for field research. The more we speak to one another, the more we must raise our voices due to the incessant rain.

Pastor Dara happily tells me about the discipleship classes at his church. He meets with students every Saturday evening to discuss lessons from a book series. Students take approximately two months to cover the lessons in one book. At the pace of an hour and a half, each session appropriately fits the students and provides a structured flow allowing them to remain engaged in the class without requiring heavy commitment.

One by one, students arrive at the church. Dripping wet and shyly laughing because of their soaked appearance, they remove their shoes at the entrance and greet us with a *sompeah*. We assemble the chairs in a circle and begin the evening session with two worship songs followed by prayer. Pastor Dara explains my role at Cambodia Bible Institute and my ongoing field research in Phnom Penh. The students quietly nod in understanding as we hear the rain increase in quantity and sound.

The lesson begins with a brief introduction about the main points of the evening. Pastor Dara adds personal life stories and illustrations, and each student takes a turn reading a paragraph from each part of the lesson. When they conclude reading a section of multiple paragraphs, it is time to answer questions highlighted in the book. The pastor reads each question as the students answer in unison. They continue this approach by taking notes, reading, and answering questions to complete the lesson.

While listening to the students and their interaction, I observe Pastor Dara's gentle demeanor as he methodically adds examples to illustrate the main points. He has been a pastor for over twenty years and received training from Assemblies of God missionaries who arrived in Cambodia during the 1990s. I quietly think about the

missionaries' influence on his life, family, and congregation in the northern part of Phnom Penh. Moreover, I distinctly remember attending the service Pastor Dara received ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God Cambodia and the honor of praying for him alongside fellow missionaries.

As the rain gradually diminishes, discipleship class ends. Some students prepare their musical instruments for the Sunday worship service, while others gather their belongings and head out into the dark, wet environment. I take extra time speaking with Pastor Dara and thank him for the congregation's initiative to provide discipleship classes. While departing from Faith Church along partially flooded roads, I contemplate the evening class. My mind stirs, thinking about the missionaries' presence and influence among national ministers, both past and present, while training Khmer Christians in the urban setting of Phnom Penh.

Providing Christian Education for Khmer Churches

Throughout my ministry in Cambodia, it has been a privilege to join pastors, elders, and teachers in urban and rural settings as they endeavor to train leaders and disciple believers. Missionary involvement has maintained a role in local churches by teaching and influencing Khmer nationals to pass on what they receive by equipping the current generation and preparing for future generations. Translation efforts, special training classes, and ongoing partnerships pave the way by circulating books and resources providing hands-on interaction in Khmer congregations.

The influx of missionaries during the 1990s facilitated the initial progress of leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Phnom Penh. Urban churches planted by cross-cultural workers from various countries shaped the Khmer Christian

landscape while preparing a foundation for national leaders and disciples to erect future components in a contextualized manner. Cultivating relationships through regular, intentional fellowship strengthened the earliest gatherings ensuring trust among individuals and practicality for building ministerial training networks.

Some of the earliest steps for resourcing Khmer Christians in Phnom Penh during the 1990s included group meetings with basic Bible instruction. Translation projects provided additional resources as missionaries taught and equipped small numbers of Khmer believers. Although leadership and discipleship efforts faced obstacles due to religious prohibitions in the early 1990s, eager nationals continued meeting in secret for worship gatherings and training sessions. Existing Khmer leadership, returning Khmer believers from other countries, and newly arrived foreign missionaries quickly became bridges between Christian education opportunities and recently established worship sites in the capital city.

AG mission efforts through American, Filipino, Korean, and Singaporean missionaries launched new churches and cell groups before creating their national church fellowship. Key components of relief projects and church ministries centered on leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Missionaries emphasized replication and multiplication in Phnom Penh during the first decade, eventually leading to nationals serving as head pastors in local churches.

By incorporating a variety of resources and methods from missionaries, Khmer believers in AGC churches received initial tools for Christian education. Selecting leaders, embracing small group fellowship, utilizing training opportunities, and providing regular encouragement opened new doors of possibilities. As urban churches engaged in

evangelism and Christian service, congregants developed trust and relationships with communities. Khmer believers followed examples from their missionaries and strategically connected with individuals around them through contextualized efforts.

Progression of Urban AGC Leadership and Discipleship through Christian Education

The First Decade – 1990 to 1999

The three decades of AG Christian education directed toward leadership and discipleship represent missionary involvement and implementation through the national church.¹ In the 1990s, missionaries led most ministries. Homes functioned as meeting places for groups and classes among potential leaders and new believers. A strong emphasis on fellowship and relationships shaped the earliest days of ministry as missionaries taught leadership and discipleship principles.

Translation efforts began in the 1990s due to the limited resources in the country. Because of the camaraderie among missionaries, some of the denominations, fellowships, and mission groups shared and exchanged any available curriculum for training leaders and educating disciples. Christian education provided training for both individuals and groups as missionaries used all available means through general Bible studies and detailed classes. Throughout the decade, methodologies and preferences varied and later expanded as more churches emerged in Phnom Penh. Furthermore, the establishment of

¹ Previous research identifies four stages of AG history in Cambodia from 1990 to 2015 rather than examining individual decades. See Joshua J. Lovelace, “The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia: An Analysis of Beginnings, Continual Progression and Enduring Optimism for the Future,” (Master of Arts Thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2016) for additional information about AG history stages in Cambodia.

CBI provided an opportunity for future leaders to receive formal training in preparation for full-time vocational ministry.

The Second Decade – 2000 to 2009

During the early 2000s, Khmer head pastors received more responsibilities as leadership development and discipleship continued in urban AGC churches. Although their hands-on roles changed, missionaries remained in contact through occasional teaching and training. Their participation provided seminars including a wide variety of areas connected to Christian education. Also, the creation of a second AG Bible school in Phnom Penh, Cambodia School of Missions (CSM), allowed current and future leaders to study leadership development and discipleship methodologies with an emphasis on church planting.

While Cambodia experienced social improvements and infrastructure developments, maintaining protocols and government mandates from the previous decade no longer required time and attention. Fewer relief and development projects allowed missionaries and pastors to place a stronger emphasis on Christian education. Leadership and discipleship commenced in new church plants rather than focusing on relief and development.

The Third Decade – 2010 to 2019

As AGC churches started in Phnom Penh and throughout the country, the Fellowship required more organization. Creating six districts geographically linked adjacent provinces and provided opportunities for fellowship, strategy meetings, and ministerial enrichment. The AGC churches in Phnom Penh, Kandal Province, and

Kampong Speu Province joined together as a newly created district. Pastors and leaders within this district now had opportunities to meet on a semi-regular basis for discussion.

One of the most significant aspects of the third decade included a new Christian education curriculum for training individuals. The Christian Life Program began as an opportunity for pastors and lay leaders to study the Christian Life Series books from Global University. Study sites in local churches served as the means for advancing Christian education within each congregation. The program in Phnom Penh provided the Fellowship with classes structured on weekends or during weeknights to balance the work schedules of lay leaders and congregants.

Missionary Involvement and Head Pastor Implementation during the Three Decades

Four areas of missionary involvement in urban AGC churches from 1990 to 2019 reflect pioneering, parenting, partnership, and participant endeavors.² The first decade represents pioneering and parenting as missionaries planted and guided the Fellowship's initial Christian education for leadership development and discipleship. The second decade represents parenting and partnership as head pastors and their congregations continued to take more responsibilities and received advice from missionaries. The third decade represents missionaries' partnership and participant efforts as they served alongside urban congregations when necessary while head pastors and church leaders oversaw Christian education for leaders and disciples.³

² Ralph D. Winter, "The Concept of a Third Era in Missions," Missio Nexus, accessed September 25, 2021, <https://missionexus.org/the-concept-of-a-third-era-in-missions/>.

³ For additional information about missionaries and missions' eras, see Tom Steffan, *The Facilitator Era: Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011).

Regardless of Christian education methods used within each congregation, partnership inspired new prospects for training leaders and disciples. Relationships between missionaries and head pastors initiated the earliest Christian education opportunities and continue as vital components. Decades of cooperation enabled the Fellowship to find necessary means for individuals and groups to receive resources and lessons aligned with their spiritual development and designed for application within a Khmer context. The ultimate result is numerical growth within the Fellowship and personal growth in the lives of adherents.⁴

Missionaries who planted the charter churches in Phnom Penh used their preferred methods as they facilitated Christian education. Though basic, the earliest ministries inspired the Fellowship's first leadership and discipleship opportunities. Head pastors modeled the paradigms they learned directly from the missionaries and implemented Christian education platforms. The result led to leadership development and discipleship within their congregations. Foundational years between the missionaries and head pastors shaped ministry models for passing Christian education to Khmer believers.⁵

Description of Leadership and Discipleship Christian Education at the Research Sites

Interviews with Head Pastors

I conducted initial interviews with head pastors and other congregants comprising the twenty-four interviews at the research sites. After analyzing and interpreting the

⁴ Growth is addressed in chapter 5.

⁵ For more information about cross-cultural ministry relationships between missionaries and national leaders, see Tom Steffan, *“Passing the Baton: Church Planting that Empowers,”* (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational and Ministry Development, 1997).

cultural and ministry data, I noticed additional research areas to pursue with the head pastors. New questions allowed for inquiry about missionary involvement and head pastor implementation. After organizing questions and topics of discussion, I contacted the six head pastors to proceed with the subsequent interviews.

Whereas the first series of interviews with head pastors lasted approximately one hour each, the second series of interviews took approximately thirty minutes each. Interview questions related to the theme of Christian education while focusing on methodologies used for leadership development and discipleship ministries. Head pastors provided a detailed description of the missionaries who planted each of the churches. Because five of the six ministers are the original head pastor at their respective churches, much of the discussion focused on the missionaries' earliest involvement and their incorporated methods to choose and train leaders. Furthermore, their emphasis on discipleship also described the progression of the six churches during their earliest years.

Participant Observation at the Research Sites

My interaction at the research sites allowed me an insider's view to observe leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Worship services, small groups, special classes, strategy meetings, and fellowship gatherings provided opportunities to experience each site's ministerial portfolio. Meeting and conversing with the congregants afforded time to ask questions and hear about the "hows" and "whys" of leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches.

Christian education received special attention throughout the participant observation occasions. Joining classes and gatherings presented instances to learn along with the students while perusing their resources. From time to time, I had opportunities to

share briefly from the Scriptures or provide explanations in response to students' questions. Overall, the process reinforced the experience of witnessing leadership development and discipleship through Christian education in urban AGC churches.

Leadership Structure for Christian Education at the Research Sites

Interviews and participant observation revealed the overall leadership structure for incorporating Christian education. Because most of the leadership and discipleship training is conducted by individuals with specific roles, the structure coincides with the general ministerial functions of each respective site. Analysis and interpretation of the interview data correspond with the individuals who assist the churches' Christian education activities. Table 21 below describes the leadership structure at each site, the number of pastors, leaders, elders, committee members, and individuals with Bible school training.

Table 21. Leadership Structure at the Research Sites

<i>Church Site⁶</i>	<i>Pastoral Staff</i>	<i>Church Leaders⁷</i>	<i>Church Elders</i>	<i>Administrative Committee Members</i>	<i>Congregants with Bible School Training⁸</i>
Faith Church	2	10	3	5	1
Hope Church	2	12	7	7	8
Peace Church	5	12	0	5	8
Life Church	4	20	10	5	4
Praise Church ⁹	3	7	0	0	1
Grace Church	2	4	5	4	6

⁶ Some of the individuals described the church site's leadership structure as having multiple roles. For example, some leaders also serve as elders and members of the administrative committee.

⁷ Leaders include both teaching and non-teaching individuals. Some of the non-teaching leadership roles include areas such as hospitality, visitation, and special events.

⁸ Bible school training includes congregants who received formal ministerial training in Cambodia or other Asian countries. Some of the individuals are not part of the regular weekend ministries but remain affiliated with their respective churches by serving in satellite locations or new church plants.

⁹ Praise Church does not have an administrative committee or elders for governance or Christian education implementation. Because Singaporean missionaries planted the church, the pastoral staff and leaders oversee the weekly ministries and maintain communication with an administrative committee in Singapore.

Missionary Involvement with Christian Education at the Research Sites

The second series of interviews with head pastors at the research sites included questions about the missionaries who planted each church and about their incorporated strategies. Analysis and interpretation of the interview data describe missionary involvement, emphasis on Christian education for leadership and discipleship purposes, and relationships with the head pastor and congregation. Furthermore, the data represents the ongoing impact of missionary involvement as churches transitioned into the current implementation through the head pastors' ministries.

Interview questions provided opportunities to share details about their relationships with missionaries as churches started. Due to the research focus involving Christian education, the discussion highlighted training approaches and missionaries' methods with groups or individuals. Also, the head pastors spoke about Christian education directed toward leadership and discipleship and if their practices remained similar to the missionaries' approaches.

Interviews with the six head pastors revealed the significance regarding initial missionary involvement and the shaping of their ministry philosophies. Although Faith Church and Hope Church did not have missionary involvement as their churches began, both head pastors started their pastoral ministry in the 1990s under missionary influence. Missionaries planted the other four sites and remained active at the churches during the foundational years before handing leadership responsibility to Khmer leaders. Table 22 represents an overview of the relationship between missionaries and head pastors, including the training and emphases used within leadership development and discipleship methodologies.

Table 22. Missionary Involvement and Emphases at the Research Sites

<i>Church and Head Pastor</i>	<i>Missionary's Influence by Nationality</i>	<i>Missionary's Approach to Training</i>	<i>Missionary's Leadership Development Emphasis</i>	<i>Missionary's Discipleship Methodologies Emphasis</i>	<i>Missionary's and Head Pastor's Methods</i>
Faith Church Heng Dara	American	Groups	Relationships	Group Study Classes	Similar to the Missionaries
Hope Church Phan Sokha	Filipino	Groups and Individuals	Relationships	Train and Multiply Curriculum	Somewhat Similar to the Missionaries ¹⁰
Peace Church Bun Vithu	Filipino	Groups	Ministry Roles	Following Examples	Similar to the Missionaries
Life Church Nak Ponleu	American	Groups and Individuals	Mentoring for Ministry	Train and Multiply Curriculum	Similar to the Missionaries
Praise Church Mon Bopha	Singaporean	Groups and Individuals	Mentoring for Ministry	Group Study Classes	Similar to the Missionaries
Grace Church Ti Samnang	Korean	Groups	Biblical Foundations	Following Examples	Different from the Missionaries ¹¹

Head Pastor Implementation with Christian Education at the Research Sites

Conducting interviews with each head pastor provided opportunities to hear their perspectives about Christian education and the connection to their vision for leadership development and discipleship. Although initial questions in the second series of interviews directed attention toward missionary involvement, additional questions allowed head pastors to describe their implementation through Christian education. Their answers and discussion provide necessary data for understanding the application of leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches.

¹⁰ Pastor Phan Sokha described some similarities in his ministry except for training individuals and groups. He received individual mentoring and training, yet he prefers to conduct leadership and discipleship training through groups. Also, he mentioned using more contextualized methods of relational care in leadership and discipleship due to Khmer-Khmer relationships rather than foreigner-Khmer relationships.

¹¹ Pastor Ti Samnang described using methods different from the missionary who trained him. Some of the reasons included not using legalistic ministry approaches, not focusing on finances and resources to conduct ministry, not being overly selective for individuals serving in ministry, and implementing contextualized ministry methods rather than foreign methods.

Concepts focusing on group classes or individual training highlighted the function of Christian education. Their emphases and supervision for leadership and discipleship describe their regular interaction with congregants as they receive training within the congregation. Furthermore, head pastors shared information about preferred curricula and resources. Their answers and discussions frequently align with their relationship with missionaries and their initial training before serving as head pastors.

Relationships with other leaders in the congregation also underscored the Christian education process. Head pastors shared their views on selecting and training leaders for implementing leadership development and discipleship. Criterion associated with spiritual progression and ministerial capability portrays how each head pastor recognizes necessary components for leading others. Potential leadership roles and assigned responsibilities typically relate to the selection methods previously incorporated through missionary involvement. Table 23 below represents the head pastors' implementation as they train congregants, emphasize leadership and discipleship, and select congregants for leadership roles.

Table 23. Head Pastor Implementation and Emphases at the Research Sites

<i>Church and Head Pastor</i>	<i>Head Pastor's Approach to Training</i>	<i>Head Pastor's Leadership Development Emphasis</i>	<i>Head Pastor's Discipleship Methodologies Emphasis</i>	<i>Head Pastor's Criterion for Choosing Leaders</i>
Faith Church Heng Dara	Groups	Participation	Example	Relationship
Hope Church Phan Sokha	Groups	Character	Group Classes	Faithfulness
Peace Church Bun Vithu	Groups	Roles	Group Classes	Character
Life Church Nak Ponleu	Groups and Individuals	Participation	Personal Testimony	Relationship
Praise Church Mon Bopha	Groups and Individuals	Participation	Group Classes	Commitment
Grace Church Ti Samnang	Groups and Individuals	Example	Application	Ability

Analysis of Leadership and Discipleship Christian Education at the Research Sites

Missionary Involvement Themes and Subthemes

The data from the second series of interviews with head pastors reveals four primary themes regarding missionary involvement at the research sites. Three corresponding subthemes support each primary theme. Missionary involvement during the 1990s includes the overarching picture of emphases and neglect by establishing urban AGC churches, providing Christian education within leadership and discipleship, and selecting leaders for specific ministry roles. Christian education is the aligning component throughout the themes and subthemes.¹²

Due to the semi-structured interview questions, leadership development and discipleship methodologies contain the most data. Head pastors shared their perspectives in these areas as training relates to groups and individuals. Curriculum and resources describe how the missionaries provided regular interaction by training leaders and disciples through preferred books and lessons.

Application emphasis and preparation for the future relate to the congregations as groups and individuals received training and served in ministry. Spiritual growth reflects progressive development as group interaction and fellowship opportunities continue in the churches. Furthermore, the transition from missionary involvement to head pastor implementation indicates the missionaries' ongoing roles by remaining connected with

¹² My ethnographic research at the six research sites includes Christian education methodologies for leadership and discipleship. For case study research about Christian education models, roles, teachers, and contexts in Cambodia, see Darin R. Clements, "A Multiple Case Study of Approaches to Nonformal Christian Education among Assemblies of God of Cambodia Churches" (Ph.D. diss, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2019).

congregations. Figure 16 contains the primary themes and subthemes from the data portraying the missionaries' involvement at the research sites.

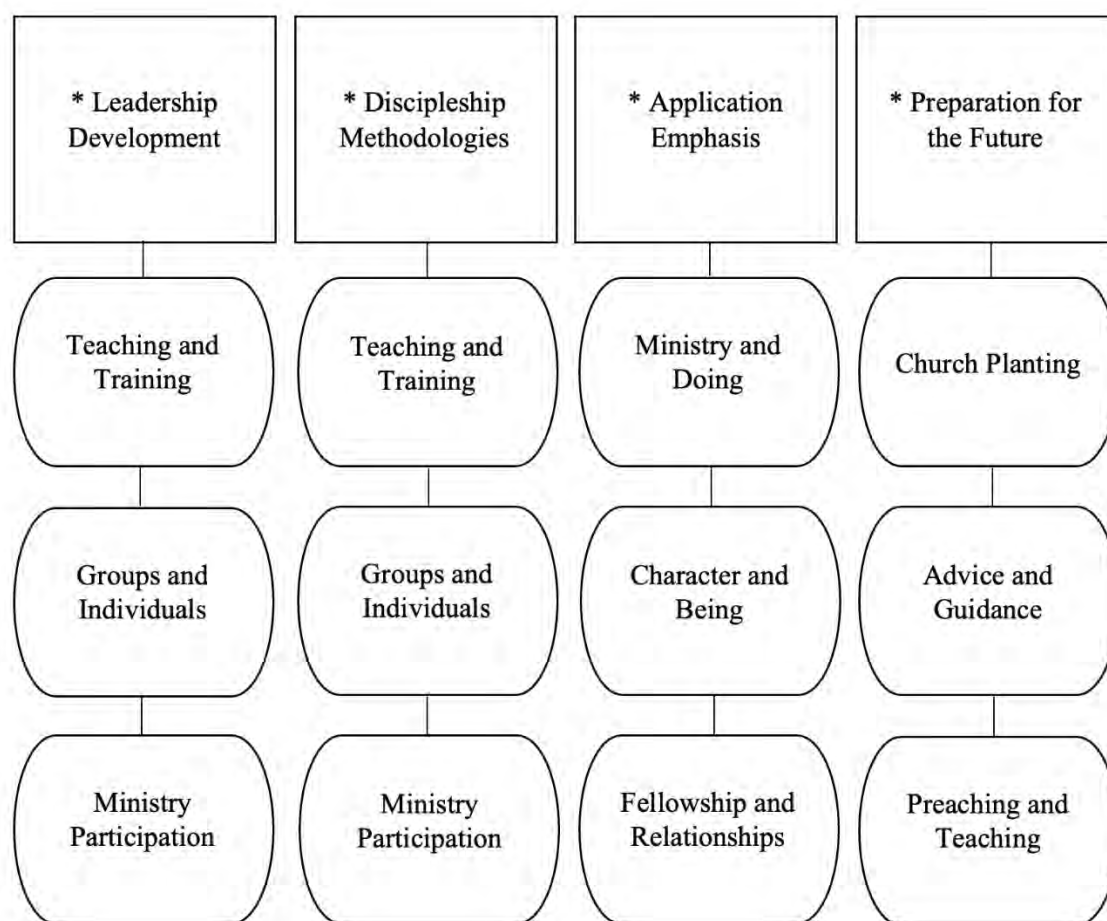


Figure 16. Themes and Subthemes of AG Missionary Involvement

* Denotes a Primary Theme

Leadership Development through Missionary Involvement

The inclusion of American, Filipino, Korean, and Singaporean missionaries demonstrates the diversity of cultural backgrounds and training methods. However, most AG missionaries who planted the urban churches in the 1990s received Western-based theological training and ministerial philosophies while preparing for cross-cultural

ministry.¹³ Their direct impact on the initial head pastors, church leaders, and congregants set Christian education in motion as the churches began. As affirmed through the interview data with head pastors, many of the methods and approaches within Christian education for leadership and discipleship continue through current implementation.

Leadership development teaching and training existed solely through the missionaries and their efforts among potential leaders. Planting churches positioned them as the ultimate source of influence and supervision in the Christian education process. Methodological preferences varied according to each missionary and included any curriculum and resources available for usage after the churches began meeting. Initial leadership principles commonly emerged through series such as Train and Multiply.¹⁴

Each missionary used varied training approaches among individuals and groups. Three of the six head pastors received training one-on-one; however, their missionaries also incorporated group training in their Christian education efforts. Individual training between missionaries and national leaders allowed opportunities for advising and encouragement.¹⁵ Group sessions and classes directed training toward the overall needs of the leaders and their ministries.¹⁶

¹³ One exception to the missionaries who received Western-based theological training and ministerial philosophies is the Korean missionary who planted Grace Church in 1996.

¹⁴ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

¹⁵ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹⁶ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

Throughout the progression of training, missionaries encouraged national leaders to participate in ministry. Responsibilities handed from missionaries to Khmer Christians allowed them to work and think for themselves without missionaries doing the majority of church ministries.¹⁷ An emphasis on serving left an indelible impression on the nationals as they followed the missionaries' example.¹⁸ Furthermore, occasions for future leaders to apply their learning through ministry upheld importance in the transition to national leadership as three of the six sites handed head pastor roles to Khmer Christians by 1999.

*Discipleship Methodologies through
Missionary Involvement*

Just as missionaries directly involved themselves in teaching leadership development, they also established and oversaw discipleship ministries in urban AGC churches. Head pastors remarked how missionaries' involvement in discipleship training displayed a resemblance to leadership training. Teaching sessions among disciples at multiple sites included Train and Multiply curriculum.¹⁹ Foundational courses used available resources preferred by the missionary for teaching AG doctrine to groups.²⁰

Head pastors described the importance of group classes and sessions for disciples studying and learning directly from missionaries. Regular gatherings with disciples

¹⁷ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

¹⁸ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹⁹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

²⁰ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

enabled quality fellowship time together and encouragement.²¹ This pattern within missionary involvement is considered one of the most significant aspects of their ministry.²² Due to the cultural focus on groups and the feasibility of individuals joining together, head pastors continue to implement groups for discipleship ministries.

Ministry participation among Khmer Christians provided an integral component of missionaries' involvement in discipleship. Following others' examples allowed new believers a hands-on approach to serve in urban AGC churches.²³ Missionaries recognized the ability of the believers and guided them through ministry opportunities. Learning and watching examples in action built a foundation of understanding and confidence for serving independently rather than requiring regular supervision.²⁴

Application Emphasis through Missionary Involvement

An essential facet of missionary involvement at the sites combined ministry and doing for leaders and laity. Teaching and training, incorporating vision in the congregation, and utilizing contextualized methods and resources for ongoing church ministries situated individuals in an environment of service.²⁵ Congregants focused on local evangelism through the support of missionaries, who also assisted in the process. Missionaries emphasized establishing trust with people by reaching out to the community

²¹ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

²² Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

²³ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

²⁴ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

²⁵ Ibid.

as part of their applied training.²⁶ Head pastors received motivation from missionaries' involvement to continually implement both inward and outward approaches within urban AGC churches.

The balancing components for ministry and doing include character and being taught from missionaries to head pastors. Serving with humility and patience relayed the value of spirituality in the life of a minister.²⁷ Missionary involvement carefully showed Christian character and encouragement resulting in productive ministry opportunities. Moreover, leading by example in front of head pastors allowed the proper model for their congregations.²⁸

Because missionary involvement included group classes and sessions, fellowship and relationships naturally followed. Closely joined bonds linked missionaries to head pastors and continued as head pastors began leading urban AGC churches. Regular group opportunities enriched life and ministry as individuals received leadership and discipleship training.²⁹ Joining together as leaders and disciples, those with experience and those new to Christianity, benefited by gaining instruction about ministry opportunities and spiritual growth.

²⁶ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

²⁷ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

²⁸ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

²⁹ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

*Preparation for the Future through
Missionary Involvement*

By planting urban AGC churches and training leaders and disciples, missionaries prepared head pastors for future growth. Missionaries emphasized starting new churches, cell groups, and worship sites from existing churches.³⁰ Planting new churches in urban and rural settings, helping in locations with new facilities, and assisting with new congregations' needs directed head pastors by maintaining a vision for continued expansion throughout the Fellowship.³¹

Providing advice before and after the transitions to head pastors assuming leadership responsibilities guided the Fellowship during the 1990s. Ongoing recommendations and counsel from missionaries maintained relationships and enabled strategies for leadership development and discipleship. Although missionaries did not directly engage in all decision-making processes, their advisement and coordination with head pastors and church leaders allowed suggestions for future ministries in urban AGC churches.³²

The availability of AG missionaries in Phnom Penh provided opportunities for teaching and preaching during worship services and at special events.³³ By participating in local churches, missionaries have continued maintaining ongoing relationships with

³⁰ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

³¹ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

³² Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

³³ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

leaders and laity. Their involvement continues to impact leadership development and discipleship ministries through periodic teaching and training sessions.³⁴

Head Pastor Implementation Themes and Subthemes

Three primary themes about head pastor implementation emerged from the second series of interviews. Each primary theme contains four accompanying subthemes about their implementation. The head pastors' roles in leadership development, discipleship methodologies, and ministry emphases demonstrate their Christian education participation in urban AGC churches. Data from the interviews reveal a framework for maintaining Christian education by implementing leadership development and discipleship.

Similar to the analysis of missionary involvement, leadership development and discipleship methodologies reflect the majority of the interview data. Head pastors described their views for utilizing classes and curriculum as groups receive training and maintain interaction. Data frequently refers to leaders and laity since various individuals have significant roles and participate in Christian education. The overall emphasis on leadership and discipleship through Christian education relates directly to head pastors' implementation within congregations. Figure 17 represents the primary themes and subthemes depicting head pastors and their implementation at the research sites.

³⁴ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

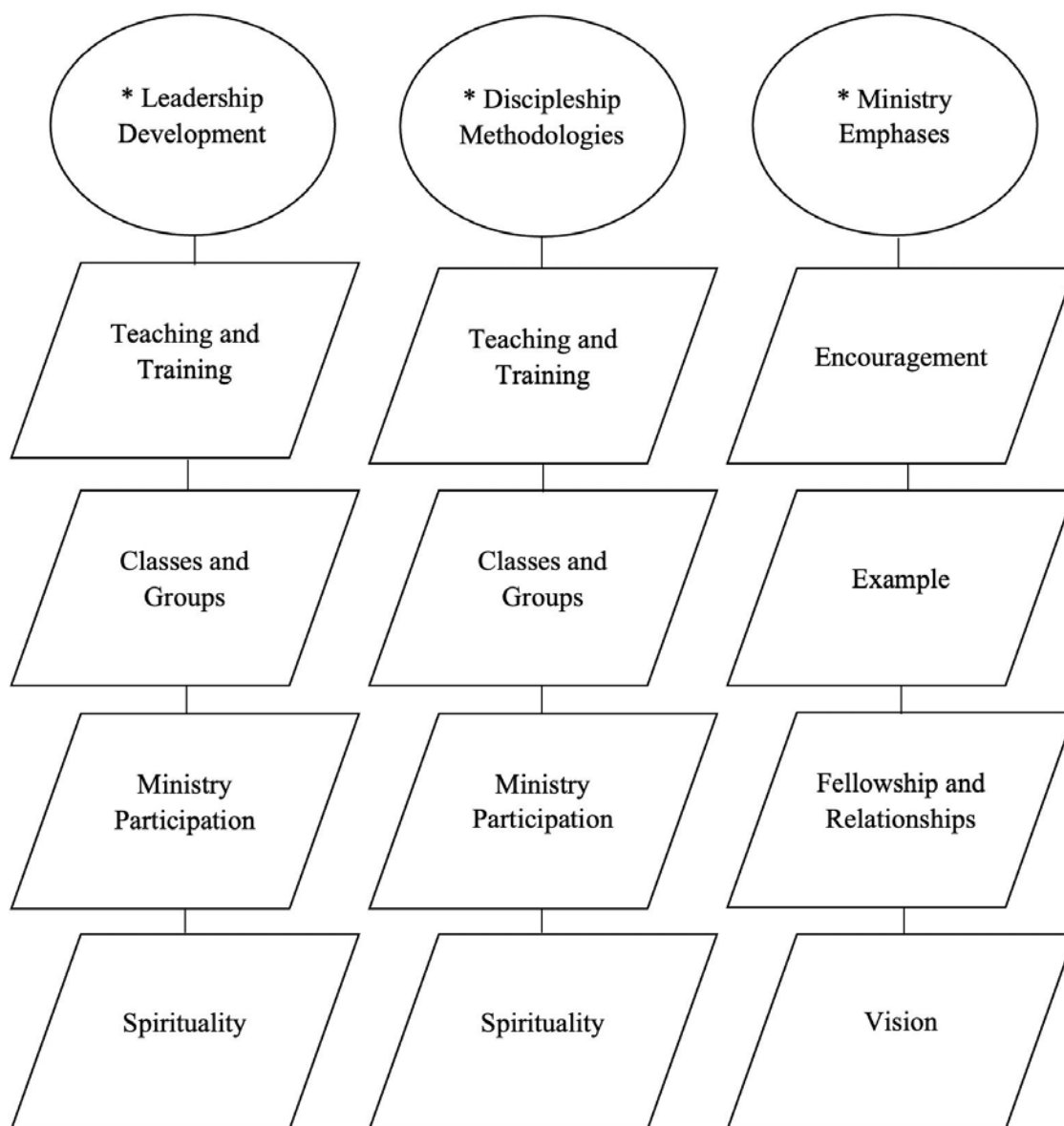


Figure 17. Themes and Subthemes of Head Pastor Implementation

* Denotes a Primary Theme

Leadership Development through Head Pastor Implementation

Head pastors value the importance of frequent interaction with individuals who have leadership roles. Weekly meetings between head pastors and leaders allow occasions for Bible study and preparation for ministry by emphasizing application and

responsibility.³⁵ Reading, studying, and discussing provide enrichment as head pastors use their role for equipping the congregation and its leadership base.³⁶

Providing leadership development through groups is typical as head pastors teach and train leaders. Although some head pastors have used methods for training individually, most training occurs within a group setting.³⁷ Head pastors can oversee leadership development according to each ministry group by emphasizing the necessary training for each specific ministry and its leaders.³⁸ Moreover, discussion with head pastors about leadership development among Khmer leaders revealed the feasibility of groups as it aligns Christian education with cultural and collective norms.

Ministry participation occurs directly through leaders and their roles connected to Christian education. A significant part of leadership development in urban AGC churches includes head pastors selecting leaders for ministerial purposes. Head pastors' relationships with other church leaders enable the church's vision to move forward as individuals actively participate.³⁹ Leaders and their roles exhibit ministry as a result of the training they receive and their commitment to serve in the congregation.⁴⁰ Head pastors' participation in leadership and discipleship is a visible component for

³⁵ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

³⁶ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

³⁷ Some head pastors received one-on-one training from missionaries and continue to use training for both individuals and groups. This scenario includes Pastor Phan Sokha, Pastor Nak Ponleu, and Pastor Mon Bopha. Although Pastor Ti Samnang received leadership training among other leaders, he prefers training leaders individually.

³⁸ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

³⁹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

⁴⁰ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

congregants to recognize the ministries, responsibilities, and roles within their local church setting.

In addition to leaders participating, their spirituality is an essential facet. Demonstrating character and displaying love within the congregation are noted as integral attributes.⁴¹ Head pastors rely upon faithful men and women who have the necessary heart for serving in Christian education.⁴² As teaching and training occur in the leadership development context, head pastors have opportunities to recognize the character of individuals and the spiritual gifts necessary for fruitful ministry.⁴³

Discipleship Methodologies through Head Pastor Implementation

Teaching and training in urban AGC churches connect head pastors to disciples through regular interaction. Foundations about Christian life and faith provide the necessary building blocks for congregations engaging in discipleship.⁴⁴ Head pastors' roles through teaching, supporting, and encouraging in Christian education can enable believers to recognize their abilities.⁴⁵ Emphasizing teaching about water baptism also provides valuable instruction for individuals and their progression.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

⁴² Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

⁴³ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁴⁴ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

⁴⁵ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

⁴⁶ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

Discipleship ministries place a premium on meeting together for classes and group sessions. Although providing individual training may be effective, congregants prefer joining others for group studies within Christian education.⁴⁷ Group structures for discipleship ministries allow head pastors to provide supervision, either through teaching or interacting, since larger numbers can be accommodated. Fondness for fellowship in discipleship adds to the environment and experience for congregants.

Disciples and their participation in urban AGC churches relate to individuals and their abilities. As head pastors oversee discipleship ministries, they continually look at the congregants' abilities for ministry and help them understand the value of serving.⁴⁸ The process of head pastors guiding disciples requires regular interaction and encouragement. Some churches address the need for ministry participation by training congregants shortly after their conversion rather than having them wait.⁴⁹

A key component of head pastors and their activity among disciples includes spiritual growth. Small groups, fellowship gatherings, and regular interaction in Christian education provide the necessary environment for congregants to develop a better understanding of their faith in God. The primary purpose for joining together is to address spiritual needs as congregants participate in classes and sessions.⁵⁰ Head pastors'

⁴⁷ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

⁴⁸ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁴⁹ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

⁵⁰ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

support and encouragement provide a foundation for individuals to grow in faith and participate in ministry.⁵¹

*Ministry Emphases through Head
Pastor Implementation*

As head pastors in urban AGC churches oversee leadership development and discipleship ministries, encouragement carries significance in their implementation. Missionaries who planted churches and trained the initial leaders passed on the necessary aspect of preparing individuals for ministry while encouraging them to remain active in service.⁵² Head pastors strive to implement ministries while providing the necessary support for those who serve alongside them. Some head pastors even recognize encouragement as the most important aspect when groups and classes participate.⁵³ This approach enables congregants to feel valued for their participation and motivated to serve.

Head pastors acknowledge the importance of being a good example because of the relation of that quality behavior to training leaders and disciples. Leadership development typically includes selecting individuals recognized by their example in life and ministry. Just as head pastors strive to implement Christian education, they look for others who have proven themselves in service and spirituality as shown by their example among others.⁵⁴ This approach also connects to discipleship as head pastors and other

⁵¹ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁵² Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

⁵³ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁵⁴ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

church leaders instruct people to follow Godly examples in their spiritual progression. Moreover, head pastors acknowledge the missionaries' involvement as they trained national leaders to emulate their paradigms for future leaders to follow.⁵⁵

Joining together in leadership development and discipleship provides opportunities for enjoying fellowship and building relationships. Simply taking time inside and outside the church setting allows head pastors formal and informal occasions with congregants. Christian education classes, special events, and retreats emphasize fellowship, which ultimately strengthens both individually and collectively.⁵⁶ Relationships developed through fellowship between head pastors and congregants create special bonds similar to spiritual fathers and mothers providing the necessary care and nurturing.⁵⁷

As missionaries trained the initial leaders in urban AGC churches, the future head pastors formed a ministry vision for leadership development and discipleship ministries. Training more individuals through Christian education by using contextualized methods shapes congregations and prepares them for future years of ministry.⁵⁸ Head pastors add necessary principles for maintaining and continuing leadership and discipleship by selecting individuals who understand the mission of the local church.⁵⁹ Their vision continues in Christian education as more leaders and disciples receive training and

⁵⁵ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁵⁶ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

⁵⁷ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

⁵⁸ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

⁵⁹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

instruction in urban AGC churches. Future opportunities remain in head pastors' hearts as they consider the upcoming generation and their impact in Phnom Penh.⁶⁰

Interpretation of Leadership and Discipleship Christian Education at the Research Sites

Khmer Christian Education in Action

Sitting in classes, listening to head pastors teach, meeting with congregants, and seeing new and old believers engaged in ministry helped me to appreciate the expanse of Christian education as it addresses leadership development and discipleship. Experiences at the various research sites brought a better perspective by examining how the years of missionary involvement led to head pastor implementation and continues to drive urban AGC churches. The link from past to present has set the stage for new leaders and new disciples to take responsibility and find opportunities to utilize their abilities.

Living in a bustling, urban Asian city with a dominating Buddhist presence can cause a person to forget about the strides taken by the small Christian subculture. While Buddhists flock to the countless pagodas throughout Phnom Penh, clusters of Christians gather with purpose. Their participation in Christian education enriches leadership development and discipleship as individuals embrace opportunities to join for fellowship, study the Bible, and encourage one another. It is found on a Sunday afternoon at Hope Church with an assistant pastor leading the young adults' meeting for discipleship and fellowship. It is realized at Life Church on a Saturday afternoon as a head pastor teaches the middle-aged leaders a book-by-book study through the Bible. It is accomplished

⁶⁰ During the second series of interviews with head pastors, they discussed their vision for leadership development and discipleship methodologies in the future. This aspect is beyond the scope of my ethnography and needs additional research.

following the Sunday worship service at Grace Church while an elder encourages and guides a small group in Old Testament studies.

The edifice constructed by missionary involvement during the 1990s has continually grown by the example of faithful Khmer men and women. Their roles as head pastors in urban AGC churches provide fellowship, learning, and encouragement for individuals from countless walks of life. Groups, classes, and gatherings move the congregants forward and inspire a new generation of believers. Overall, Christian education in their local churches raises awareness for embracing and continuing leadership development and discipleship.

Overview of Data Interpretation

Similar themes from the interview data represent the connection between missionary involvement and head pastor implementation. Christian education directed toward leadership development and discipleship methodologies coincides with the data and observation from the research sites. Reoccurring subthemes address the significance of groups, participation, and spirituality and their alignment with the historical progression of AG leadership and discipleship in a Khmer cultural setting. Interpreting the data from the themes and subthemes presents the overall emphasis and neglect throughout the involvement and implementation processes.

Interpretation of the Missionary Involvement Themes

Leadership Development from Training, Groups, and Participation

A basic teaching of the Bible and training curriculum, according to missionary preference, comprised the resources during the earliest years of leadership development

in urban AGC churches. Missionaries successfully trained and released head pastors and other church leaders into ministries. Structured classes provided fellowship and close-knit relationships among the missionaries, leaders, and laity. As groups received biblical training and completed courses, the emphasis focused on participation. The missionary involvement process within leadership development equipped local worship sites to continue as functional, sovereign churches in Phnom Penh.

While training provided leadership development, much of the attention addressed raising individuals as leaders rather than using a discipleship process. Most head pastors spoke about leadership development from missionaries as active involvement for creating leaders who are directly responsible for ministries.⁶¹ Furthermore, the emphasis on group strength and stability overshadowed the individual growth and development of each leader. Although some head pastors received one-on-one leadership training, others did not have the opportunity to receive direct mentoring for personal maturity.⁶²

Discipleship Methodologies from Training, Groups, and Participation

Group discussions, Bible studies, and varied curricula established a framework for missionaries discipling believers in urban AGC churches. One distinguishable difference from leadership development involved the strong emphasis on personal examples and role models used within discipleship. Interaction among other disciples also played a

⁶¹ Pastor Mon Bopha is an exception; she mentioned using discipleship as the foundation for leadership training. Her Singaporean missionary emphasized in-house training through discipleship, which ultimately incorporated leadership principles.

⁶² Pastor Nak Ponleu spoke about his ministerial training in the early 1990s. He referred to an American missionary who trained individuals for service while helping them apply independent thinking. This approach helped future leaders to serve without direct missionary involvement.

significant part in training as missionaries assisted in the training process. As congregants built relationships and bonds, joining together provided fellowship and opportunities for service.

A key aspect of discipleship training included the overlap and similarities to leadership development. Missionary involvement did not always have a clear distinction between the training for leaders and disciples since they used similar resources.⁶³ Another area comparable to leadership development relates to a group focus. Discipleship groups and collective productivity maintained high importance rather than training for individual growth.

Application Emphasis for Doing, Being, and Fellowship/Relationships

Missionary involvement placed significant emphasis on leaders and disciples remaining engaged in local church ministries. Serving, applying, teaching others, and addressing communities' needs situated congregants as active participants while new leaders and disciples received Christian education. On the other hand, missionaries also addressed the value of character by teaching and training about life in Christ. Humility, patience, and being teachable made long-standing impressions still passed on from head pastors to congregants.⁶⁴ The balance between doing and being emerged through group

⁶³ Some head pastors indicated the same or similar methods when missionaries trained leaders and disciples at urban AGC churches.

⁶⁴ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

emphasis as leaders and laity embraced opportunities to meet for fellowship, service, and prayer.⁶⁵

Although Christian education originated through missionaries for applying service, character, and fellowship, differences arose as churches began. Different approaches and different visions among missionaries created issues in urban AGC churches.⁶⁶ Each church represented itself as an AGC entity, yet it could be seen as a sovereign congregation following missionary direction rather than remaining under the Fellowship's covering. Methods and emphases on specific leadership and discipleship aspects lacked uniformity as personal preference surpassed collective cohesion.

Future Preparation for Planting, Advising, and Teaching

Missionary influence during the 1990s pointed congregations toward starting new groups and worship sites within the Fellowship. While some urban AGC churches quickly implemented this strategy as head pastors accepted leadership responsibilities, others assisted new church plants years after maintaining their congregation's internal stability and growth.⁶⁷ As church leadership transitioned from missionaries to Khmer head pastors, missionaries continued participating through advisement and teaching. The intentional strategy to appoint Khmer leaders and remain as partners enabled

⁶⁵ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

⁶⁶ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

⁶⁷ An example of an urban AGC church planting another site is Life Church and its relationship with Faith Church. After Pastor Nak Ponleu became head pastor at Life Church in 1999, the congregation assisted one of its leaders, Pastor Heng Dara, as he and his family received encouragement to start Faith Church during the same year.

congregations to have their own identity yet continue relationships with missionaries. Ongoing guidance for leadership development and discipleship assisted the churches and their emphasis on Christian education.

Although inevitable transitions loomed in the congregations, not all missionaries instructed the head pastors about planning for the future. Some head pastors received their appointment to lead the church and did not receive guidance for creating a vision or setting long-term goals.⁶⁸ However, congregations generally maintained relationships with missionaries, including new missionaries who arrived in Cambodia after the churches existed. The ongoing connection between urban AGC churches and AG missionaries exemplifies opportunities for strategies and teaching about leadership and discipleship.

Interpretation of the Head Pastor Implementation Themes

Leadership Development for Training, Classes, Participation, and Spirituality

Head pastors in urban AGC churches conduct leadership training through regular sessions in group formats. Emphasis is placed on learning and applying as individuals take personal responsibility. Maintaining fellowship is highlighted throughout the process for building cohesion within the group and enhancing ministries. The connection to relationships within the congregation is significant as head pastors select leaders based on their previous interactions with others. Progression throughout training and development

⁶⁸ Some head pastors spoke about missionary involvement and the lack of clarity regarding planning for the future.

points toward the growth and spiritual dynamics among those with leadership responsibilities.

One challenging aspect is generalized training within the congregations. Although group training is productive, a specific development focus does not always emphasize leadership in each ministry.⁶⁹ Head pastors typically address leadership development in terms of the group's participation rather than individual learning opportunities. While spiritual dynamics and character growth are involved, interaction and commitment appear to have higher value due to the direct relation with a hands-on ministry.

Discipleship Methodologies for Training, Classes, Participation, and Spirituality

Studying various curriculum series in groups remains significant for discipleship ministries in urban AGC churches. Head pastors and other leaders teach and oversee classes, examine the ability of congregants, and emphasize cohesion within groups for regular fellowship and relationship building. The entire process of discipleship includes encouragement from head pastors directed toward prospects for future ministry. Furthermore, teaching about character issues addresses spiritual aspects for the groups to consider.

Individual growth is a component of discipleship in urban AGC churches. However, emphasis points toward the group and its overall stability. Fellowship among believers finds a place of preeminence as merely joining together for discipleship classes and events can overshadow the instructional content. Also, because similar books and

⁶⁹ Pastor Bun Vithu is an exception for emphasizing specific leadership development according to ministry. He described the responsibility of head pastors developing leaders in each context of ministry such as adults, youth, children, etc.

resources are used simultaneously for leadership and discipleship in some churches, the lack of distinction may limit the advancement of individuals who need to designate training for specific ministries.

Ministry Emphasis for Encouragement, Example, Fellowship/Relationships, and Vision

Head pastors view leadership development and discipleship as auspicious occasions for encouraging congregants. Whether by teaching classes, leading seminars, or overseeing small groups, encouragement maintains a prominent place in urban AGC churches. These opportunities allow fellowship and relationship-building as leaders and disciples alike function in cohesion. Devoting time among believers situates head pastors as examples for other leaders and laity to emulate as they train and influence others. As familiarity and credibility increase among congregants and in groups, the vision for current and future ministry plans can be realized and applied.

Since encouragement and fellowship are components to ensure relationships and promote vision, there is a stronger emphasis on groups and the congregation at large rather than individuals. Also, churches tend to highlight joining together instead of directing attention toward specific teaching and training suitable for leadership development and discipleship. While some head pastors implement vision through maintaining fellowship as a core function, others strive to keep Christian education directed toward equipping leaders and strengthening disciples.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Pastor Mon Bopha shared about the importance of vision as leaders regard their roles as similar to spiritual parents assisting spiritual children through accountability. However, she mentioned it is different for each church and can cause a lack of clarity in the Fellowship.

Learning, Serving, and Growing through Missionary Involvement

Interview data reveals the significance of missionary involvement as leadership development and discipleship ministries took shape through Christian education in urban AGC churches. The emphasis on learning, serving, and growing created a starting point for head pastors to comprehend, remain active, and reflect achievement. Missionary influence aligns with modern education by addressing knowledge, skills, and attitude, thereby facilitating progression.⁷¹

The arrival of missionaries in the 1990s landed cross-cultural workers in a setting with numerous limitations: small numbers of Christians, few resources in the Khmer language, and time restraints due to government protocols. However, focusing on learning, serving, and growing among individuals and groups postulated a model for head pastors to implement during the subsequent years. Each step in the process allowed more autonomy as missionary involvement flowed into head pastor implementation. Figure 18 illustrates these approaches at the beginning of leadership development and discipleship through missionary involvement.

⁷¹ Edgar J. Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 119.

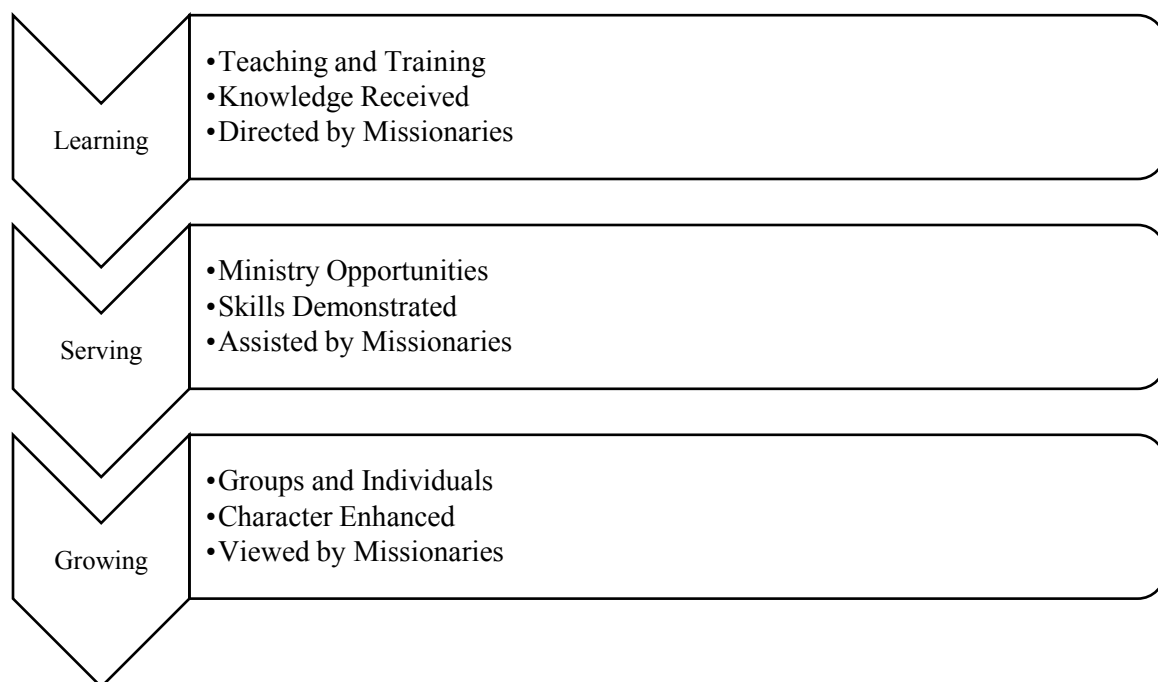


Figure 18. Learning, Serving, and Growing Through Missionary Involvement

Strategic enactment of learning, serving, and growing in leadership development and discipleship within urban AGC churches created a balance between ministry (doing) and character (being). Regular classes, participation in the local church, and progression in character situated head pastors for overseeing an environment aligned with outward and inward applications. Missionaries' emphases impressed upon head pastors provided an outline for future leadership development and discipleship within a Christian education framework. Table 24 below reflects the balance between ministry and character as missionaries directed head pastors.

Table 24. Ministry/Doing and Character/Being Emphases

<i>Missionary Emphasis to Head Pastors for Ministry and Doing</i>	<i>Missionary Emphasis to Head Pastors for Character and Being</i>
Community Focus	Example
Contextualized Strategies	Humility
Evangelism	Inspiration
Serving	Patience
Teaching	Trust
Visitation	Vision

Fellowship, Participation, and Encouragement through Head Pastor Implementation

As head pastors took responsibility for overseeing leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches, their ministry philosophies shaped future Christian education possibilities. Instruction and guidance from the learning, serving, and growing patterns became more contextualized and suited for Khmer leadership and discipleship. As new resources became available in Cambodia, head pastors implemented approaches for training their congregation without requiring ongoing missionary involvement.

Learning, serving, and growing methods gradually transformed into an emphasis on fellowship, participation, and encouragement. While learning through classes remained firmly in place, the focus shifted toward congregants meeting for fellowship. Serving continued in urban AGC churches; however, group participation within classes or ministries became emphasized. Growing remained a component in the local church, yet encouragement found a higher place of significance as head pastors trained individuals. Figure 19 represents the fellowship, participation, and encouragement model as head pastors implemented leadership and discipleship.

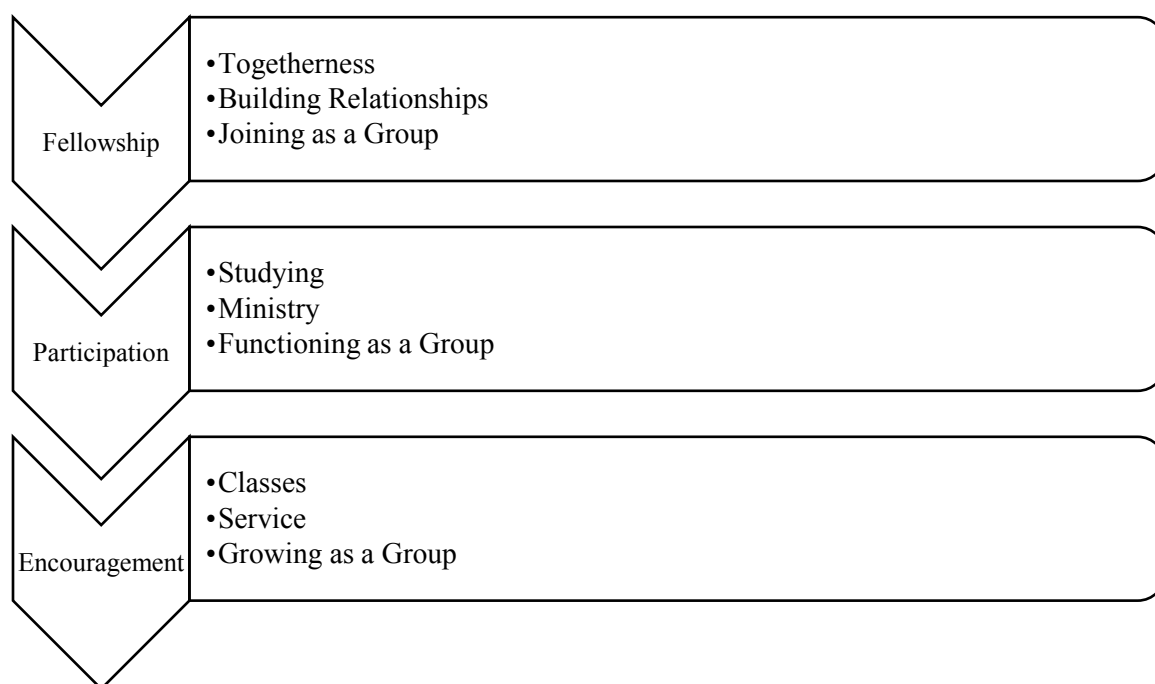


Figure 19. Fellowship, Participation, and Encouragement through Head Pastor Implementation

While utilizing groups through Christian education, leaders and disciples receive training together as they build relationships. Participating as a group permits continual classes for studying and serving alongside others in ministry. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on encouragement fashions an environment for strengthening groups as learning opportunities and ministry events progress.

Implementing fellowship, participation, and encouragement allows a strategic selection of resources and topics. As more leaders and disciples receive training, head pastors understand preferences and circumstances for leadership development and discipleship in their congregations. Responsibilities continue as the emphasis for leadership while ability remains the key facet for discipleship. Although similar resources and curricula overlap between leadership development and discipleship, themes differ to directly impact the groups while receiving training. Table 25 shows how resources and

topics shape the process as head pastors implement Christian education for leaders and disciples.

Table 25. Resources and Topics for Leadership Development and Discipleship

<i>Leadership Development Resources</i>	<i>Leadership Development Topics</i>	<i>Discipleship Resources</i>	<i>Discipleship Topics</i>
Bridge Commentary	Doctrine	Christian Life Series	Ability
Christian Life Series	Example	Christian Service Series	Evangelism
Church Development Program	Leadership	Church Development Program	Ministry
Intentional Moves	Parenting	Intentional Moves	Stewardship
Train and Multiply	Responsibilities	Train and Multiply	Water Baptism

Primary Emphases in the Missionary Involvement and Head Pastor Implementation Processes

Strategies from AG missionaries and AGC head pastors established models for ongoing leadership development and discipleship. Christian education in each urban AGC church directs the function of leaders and disciples resulting in ministry. Learning, serving, and growing initiated the framework while addressing the importance of ministry and character balance. The current approaches include fellowship, participation, and encouragement to safeguard the ministries as congregants collectively join, serve, and continue under the head pastors' supervision.

The combined efforts of missionaries and head pastors during the past three decades allow individuals to receive training, function through specific roles, and enrich ministries in urban AGC churches. Emphasis directed toward leadership development provides training as individuals oversee others, maintain responsibility in roles, and represent the congregation's leadership structure. As for discipleship, the emphasis provides training for individuals who build trust with leadership, recognize and increase their ability, and assist the congregation in ministry. The Christian education process within leadership and discipleship points toward ministry in the local church. Figure 20

below demonstrates the specific emphasis on leadership development and discipleship, the integral components of training, and the result of continual ministry.

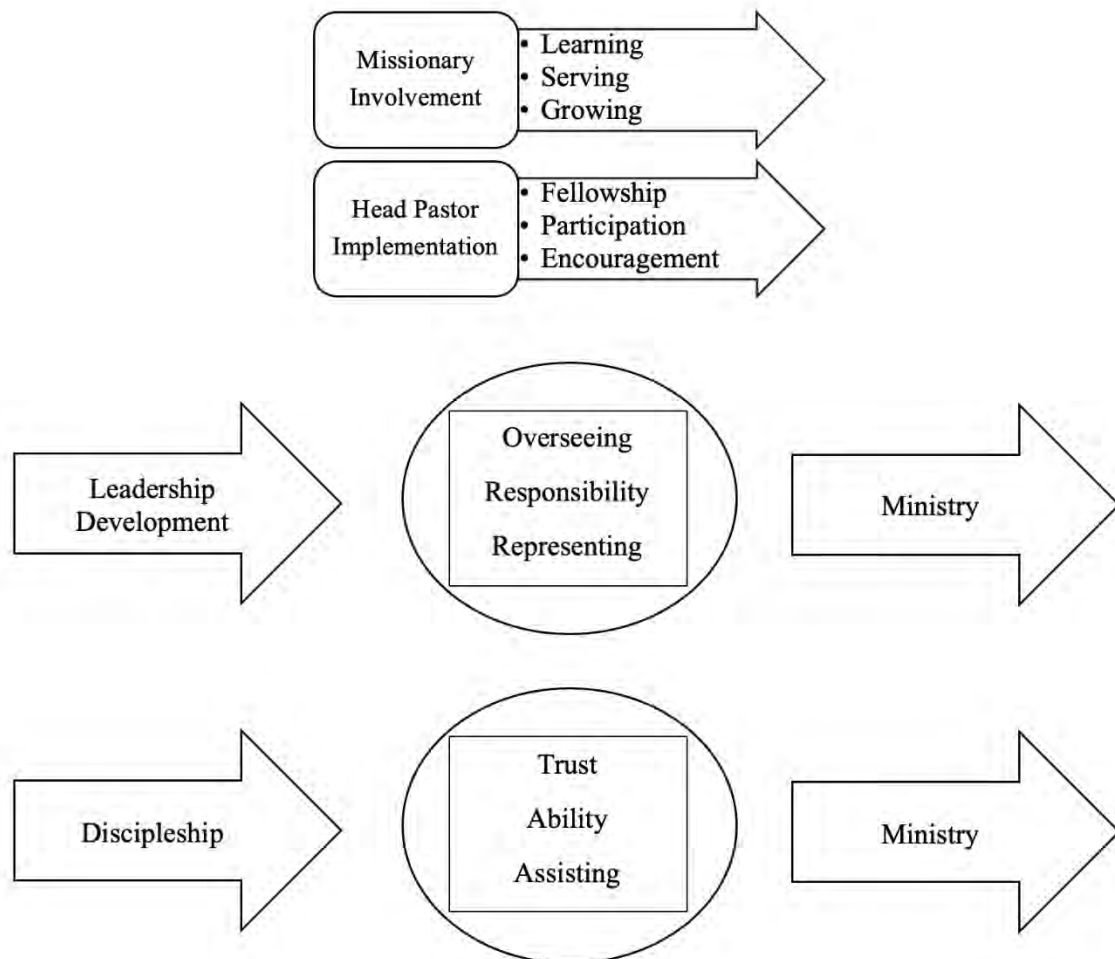


Figure 20. Emphases from Missionaries and Head Pastors

Neglect in the Missionary Involvement and Head Pastor Implementation Processes

Although missionaries effectively engaged in cross-cultural ministries while creating opportunities for leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches, differences existed in expectations as missionaries passed their strategies to head pastors. Neglect within missionaries' methodologies, some due to cultural issues in Cambodia, ultimately led to different emphases as head pastors began implementing leadership and

discipleship. Figures 21 and 22 reveal how challenges within learning, serving, and growing transitioned into fellowship, participation, and encouragement.

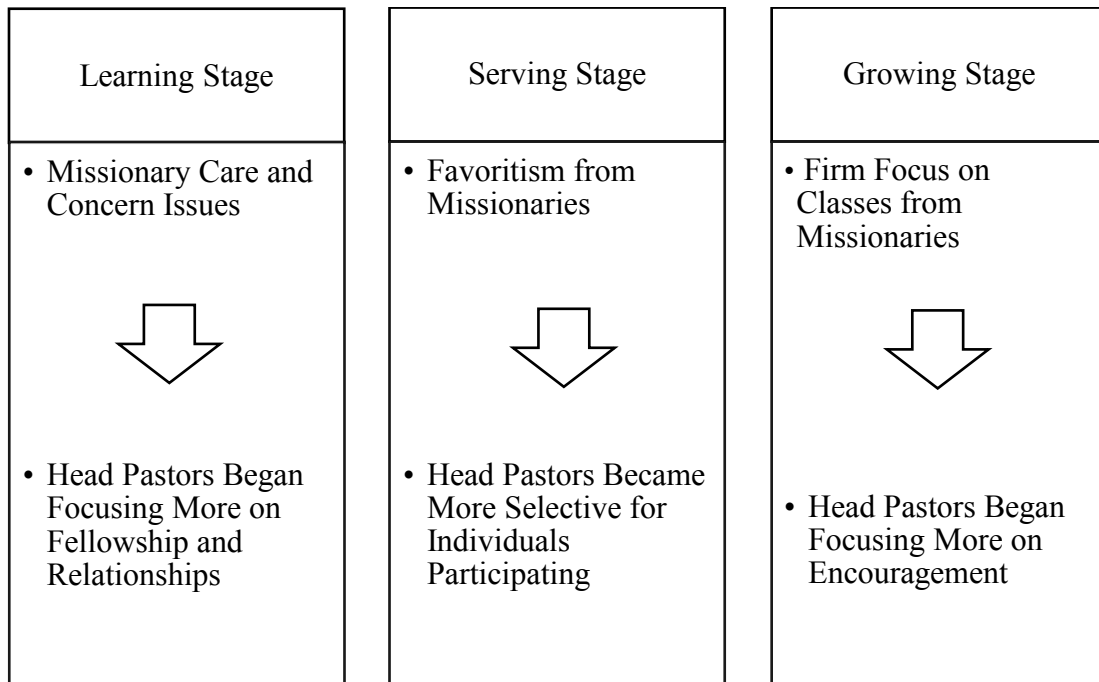


Figure 21. Results from Neglect in Missionaries' Methodologies

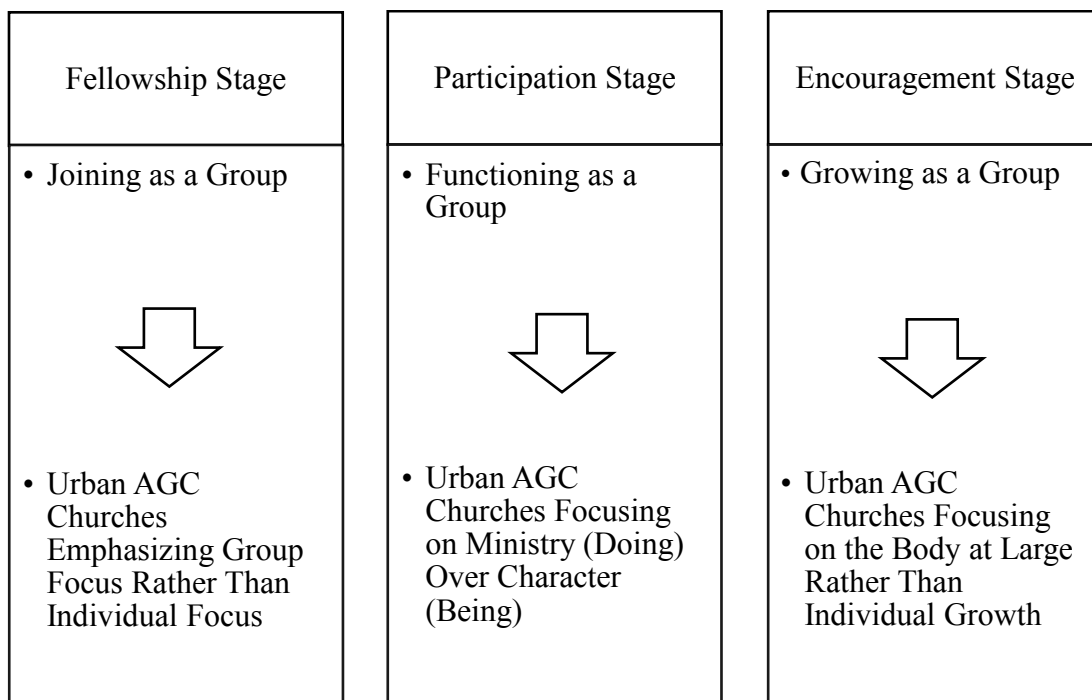


Figure 22. Results from Neglect in Head Pastors' Methodologies

Neglect occurred during the learning stage as some missionaries promoted themselves and did not show the necessary care and concern needed by future head pastors.⁷² The result led to a stronger emphasis on relationships within the congregation. Favoritism appeared a concern leading to neglect among some of the individuals who received hands-on training during the learning stage.⁷³ Head pastors adapted through their selection process while implementing participation in urban AGC churches. A firm focus on classes and sessions during the growing stage presented training and content as too rigid which discouraged individuals.⁷⁴ The adjustment by head pastors provided a more encouraging approach to uphold leaders and disciples.

Areas of neglect continued after the leadership transition from missionaries to head pastors at urban AGC churches. The fellowship stage emphasized the value of groups, yet it did not address the individual needs of congregants. Participation situated individuals in places of ministry; however, their participation focused on ministry (doing) rather than their character (being). Similar to the fellowship stage, encouragement became a primary emphasis directed by head pastors. The neglect demonstrated through the encouragement stage directly equated encouragement with growth while addressing the body at large rather than individual progression.

⁷² Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

⁷³ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

⁷⁴ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

Final Remarks About Educational Data

Missionary Involvement

Learning, serving, and growing directed the initial leadership and discipleship training as Christian education commenced in urban AGC churches. Missionaries' relationships with future head pastors found balance by emphasizing ministry and character throughout the preparation stages. Directing, assisting, and viewing the progression within leadership and discipleship provided an environment for obtaining knowledge, skills, and character growth.

Teaching and training within group formats and individual focus facilitated progression during the earliest years of missionary involvement. Structured learning provided recognition of ministry and character as opportunities for service emerged in local churches. Direct involvement through a hands-on approach positioned missionaries as role models, while long-term relationships moved the Fellowship forward during the first decade. Their labor established leadership and discipleship potential for the future as they handed authority to head pastors by applying their upbringing under missionary tutelage.

Head Pastor Implementation

Fellowship, participation, and encouragement advance leadership development and discipleship following the years of missionary involvement. Group focus with proven resources continues to enable the enhancement of relationships between head pastors and congregants. Joining together, functioning as a group, and growing within local churches moves the Fellowship toward the next generation of urban Khmer Christians.

Current leadership functions in urban AGC churches position individuals to oversee others, maintain personal responsibilities, and represent the congregation's leadership structure. Discipleship functions uphold key principles including trust, ability, and assistance as individuals serve under the head pastor and church leaders. These combined efforts between leadership and discipleship direct congregations toward necessary ministries in a Khmer context.

Conclusion

Urban AGC churches in Phnom Penh continue after three decades due to leadership development and discipleship methodologies connected to Christian education. Service and sacrifice, demonstrated by missionaries in the past and current head pastors, produced teaching and training for Khmer Christians of various backgrounds. The result is a system for dedicated workers who can serve and fulfill the necessary roles within urban AGC churches. Training leaders and disciples can impact the congregation while inspiring individuals to participate in the local church's ministry models and functions.

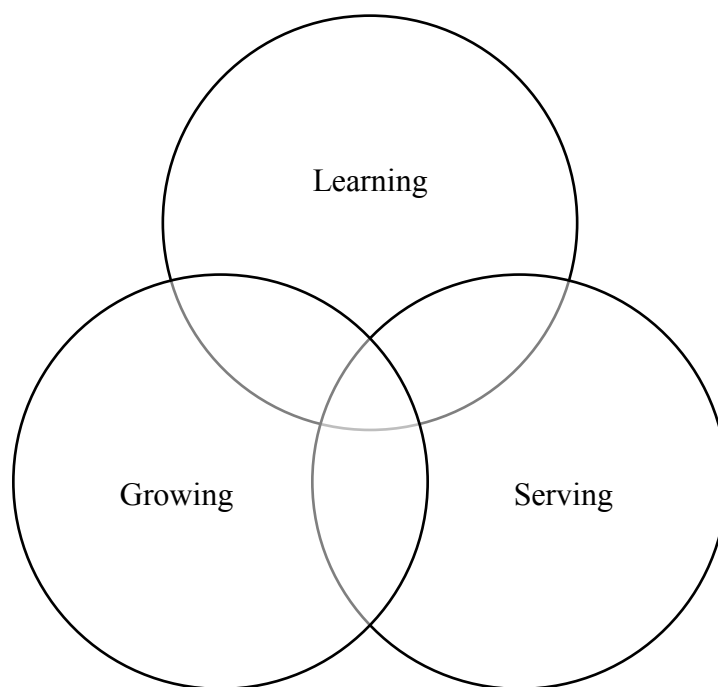


Figure 23. Leadership and Discipleship Emphasis Model through Missionary Involvement

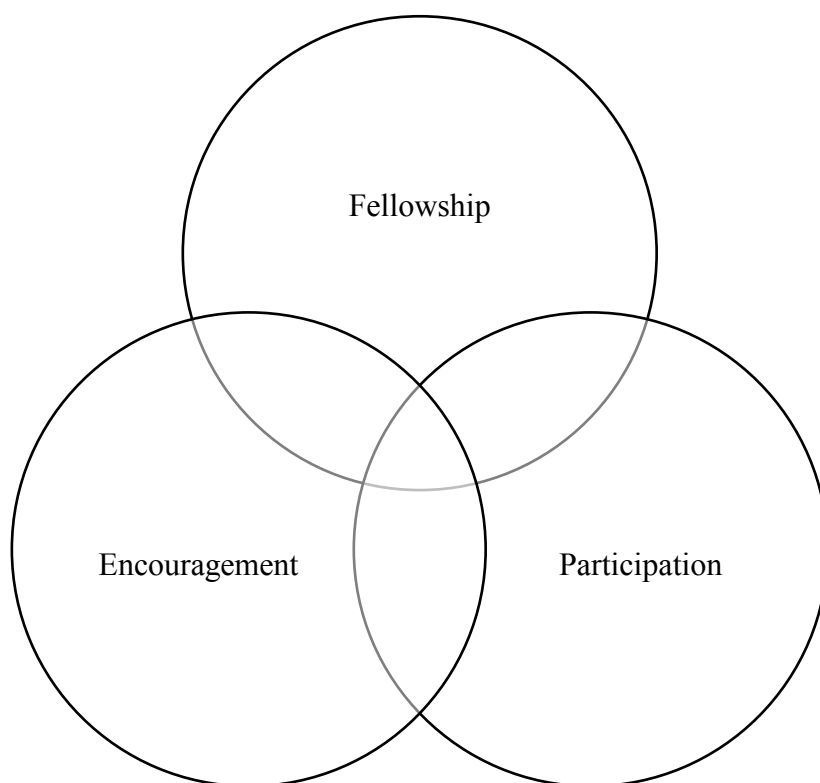


Figure 24. Leadership and Discipleship Emphasis Model through Head Pastor Implementation

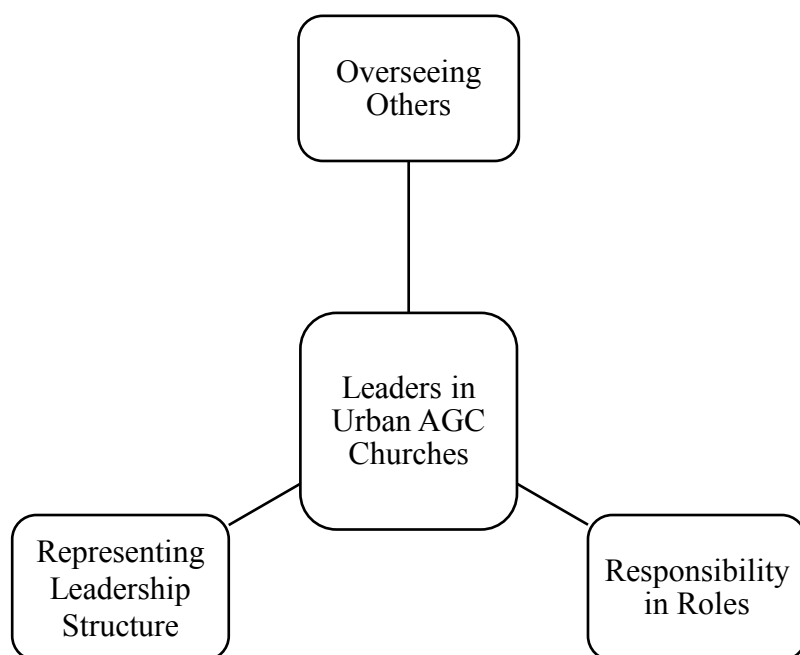


Figure 25. Leadership Functions in Urban AGC Churches

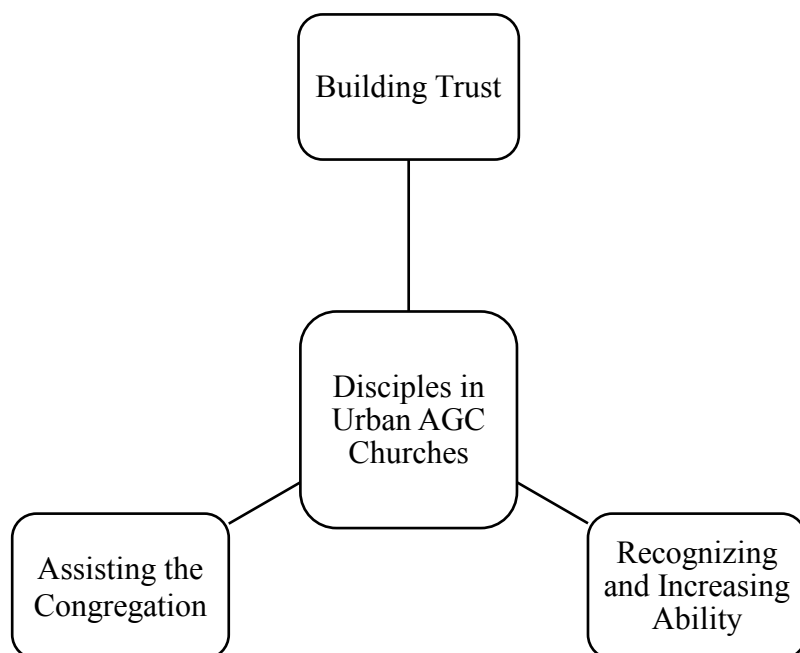


Figure 26. Discipleship Functions in Urban AGC Churches

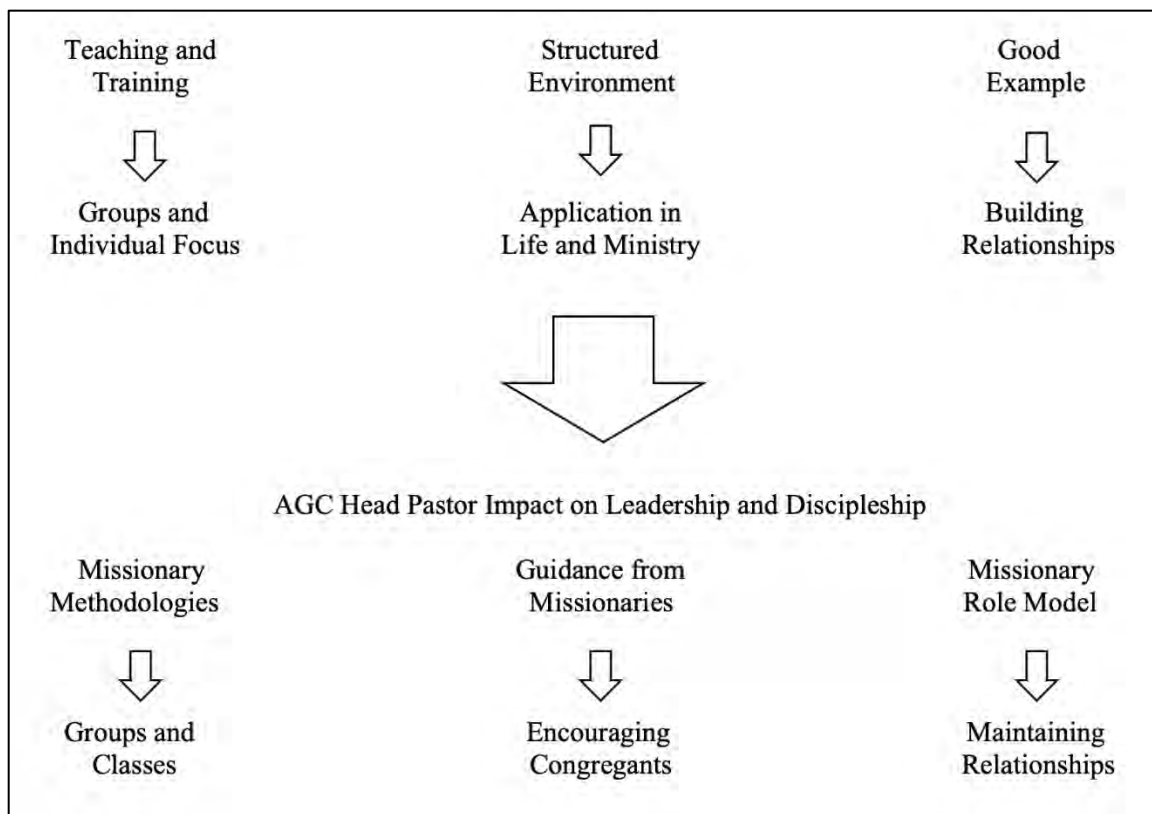


Figure 27. AG Missionary Impact on Leadership and Discipleship

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
AND DISCIPLESHIP METHODOLOGIES AT URBAN
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

“The coming of the kingdom of God is not something
that can be observed, nor will people say, “Here it is,’
or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God
is in your midst” (Luke 17:20b-21).

The Kingdom of God in the Kingdom of Cambodia

From Refugee Camp to Orphanage to Pulpit

The Sunday worship service at Hope Church is scheduled to begin shortly after I find a seat for participant observation. After getting settled, the assistant pastor, Van Narith, asks if I will lead the congregation in prayer because there will be special recognition for the church leadership as they recognize pastor and leader appreciation month. I agree to his request and prepare a few brief remarks shortly before the worship service begins.

The worship team leader opens the service and leads the congregation in a variety of older and newer songs in the Khmer language. People across the sanctuary lift their voices and hands as they celebrate another Sunday gathering. A few individuals arrive late and catch their breath after climbing the four flights of stairs. As the worship time concludes with a slow song for reflection, the congregation focuses its attention on prayer needs in the church. Overall, the ease and flow of the service make me feel at home

among my Khmer brothers and sisters. I make my way to the platform and lead the congregation in a prayer of appreciation and blessing for the pastors and leaders at Hope Church.

While looking around the congregation, I see the faces of Christians who have persevered. The older generation still lives with the scars from the civil war, the Khmer Rouge genocide, and the Vietnamese occupation. Youth and children have been more fortunate as the country has progressively rebuilt, yet their stories evoke continuing pain still felt by millions. Some of the younger generation were born in refugee camps while others were raised in orphanages. Narith encountered both in his earliest years of life.

Born along the Cambodia-Thailand border, Narith was considered a refugee in his own country following the years of war, genocide, and occupation. His father was frequently away due to his service in the military, and his mother struggled with health issues shortly after his birth. Although Cambodia endured the process of rebuilding the country through the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the country remained in shambles with its people scattered throughout refugee camps. Food and medicine were limited, death lingered, and hope was distant.

Narith's mother passed away when he was only three years old. He was shuffled around different areas as people tried to reunite with displaced family members who relocated for economic possibilities. At age five, Narith's family decided to find an orphanage to take care of him during trying times. A Buddhist orphanage in Kampong Som Province orphanage opened its doors to children; however, they denied Narith's application. The family then contacted an Assemblies of God (AG) orphanage, which graciously welcomed young Narith.

The formative years at the orphanage made an impression on his life as he realized how God continually protected him. Various missionaries and Khmer teachers poured into his life and encouraged him in areas such as teaching and music. Narith moved to Phnom Penh after completing high school at the orphanage campus and began studying electrical engineering at a university. While preparing for a career, he joined Hope Church and learned more about pastoral ministry from Pastor Phan Sokha. After completing his engineering degree and serving four years in ministry alongside Pastor Phan Sokha, Narith considered a ministerial degree at Bible school and preparation for vocational ministry at his church. He graduated at the top of his class at Cambodia Bible Institute (CBI) with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible and church ministries. After watching his journey to serve in full-time ministry, I now have the privilege to hear him preach on a Sunday morning.

After greeting the congregation, Narith preaches from the Book of Acts. He shares from Acts 3 about Peter and John's encounter with the crippled man near the temple gate. Asking questions, providing illustrations, and encouraging the congregation come naturally to Narith. Preaching about kingdom of God principles emanates from the pulpit and spreads throughout the sanctuary. His educational background coupled with genuine kindness mesh harmoniously, causing a response from those in attendance. The sermon carries the same gentleness while reminding the brothers and sisters about responsibilities when sharing Christ and serving others.

Narith's desire through his ministry is simple: see more leaders trained and more believers discipled. While listening to Narith, I see great potential for the future of urban Christianity in Phnom Penh. This is a leader I have befriended, and I admire his

willingness to invest in others through leadership development and discipleship in his local congregation. I marvel at his journey from a refugee camp along the Cambodia-Thailand border, to a Christian orphanage in Kampong Som Province, to the pulpit at Hope Church in Phnom Penh.

Living Testimonies in Phnom Penh

Interviews and participant observation at the six research sites placed me near faithful men and women with life stories and testimonies like Narith. “Living testimonies” is how I describe them when people ask about leaders and laity at Assemblies of God Cambodia (AGC) churches in Phnom Penh. Their journeys to find salvation in Christ, their willingness to serve in local churches, their personal evangelism efforts in day-to-day life, and their hope for the future of Christianity in Cambodia inspire me as a missionary.

Kingdom of God principles are evident when I see the urban AGC churches and their ministries. They recognize Christianity as a religion of action by incorporating preaching, teaching, evangelism, prayer, and fasting to reach their communities. Life stories and testimonies serve as examples to the Buddhist majority in Phnom Penh. Examples lead to a progression including curiosity, hearing, contemplating, surrendering, baptism, and discipleship. The function and flow of the congregations maintain an environment for germane ministry amid an ever-growing metropolis.

Joining with Khmer believers at urban AGC churches like Hope Church revealed weekly ministry involvement to me within the Christian subculture in Cambodia. Seeing men and women of various ages and generations, former refugees and orphans, and of a Buddhist background creates a unique perspective in a country with a troubled history.

Using kingdom of God principles coupled with leadership development and discipleship methodologies put urban churches in Phnom Penh, such as Hope Church, in a strategic place at the present time and for years to come. The commitment and diligence shown by Narith and those like him authenticate effective ministry for Khmer leaders and disciples.

Serving through Leadership Development and Discipleship

Many events have transpired since I launched into cross-cultural ministry as a missionary in Cambodia. After a change of scenery from the urban setting to provincial life in 2012, I experienced regular interaction with leadership development and discipleship. As a young missionary equipped with a desire to serve, previous ministry experience in America, and a fair amount of naivety, I gradually recognized some of the basic needs among Khmer leaders and disciples. Learning from them and hearing their stories inspired me to do more through teaching and training.

The journey toward comprehending the history, culture, and education aspects came from serving alongside veteran AG missionaries. Their graciousness allowed opportunities for sharing among Khmer believers and gaining experience as a practitioner. Preaching in AGC churches became an honor to connect with the people during worship services. My first sermon, as mentioned in the conclusion of this dissertation, was a driving fervor during my earliest years on the field, and it remains close to my heart while continually endeavoring through leadership development and discipleship.

Returning to Phnom Penh for full-time ministry at CBI in 2014 allowed new opportunities for leadership development and discipleship. Teaching classes, training ministers of various backgrounds, and preaching in chapel services situated me alongside

individuals such as Narith. Most of all, I experienced face-to-face encounters with faithful men and women who poignantly considered the cost of their sacrifices and willingly gave of themselves for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. The example of these individuals, many of whom are first-generation Christians, continues to inspire me.

Ethnographic Research at Urban AGC Churches in Phnom Penh

Qualitative Research Approaches

Research at the six sites in Phnom Penh included intentional alignment with social constructivism. As I observed leadership development and discipleship at the sites, questions related to culture and education could be formulated in the most appropriate way for presenting common understanding and principles among the people. Interviewee data provided a cultural portrait of urban AGC churches while sharing views and meanings concerning cultural norms and a portrayal of their life setting.¹ Inquiry through social constructivism allowed a comprehensive analysis during each stage of the research.

Stemming from an analysis based on social constructivism, specific aspects relating to history, culture, and education created a basis for interpreting data. Writing with an ethnographic approach to inquiry combined the cultural reflection of analysis along with personal interpretation through reflexivity. Hearing and seeing the

¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed., (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 25.

interviewees' values provided proper positioning as interpretations relate to the research problem and the five sub-questions.²

Ample research time at urban AGC churches permitted direct contact for data collection among interviewees and participants. The close distance at each site coupled with multiple perspectives situated the research within a methodological framework with an emerging design.³ The process led to the description, analysis, and interpretation about the vital components of history, culture, and education.⁴

Interviews and Participant Observation

Field research during my third missionary term began in September 2019 and ended in August 2021. The two-year period included missionary interviews with leaders from four mission groups, seven missionary interviews with AG field personnel, thirty Khmer national interviews, and participant observation at the six research sites. Each interview was audio-recorded and put into transcript form, with the Khmer interviews personally translated into English. Participant observation notes were recorded during each service, training session, strategy meeting, and fellowship gathering.

Historical information was gathered from the eleven missionary interviews and documents from the AGC national office. Cultural information was based on twenty-four interviews with Khmer nationals and participant observation. Education information included six interviews with Khmer national pastors and participant observation. My

² Ibid., 216.

³ Ibid., 21.

⁴ Harry F. Wolcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 10.

research problem and five sub-questions were continually filtered through the historical, cultural, and educational aspects as I engaged in the two-year field research process.

Focus Group Discussion

After completing the field research in Phnom Penh during my third missionary term, I returned to the United States in November 2021 for a furlough. I arranged an online meeting via Zoom with five AG missionaries on January 3, 2022. The missionaries previously took part in historical interviews and included Ann Greve, Ken Huff, Dareth Ly, Kelly Robinette, and Troy Tabor. The meeting lasted approximately one and a half hours with a presentation of historical, cultural, and educational data. While moderating the meeting, discussion among the focus group members highlighted leadership development and discipleship methodologies at urban AGC churches.

The primary purpose of the focus group meeting was validation of the leadership and discipleship field research at urban AGC churches. The combination of participant observation at the six sites and interviews with Khmer nationals in addition to a focus group with veteran AG missionaries provided necessary triangulation. Presenting leadership and discipleship themes from the data analysis allowed the five participants to share viewpoints and ask questions leading into the findings.⁵

Description of Findings

Historical Research Components

Providing a historical overview of the research commenced by interviewing veteran missionaries from four non-AG mission groups and AG personnel. The data from

⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 252.

the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), Overseas Missionary Fellowship International (OMF), World Team, and Youth with a Mission (YWAM) presented a general perspective of Cambodia during the rebuilding process of the early 1990s. The semi-structured historical interviews with missionaries allowed more specific questions for subsequent field research at urban AGC churches.

Conducting the missionary interviews provided perception by inquiring about significant actions and events.⁶ Historical questions described the scene which greeted cross-cultural workers upon their arrival in Cambodia. My intentions posited the challenges of missionary work during the 1990s and the necessities of relief and development efforts before traditional church ministries launched. As missionaries explained initial strategies and methodologies, their open discussion led to personal stories, testimonies, triumphs, setbacks, and musings about urban ministry during the 1990s. The missionaries' first-hand interaction afforded the facts about situations in addition to personal reflection.⁷

Questions for the four mission groups included questions to identify the Christian situation in Phnom Penh during the rebuilding process and the mission group's history during its initial year in Cambodia. Additional questions focused on specific strategies for leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Interviews with AG missionaries were similar, yet the discussion included more details about the

⁶ Pablo A. Deiros, "Historical Research," in *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 135.

⁷ Ibid.

Fellowship's history and the missionaries' personal interaction with urban AGC churches.

Results from the historical interviews provided data for understanding the urban setting during the 1990s and the necessary approaches with missionary involvement. The events, setting, and uniqueness of missionary activity in Cambodia enhanced my understanding of the causal interactions among cross-cultural workers and nationals.⁸ Data about leadership development and discipleship methodologies revealed how non-AG mission groups and AG field personnel coped with challenges before religious freedom and the necessity of government protocols in urban and rural settings. Furthermore, results from the interviews yielded insights into the research sites' cultural and educational data.

Cultural Research Components

Cultural studies at the six research sites carried the bulk of the overall research process while conducting the ethnography. Interviews with twenty-four individuals included a mixed sampling of gender, age, educational background, and church ministry role. Regular interaction at the sites with interviews and participant observation provided adequate time for collecting data. The eventual result included cultural descriptions of urban AGC churches as a subculture and their regular ministries directed toward leadership development and discipleship. Throughout the research process, participants'

⁸ Ibid., 136.

views in addition to my views as a researcher incorporated emic and etic principles in the ethnography.⁹

Interviewees responded to semi-structured questions about Khmer culture, urban Christianity, and local church ministry. During the interview process, individuals felt comfortable sharing their Christian background, specifics about culture, and roles at church. Joining their churches for participant observation provided additional opportunities to discuss weekly ministries, especially leadership and discipleship. The research sites conveyed settings conducive to collaboration while sharing life in the congregants' environment.¹⁰

Special emphasis on culture directed the interview questions toward Khmer culture, Christian perspectives about culture, leadership perspectives, and discipleship perspectives. Descriptions about leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving provided essential data regarding Khmer culture and the Khmer Christian subculture. Cultural and ministerial areas received special attention throughout the research for identifying patterns in the analysis and interpretation processes.¹¹ Many interviewees added personal testimonies about their Buddhist background, the desire to serve in ministry, and ministerial influences from missionaries and head pastors.

⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 96.

¹⁰ R. Daniel Shaw, "Qualitative Social Science Methods in Research Design," in *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 145.

¹¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 198.

A cultural portrait of urban AGC churches emerged from the interview data and participant observation at the research sites.¹² Cultural intricacies and nuances highlighted specific ministry definitions, purposes, engagement, roles, and plans directed toward leadership development and discipleship methodologies. The associated themes portrayed urban Khmer Christians functioning in an active ministerial environment, recognizing purposes for existence, and utilizing opportunities for continual growth. Furthermore, this provided firsthand experiences for writing the ethnography with narrative encodings as I joined worship services and training sessions at the research sites.

Educational Research Components

Participant observation at the research sites for acquiring cultural data positioned me to monitor leadership development and discipleship training sessions. Additional interviews with the six head pastors provided personal insights for strategies and methods through Christian education in urban AGC churches. Understanding the local context of education used for leadership development and discipleship revealed significant variables as urban Khmer Christians receive training.¹³ Moreover, the educational data corresponded with preceding research at the sites related to culture and history.

Regular interaction at the research sites through interviews and participant observation developed amity with congregants, especially with the head pastors. The semi-structured education interviews with each of the head pastors allowed casual

¹² Ibid, 96.

¹³ Edgar J. Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 120.

dialogue and discussion about their viewpoints. They graciously provided time by sharing their experiences and personal involvement in Christian education. Frequent visits to the research sites and genuine rapport with the six head pastors yielded the necessary details for understanding leadership and discipleship activities.

The cultural interviews with twenty-four Khmer leaders and laypersons provided the framework for moving into questions and discussions about education at the research sites. Interview questions related to initial methods by missionaries, selecting and training leaders, strategies for discipleship, and incorporating groups as the primary education medium. Due to the close bonds between the missionaries who planted churches and provided mentoring, head pastors shared valuable insights as they received instruction and reciprocated the training by investing in their congregations.

Emphasis on the transition from missionary involvement to head pastor implementation allowed a clear understanding of each site's educational focus. Curriculum, both past and present, relayed the ongoing development of training resources incorporated for leadership development and discipleship. The interaction describing initial missionary activity, current supervision from church leaders, and ongoing plans for regular training portray a system for enabling holistic learning.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., 121.

Analysis of Historical Findings¹⁵

Historical Comparisons from the Interview Data

Interviews with the four missionaries from C&MA, OMF, World Team, and YWAM, along with the seven AG missionaries indicate consistency in themes and subthemes. Data from the eleven interviews can be arranged together for portraying the ministerial environment for missionaries arriving in Cambodia during the 1990s. The themes and subthemes directly relate to leadership development and discipleship methodologies as Khmer nationals developed relationships with missionaries, new ministries began in urban and rural areas, and relief and development projects led to worship sites.

Themes from the four mission groups emphasize general methodologies, leadership development, and discipleship. From the general methodologies theme, subthemes include missionary personnel, initial focus, fellowship, ministry sites, contextualization, and organization. Themes about leadership and discipleship relate to overall strategies, selecting leaders, and implementing discipleship. Data emerging from the themes and subthemes point toward three repeated patterns: collective and individualistic tendencies, transformation and tensions, and national leaders' characteristics.

The AG missionary interview data revealed six primary themes: strategy, methodology, national leaders, growth, tensions, and cooperation/fellowship. Three subthemes emerged from each of the six primary themes including areas such as

¹⁵ See Appendix A, "History Data," which contains charts with additional historical data.

missionary involvement, field ministries, leadership, discipleship, and the national church fellowship. The themes and subthemes reflect initial efforts during the 1990s as relief and development projects led to the emphasis on leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches.

Combining the AG themes and subthemes with the data from the four mission groups presents an overview of missionaries during the 1990s as mission groups, denominations, and fellowships arrived in Cambodia. A summarization of the historical content through the six primary themes from AG missionary interviews points toward a general overview including initial efforts, leadership development, and discipleship. Table 26 below shows the similarities between missionary interview data and the AG themes used for mission foundations.

Table 26. Primary Historical Themes

<i>Four Mission Groups</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>
Personnel and Initial Focus	Strategy
Fellowship	Methodology
Sites and Resources	National Leaders
Contextualization and Organization	Growth
Strategies	Tensions
Implementation	Cooperation and Fellowship

Six Historical Themes

Strategy

Missionaries arrived in Cambodia during the 1990s to establish a base of operations for future church ministries. Although plans included leadership development and discipleship, most of the missionary involvement included relief and development projects as a platform.¹⁶ Ministry in local churches emerged from the projects by

¹⁶ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

partnering with Khmer nationals. Working alongside potential leaders paved the way as various groups, including the AG, C&MA, OMF, World Team, and YWAM, pursued opportunities for creating a national church or long-term centralized ministry led by Khmer nationals.

Methodology

As evangelistic opportunities arose within the relief and development projects, Khmer believers served alongside missionaries and received basic training.¹⁷ Common methodologies included building relationships with nationals at the projects and guiding them through doctrinal studies. Although few resources existed in Cambodia during the earliest years of missionary involvement, translation efforts allowed for some training materials, such as Train and Multiply and Firm Foundations for disciples and potential leaders. Most leaders were already connected to relief and development projects and continued serving while receiving training from the missionaries. Before church buildings in Cambodia became customary in urban or rural settings, house fellowships or project sites were regularly used for conducting leadership and discipleship classes.¹⁸

National Leaders

Missionaries directed attention toward investing in national leaders as relief and development projects and church ministries took shape. Mentoring, advising, and guiding Khmer nationals in life and ministry enhanced opportunities for growth and experience. Although some groups and organizations chose to pay ministerial salaries, missionaries

¹⁷ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

¹⁸ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

from the AG, C&MA, OMF, World Team, and YWAM avoided salaries for church workers. As house churches and worship sites at projects began, groups emphasized contextualized approaches by making Christianity applicable to Khmer Christians rather than having Western characteristics.¹⁹ Furthermore, missionaries selected national leaders based on availability, rather than Christian maturity, and those having a penchant or persona for leadership.²⁰

Growth

After Cambodia opened to missionaries, primary roles required constant involvement with relief and development projects. Obligations to government protocols positioned missionaries at schools, orphanages, medical clinics, and English centers.²¹ As freedom increased for Christians following the 1993 general elections, Christianity grew throughout the country. Ministries launched and expanded through relief and development projects in both urban and rural areas. House churches led by missionaries became the center of worship activities and training opportunities.²² Overall, growth and transformation came over time as projects and churches progressed during the 1990s.

Tensions

As shown by balancing relief and development projects with church ministries, it became challenging for mission groups, denominations, and fellowships to create a

¹⁹ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

²⁰ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

²¹ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

²² Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

centralized plan of action in Cambodia. Differences in ministerial philosophies between projects and churches caused issues among groups and workers due to trying to find a proper balance between the two areas.²³ Although areas of ministry existed in various parts of the country, limited technology and scattered personnel intensified challenges.²⁴ Finances also caused concern while allotting resources to maintain government protocols without causing dependency or patron-client issues to arise.²⁵

Cooperation and Fellowship

Relationships among missionaries from various groups, denominations, and fellowships commonly occurred in Cambodia during the 1990s. Before the early 2000s, global workers did not view ministry in terms of denominational lines affording periodical occasions for sharing life together.²⁶ Fellowship can be viewed as the common denominator among mission groups as close bonds existed among those laboring amid the earliest years. House gatherings for worship, prayer, and discussion allowed cross-cultural workers opportunities for sharing experiences and challenges during the years of pioneering ministries.²⁷ As relief and development projects and church plants expanded throughout Cambodia, missionaries and Khmer nationals formed relational bonds of

²³ Missionaries from the four mission groups and AG missionaries referred to the ongoing scenarios between the relief and development projects and church ministries. Field personnel remained somewhat divided based on personal preferences and mission philosophies after Cambodia opened to cross-cultural workers.

²⁴ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

²⁵ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

²⁶ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

²⁷ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

friendship and service. Fellowship among missionaries and nationals continued as groups met for leadership development and discipleship. Although some one-on-one training and mentoring took place between missionaries and nationals in the 1990s, many ministries favored groups.²⁸

Historical Themes and the Impact on Leadership Development and Discipleship

Strategy

Mission groups, denominations, and fellowships incorporated leadership development and discipleship from the outset of starting projects and programs. Because of the fellowship bonds shared among global workers in the 1990s, sharing meals and resources aided momentum in ministry efforts. Leadership and discipleship materials, especially those already translated into the Khmer language, circulated among the small pockets of global workers and Khmer Christians. Missionaries utilized any available resources as the initial years of training leaders and disciples progressed in Phnom Penh and rural settings.²⁹

As missionaries gained an open door through relief and development efforts, leadership and discipleship potential increased as the government recognized Christianity as a practicable religion in Cambodia. The expansion of ministry opportunities throughout the 1990s led to more nationals receiving training directly from the missionaries. However, missionaries continued to serve as the primary source for training individuals during a time with varied strategies and remaining particular about their

²⁸ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

²⁹ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

ministry territories in Cambodia.³⁰ As missionaries selected individuals from project sites, leadership development was typically the first step. Leadership took precedence as nationals received training causing discipleship to become somewhat limited, especially as church ministries began in urban and rural areas.

Methodology

Relationships enabled continuous ministry opportunities throughout the 1990s and the following decades. Missionaries demonstrated their genuine ability to connect with Khmer nationals and assist them through levels of leadership development and discipleship. As Bible schools launched in the 1990s, the relationships guided individuals to prepare for vocational ministry and enhance their Christian education. However, limitations on the number of available Khmer Christians and resources for training caused slow progress. Although not all potential leaders attended Bible schools, missionaries continued to train nationals through relief and development projects and church plants. Due to the small number of Khmer Christians during the initial decade, missionaries generally chose any available individuals, regardless of personal issues or lack of Christian growth.³¹ Training continued through missionaries with on-hand resources providing instruction to leadership and discipleship groups.

³⁰ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

³¹ Kelly Robinette shared about a young Khmer believer who assisted missionaries at a church plant in Phnom Penh. The workers wondered about his ethical sincerity, yet they trained him to serve as a pastor due to the small number of potential leaders. As one of the missionaries left Cambodia for a furlough, the young man sold the church's equipment and abandoned the congregation.

National Leaders

Despite the requirements to fulfill government protocols through relief and development projects, missionaries intended to train Khmer leaders and disciples for future church ministries in Cambodia. Investing in future national leaders was a significant aspect of each project in urban and rural areas. Denominations and fellowships considered the long-term ramifications while preparing individuals to fill roles in national churches. Some missionaries arrived in Cambodia after serving in other parts of Asia with years of experience. However, other missionaries had no prior cross-cultural ministry experience and did not use proper contextualization.³² As missionaries trained nationals, some nationals expected a patron-client framework to provide mutual benefits for themselves along with missionaries.³³ Regardless of creating patronage systems or participating in regular training, some missionaries became territorial and particular of their trainees.

Growth

The 1990s in Cambodia can be viewed as a decade of Christian growth following the years of rebuilding after war, genocide, and occupation. Government officials graciously welcome missionaries as relief and development workers for projects throughout the country. Although projects carried the potential for the general well-being of Cambodian citizens, mission groups, denominations, and fellowships strategized for open doors and planting churches. Projects situated throughout urban and rural areas

³² Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

³³ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

allowed missionaries to envision future worship sites, progress in local churches, and Khmer national leaders.³⁴ Government protocols permitted missionaries in Cambodia, yet the ongoing requirements limited church planting and ministerial training during the earliest years. Roles and responsibilities among missionaries demonstrated the necessity for maintaining projects while preparing opportunities to train leaders and disciples. The situation confused nationals who wondered about the intentions of missionaries starting projects rather than planting churches. As the process continued throughout the 1990s, missionaries realized the volatility of the country and moved with haste to incorporate leadership development without necessary discipleship steps.

Tensions

Despite tensions among missionaries and mission groups, training leaders and disciples continued throughout the 1990s.³⁵ Relationships and group gatherings provided occasions for pouring into lives and ministries. Prioritizing training through ministry opportunities at projects and churches created training networks for nationals. Ongoing government protocols and varied methods for leadership and discipleship created questions about overall strategies in Cambodia. As relief and development projects received significant funding, misunderstandings lingered among missionaries and nationals alike.³⁶

³⁴ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

³⁵ Among AG missionary interviewees, repeated concerns described the lack of a clear vision for the 1990s flowing through strategic projects and church ministries. Most field personnel served according to their preferences and previous ministry experiences.

³⁶ Some AG missionaries became displeased due to the amount of money used for relief and development projects rather than church planting. They argued more emphasis could be placed on

Cooperation and Fellowship

By the end of the 1990s, missionaries witnessed firsthand the importance of cooperating and joining together through training and discipling Khmer believers. Mission groups, denominations, and fellowships actively served to establish separate ministry networks; however, fellowship remained intact with few barriers among the groups.³⁷ Urban and rural worship sites experienced partnership as missionaries handed responsibilities to nationals for continuation in local churches. Some areas grew indigenously while others remained dependent on missionaries for support and resources. As nationals led congregations, leadership development and discipleship differed from missionaries' approaches. The overall transmission of training slowed with fewer results from the nationals instructing other nationals.³⁸

Historical Significance of AG Efforts in the 1990s

AG missionaries with a pioneering focus created the necessary foundation for subsequent years in Cambodia. Their dedication built long-term relationships leading to leadership development and discipleship.³⁹ The result includes a national church and local church ministries led by Khmer nationals. Throughout the challenges encountered during the 1990s, their initial experiences guided a new generation of missionaries who continue serving.

leadership development and discipleship if funds went to missionaries serving in churches rather than projects.

³⁷ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

³⁸ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

³⁹ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

Strategies for leadership and discipleship expanded as more mission groups, denominations, and fellowships entered the country. AG personnel quickly understood the value of partnership, balancing projects with local church ministries, using proper contextualization among the Khmer people, evaluating progression, and holding firm to cardinal principles. The Fellowship's legacy in Cambodia points back to the first group of AG missionaries and their willingness to assist broken people during desperate times.⁴⁰

Religious freedom coupled with ongoing relief and development projects allowed missionaries regular opportunities for an expanded base of operations. As missionaries maintained a close connection with nationals and urban ministries, they continued starting house churches in Phnom Penh. Seven churches existed in the capital city by 1999, and some already had Khmer nationals serving as head pastors.

Research site interaction, including five of the six which began in the 1990s, provided a firsthand understanding of the influence of missionaries during the AGC's first decade. Listening to stories and testimonies from leaders and laity offered numerous accounts of missionaries planting worship sites while training and mentoring individuals. The results reveal urban AGC churches advancing with national leaders and evangelizing their local areas in Phnom Penh. My firsthand encounters at the research sites caused me to appreciate the early years of pioneering and understand the gratitude from those who continue in place of the missionaries. Individuals at the sites recognize the contributions missionaries made during the 1990s and the church leaders who personally received training. Table 27 shows the research sites and their connection to missionaries.

⁴⁰ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

Table 27. Research Site Establishment and Founder

<i>Church Name</i>	<i>Year of Establishment</i>	<i>Founder⁴¹</i>
Faith Church	1999	Khmer Head Pastor
Hope Church	2007	Khmer Head Pastor
Peace Church	1996	Filipino Missionary
Life Church	1992	American Missionary
Praise Church	1999	Singaporean Missionary
Grace Church	1996	Korean Missionary

Analysis of Cultural Findings⁴²

Khmer Culture Definitions

Comparisons between leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving traits allowed an initial overview of Khmer culture for urban ethnographic studies. The cultural foundation flows into the Christian subculture with traits related to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches. Traits for each area typically overlap as frequent, repetitive descriptions indicate.

Field research interviews with twenty-four Khmer nationals representing males and females, various age groups, educational backgrounds, and work experience offered a suitable sampling. Although interviewees provided similar and repeated responses, the descriptions included a broad range of traits. Comprehensive lists of leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving portray the intricate details within Khmer culture.

Due to the ethnographic approach to inquiry, most data originated from cultural parameters. Khmer culture traits established a necessary foundation for describing the Christian subculture definitions and comparing the interview data.⁴³ Moreover, leadership

⁴¹ The two Khmer head pastors who founded churches received mentoring from AG missionaries and started their ministries in urban churches planted by AG missionaries.

⁴² See Appendix B, "Culture Data," which contains charts with additional cultural data.

⁴³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 176.

development and discipleship characteristics at the research sites remain consistent with the cultural and subcultural data. Figure 28 below shows the four areas and most significant traits of Khmer culture.

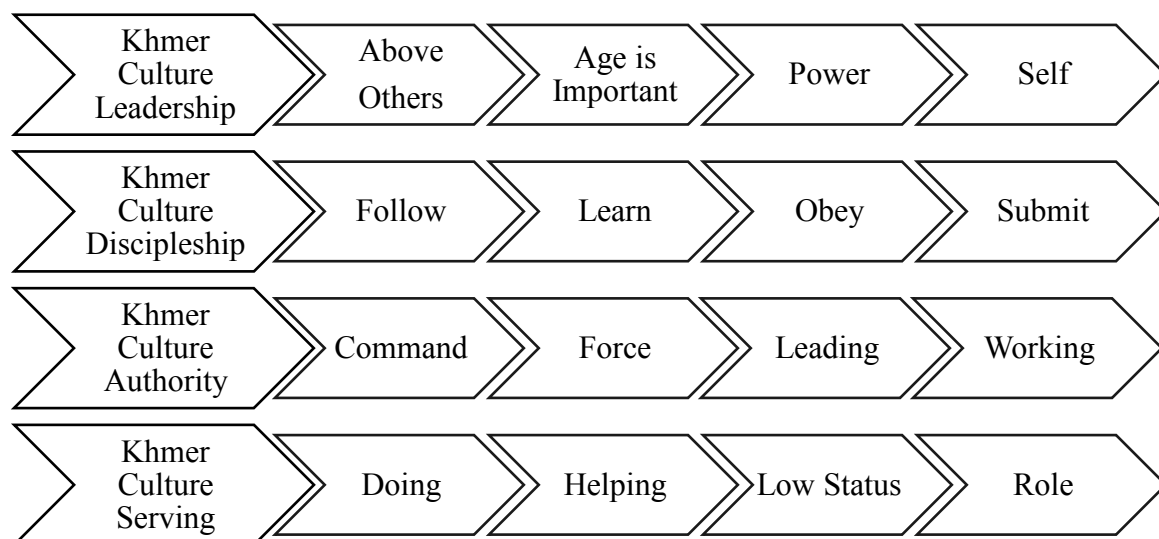


Figure 28. Khmer Culture Depictions

Khmer Leadership Traits According to Culture

Cultural interviews provided forty areas revealing common leadership traits in Khmer culture. Although the interviewees responded with numerous descriptions, twelve traits represent the most repeated areas. A hierarchical structure exhibits the nature of leadership in the Khmer culture with an individual remaining distant from others. People viewed as leaders are known for their power and ability to maintain authority. Individuals without leadership roles have less influence and remain below leaders.⁴⁴ Acknowledgment of true leaders in Cambodia typically includes those with proficiency in leadership stretching across a significant duration.

⁴⁴ Van Narith, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 7, 2019.

*Khmer Discipleship Traits
According to Culture*

Discipleship descriptions revealed thirty-two traits during the interviews with twelve traits regularly repeated. Many of the responses and descriptions are opposite when comparing leadership and discipleship. While the areas of experience and knowledge represent both leadership and discipleship in Khmer culture, many of the traits differ vastly. Interviewees described these two areas as progressively acquiring in discipleship scenarios rather than leaders who already possess them.

Khmer culture views discipleship in an inferior way due to its association with younger people who are students. As the traits relate to students and their lower standing, the hierarchy also represents the upper echelon.⁴⁵ Frequent references to teachers, those who have leadership roles above students, demonstrate their authority and the capability to remind students about subservient positions.

*Khmer Authority Traits
According to Culture*

Interviewees identified forty areas of authority traits in Khmer culture. As twelve frequently mentioned traits indicate, descriptions refer to individuals with authority as leaders who have significant titles and remain above others. Although roles and positions are involved, authority is constant and demonstrated by words and actions.

Traits associated with authority in Khmer culture reveal many similarities with leadership traits. Due to the hierarchical structure, authoritative individuals remain

⁴⁵ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

distant. Their interaction with others involves forcefully giving commands or orders while expecting obedience and respect.⁴⁶

*Khmer Serving Traits
According to Culture*

The depictions of serving in Khmer culture show the lower side of the hierarchy through thirty-six traits. In addition to the general overview, repeated traits show serving roles related to common tasks for benefiting individuals with leadership roles and authority. Traits about serving align with discipleship and typically reflect the roles of young, inexperienced individuals meeting the needs of others.⁴⁷ Khmer culture acknowledges the commonality of serving yet views it with contempt due to its lower standing.

Khmer Christian Subculture Definitions

Because the central research question pertains to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Phnom Penh, interviews within the Khmer Christian subculture provide insight regarding its structure and functions. Perspectives from the interviews portray urban Khmer Christians in a Buddhist-dominated culture. Descriptions about the leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving traits yield data related to their involvement with leadership and discipleship in AGC churches.

Leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving traits emerge from descriptions based on a biblical interpretation. The Khmer Christian subculture traits point toward a

⁴⁶ Sut Veasna, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁴⁷ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

foundation of interaction among leaders and laity at urban AGC churches. Ministries stemming from the research sites portray a culture-sharing group as part of the larger culture while participating in regular events and activities.⁴⁸ Figure 29 shows the four areas and most significant traits of the Khmer Christian subculture.

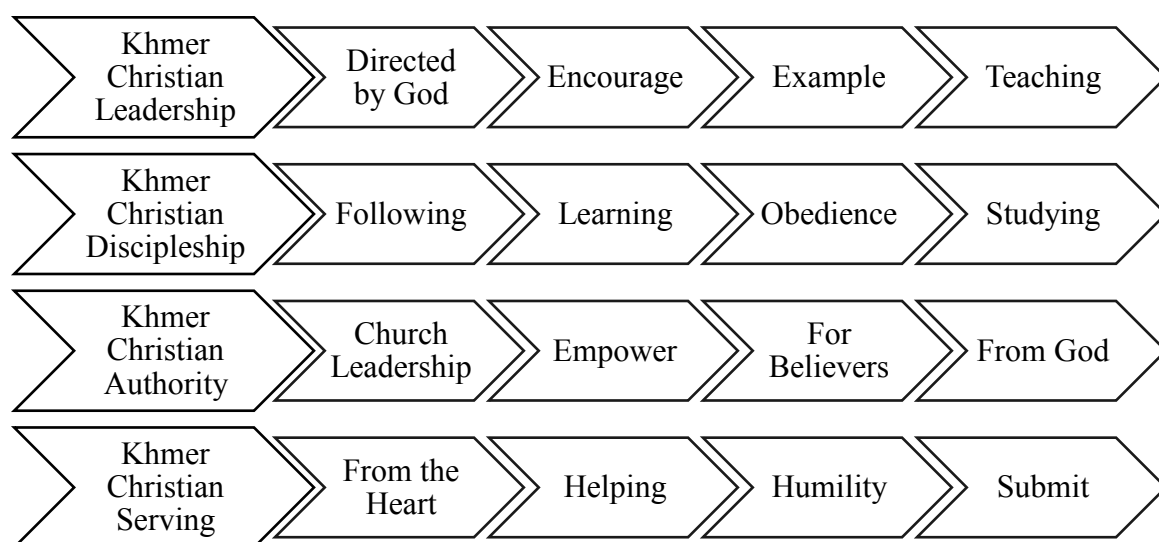


Figure 29. Khmer Christian Subculture Depictions

Leadership Traits in Khmer Christian Subculture

Interviews provided forty leadership areas in the Khmer Christian subculture in Phnom Penh. While interviewees commonly repeated eleven traits, most of the data points toward authoritative figures who serve as examples, leading according to a biblical standard, and using the means of preaching and teaching. Adherence to leadership acknowledges a willingness to follow leadership examples, the importance of leaders in the Bible, and obedience.⁴⁹ Although church leadership is not viewed as forceful or

⁴⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 96.

⁴⁹ Chon Kanya, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 23, 2019.

negative, honor and respect remain present through the actions and attitudes of congregants.

*Discipleship Traits in Khmer
Christian Subculture*

Discussion about discipleship in the Khmer Christian subculture revealed thirty-two traits. The transmission from teacher to student emphasizes disciples learning from church leaders. Emphasis is placed on learners to follow the leader's example while carefully learning and applying preaching and teaching content. Submission and obedience, especially to the head pastor, situates disciples for responsibly serving and ministering in the local church.⁵⁰ As disciples progress through learning, their role allows opportunities to assist leaders in the disciple-making process among urban Khmer Christians. Beneficial relationships occur in churches, yet indications refer to a distance between teachers and students.

*Authority Traits in Khmer
Christian Subculture*

Authority traits in the Khmer Christian subculture identified thirty-six areas. Interviewees repeatedly mentioned twelve traits from biblical references and purpose in urban Khmer churches. Descriptions involve God-given authority for believers while connected to their relationship with God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and necessary for signs, wonders, and miracles.⁵¹ However, distinctions exist, as church leaders use their authority in churches. Head pastors and other church leaders have

⁵⁰ Sut Veasna, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁵¹ Huot Malis, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 26, 2021.

spiritual authority in churches due to their role as teachers, overseeing individuals, and doing the necessary work in urban Khmer churches.⁵² Overlap exists between Christian leadership traits and authority traits as described by the interviewees.

*Serving Traits in Khmer
Christian Subculture*

Serving in a Khmer Christian context revealed thirty-six traits and twelve regularly repeated characteristics. Although some interviewees described serving as a component of leadership, most responses relate to discipleship. Humility carries significance as a Christian servant casts off self-desires and faithfully follows the example of others.⁵³ The key service areas relate to an individual's heart as a responsible disciple rather than individuals with leadership roles. An emphasis on walking and doing accordingly depicts Khmer Christians who adhere to biblical principles while respecting church leadership.

Leadership and Discipleship Data from
Cultural Interviews

The twenty-four interviews from the research sites provide a foundation for understanding leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches. Descriptions related to Khmer cultural elements and active usage within the Khmer Christian subculture. Figures 30 and 31 show the five primary components of leadership development and discipleship.

⁵² Vong Sophea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 22, 2019.

⁵³ Yan Kolab, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 6, 2021.

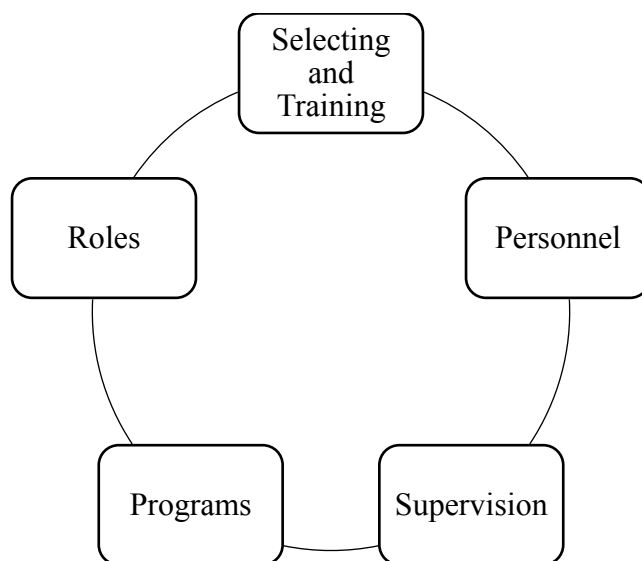


Figure 30. Components for Leadership Development

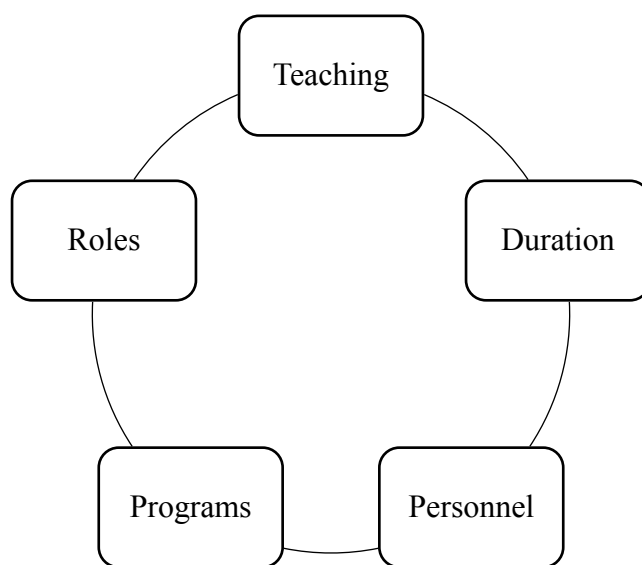


Figure 31. Components for Discipleship

Selecting Leaders

Selecting leaders in urban AGC churches depicts a balance between doing and being. Interviewees described the importance of potential leaders having the necessary

character balanced with prior ministry experience and biblical knowledge.⁵⁴ Although data indicates the importance of Christian service for each congregant, church leadership is viewed in a higher sense. Criterion points toward individuals having existing relationships and remaining in good standing with people.

Lan Phearun emphasized the importance of disciples progressing into leaders. He stated how making disciples should provide a foundation from ability to responsibility as noted by multiple interviewees. Becoming a leader in a local church is never claimed or declared by an individual, but Christians will recognize the value of meeting together, growing in faith, and finding people who will develop into capable leaders.⁵⁵

Training Leaders

Training leaders in urban Khmer churches includes a process of studying accompanied by their ministry. Group gatherings allow potential leaders to learn from head pastors and experienced church leaders while enjoying fellowship together. Regular classes provide structure for adding to biblical knowledge and understanding the functions of ministry in the local congregation.⁵⁶ Special training sessions, such as seminars enhancing ministry skills, provide the necessary encouragement for leaders.

Fellowship and studying the Bible as a group are basic areas yet contain dividends during the first stages. Van Narith described the importance of focusing on the small, integral components vital for church leaders. Furthermore, having classes that

⁵⁴ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁵⁵ Lan Phearun, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

⁵⁶ Seng Tola, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 5, 2019.

accommodate schedules, such as classes and sessions on Saturdays, can provide flexibility as leaders receive in-church training.⁵⁷ Participant observation allowed me to see these areas firsthand as I joined Narith and other leaders at Hope Church during Saturday and Sunday sessions.

Personnel for Training Leaders

Khmer Christians generally view the head pastor as the most significant individual in the leadership development process. The head pastor's influence from teaching, encouragement, and example shapes potential leaders and aligns ministerial roles under the highest authority. Congregants can understand a church's vision by receiving training and submitting themselves to the church leadership structure.⁵⁸

Additional individuals who train potential church leaders include elders, board members, and other church leaders.⁵⁹ Congregants recognize authority and role along with previous experience in church ministries. Although few acknowledge outside entities for responsibility in leadership development, interviewees recognized the importance of receiving training through missionaries and Bible school staff.

Overseeing Leaders

Congregants acknowledge the head pastor as the primary authority for overseeing a church's leadership structure. Their role as a shepherd includes supervision and

⁵⁷ Van Narith, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 7, 2019.

⁵⁸ Sut Veasna, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

⁵⁹ Twenty of the twenty-four interviewees specifically mentioned the head pastor as a primary person for training church leaders. The four interviewees who referred to other church personnel included board members, elders, and other leaders who have already received training.

administration over other leaders. In addition to the head pastor, some interviewees recognized other individuals such as elders, leadership teams, and the congregation in general.⁶⁰ Overall, urban AGC churches recognize the need for organized leadership in churches with clear direction among both leaders and laity.

Pastor Nak Ponleu explained the leadership structure and supervision for his congregation at Life Church. He maintains and oversees responsibilities along with assistance from the assistant pastors. Regular meetings with church leaders provide opportunities for sharing about each ministry group and receiving guidance in specific areas.⁶¹ Pastor Ponleu's interaction allows him to hear reports and details directly from church leaders as ministries continue among the various groups.

Allowing New Leaders to Preach or Teach

Interviewees recognized the importance of training individuals before they preach or teach in the local church setting. They emphasize receiving in-house training from head pastors and church leaders or attending classes at Bible school. Bible knowledge and ability from training can properly prepare congregants for teaching others. However, some interviewees stated Khmer Christians should have opportunities to preach and teach without any waiting period. Allowing new believers to participate in ministry, even by sharing in a formal or informal setting, provides a time for serving, application, and

⁶⁰ Fourteen of the twenty-four interviewees referred to the head pastor as the primary individual for overseeing the church leadership structure. Seven interviewees stated that elders or a leadership team should maintain this responsibility. Three interviewees described the congregation's role in administration while indicating leaders are people capable of failure and need congregants to assist if problems arise.

⁶¹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 27, 2021.

reflection.⁶² Because the head pastor usually oversees the preaching and teaching schedules in urban AGC churches, some interviewees described the importance of the head pastor deciding for congregants to preach or teach.⁶³

Leadership Programs in the Church

Training leaders through regular programs in urban AGC churches can provide continual development for ministry enhancement and personal growth.⁶⁴ Due to emphasizing group training, Bible studies and classes allow potential leaders to learn doctrine and participate in fellowship. Other opportunities for specific leadership training with the head pastor and other church leaders can inform future leaders about ministry and guide individuals toward service. Special events such as seminars focus on themes for emphasizing leadership according to each ministry among children, youth, and adults.⁶⁵

Ros Kunthea gave insight into the importance of time as leaders receive training in urban AGC churches. She stated congregations can have many programs, but there are no benefits unless time management is involved. For growth and advancement in leadership, regularly scheduled time must be considered as leaders join together for training.⁶⁶ The leaders at Praise Church exhibit this principle by meeting with Pastor Mon Bopha weekly for fellowship, training, discussion, and prayer.

⁶² Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁶³ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

⁶⁴ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁶⁵ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

⁶⁶ Ros Kunthea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 14, 2019.

Leadership Programs Outside the Church

Providing leadership development and training outside local churches includes a variety of methods and emphases. Aside from classes about leadership, many interviewees mentioned focusing on areas not provided in urban AGC churches, such as general education opportunities for knowledge and application.⁶⁷ Studies about budgeting, accounting, and administration also position current and potential leaders for learning about finance related to managing the local church.⁶⁸ Emphasis on fellowship times in outside training opportunities yields more gatherings for fellowship and building relationships among other leaders.

Head Pastors' Roles in Leadership Development

Khmer Christians from urban AGC churches recognize teaching as the most important aspect of head pastors assisting in leadership development. Their role positions them to guide and govern through regular classes and informal settings. As head pastors teach and train potential leaders, encouragement enables, inspires, and motivates congregants for Christian service while building personal confidence. Interviewees acknowledge the importance of casting and sharing vision throughout the leadership development process. Head pastors can promote fellowship while discussing positive and negative areas in current and future ministries.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

⁶⁸ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2021.

⁶⁹ Son Phally, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 6, 2019.

Some leadership teams at urban AGC churches meet at the beginning of the year for the head pastor to share his or her insights, plans, and responsibilities. Hok Nimol mentioned Peace Church's approach as Pastor Bun Vithu oversees leadership development. There is a combination of vision, schedules, and inspiration for the leadership team.⁷⁰ It is through this combination I noticed Pastor Vithu's demonstration of genuine, pastoral leadership while observing his regular interaction with church leaders. He stood out as a shepherd who pours into the spiritual well-being of his congregation while encouraging leaders to meet their full potential while serving in ministries. Although Khmer head pastors and church leaders continually face the issues between doing and being aspects, his example portrayed a balance through remaining active in ministry and striving to enrich character.

Missionaries' Roles in Leadership Development

Although urban AGC churches can maintain leadership under their authority, missionaries remain active in the leadership development process. Congregants recognize the experience of leadership, service, teaching, and ministry for strengthening churches. Classes and training sessions can provide partnership and encouragement while assisting head pastors, existing leaders, and potential leaders.

Congregations' Roles in Leadership Development

Interviewees recognize the importance of congregants as they come together for services and events. While applying the teaching and instruction, everyone can assist the church leadership structure and serve in ministry. Fellowship gatherings and group

⁷⁰ Hok Nimol, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 22, 2019.

classes offer times for encouragement as the local church directs its attention toward developing new leaders. Moreover, some urban AGC churches emphasize leadership by continually reminding congregants to become leaders as growth occurs.⁷¹

Teaching Disciples

Interviewees noted twenty-four areas about teaching disciples in urban AGC churches. Following the pattern of leadership development, discipleship methodologies include a group focus with curriculum and studies focusing on Bible classes and emphasis on doctrine.⁷² Regular gatherings provide occasions for learning together and being encouraged by church leaders. The result includes application from the classes while emulating the examples of teachers and Khmer Christians with ministerial experience. Some congregations also incorporate classes about baptism with clear instructions for taking the first steps as a follower of Christ.⁷³

Starting with fundamentals already known by disciples can serve as a foundation for adding new perspectives. Pastor Vithu highlighted the importance of simple beginnings and using various methods when learning about doctrine and ministry. He mentioned how students prefer to study new topics over time, and change is positive throughout the learning process.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Kun Rithy, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 27, 2019.

⁷² Seang Chenda, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 24, 2019.

⁷³ Pastor Nak Ponleu from Life Church emphasized the importance of baptism classes in the discipleship process. He noted a significant difference between baptized and non-baptized Christians as shown by their commitment.

⁷⁴ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

Discipleship Duration and Emphases

While six of the interviewees spoke about discipleship within a set duration of time, eighteen of the interviewees indicated the importance of continual, progressive discipleship for Khmer Christians. Maturing, growth, and serving demonstrate the advancement as groups participate in regularly scheduled discipleship classes. As congregants receive encouragement for studying and learning throughout their lives, they embrace the tenants of faith and assist in the discipleship process of others.⁷⁵ A key component for discipling Khmer Christians includes starting discipleship classes and activities immediately after conversion. Just as a public confession of Christian faith remains significant in a Buddhist culture, growing in faith coupled with baptism and sharing one's personal testimony demonstrates a genuine, outward change for family and friends to see.⁷⁶

Personnel for Teaching Disciples

The discipleship process may include a variety of leaders and teachers at urban AGC churches. Head pastors, church leaders, and congregants with experience maintain responsibility for overseeing classes. However, eleven of the twenty-four interviewees noted various individuals without mentioning the head pastor. Some described the importance of disciples as those who make disciples in the local church.⁷⁷ Although there

⁷⁵ Sut Veasna, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁷⁶ Pastor Nak Ponleu from Life Church mentioned annual evangelistic events followed by baptism services. The church directs its discipleship focus on faith, baptism, and personal testimony. Because new Christians invite Buddhist family members, their public confession of faith joins with baptism and personal testimony of following Christ. The attendees, including both Christians and Buddhists, are impacted by a new Christian's outward faith and a brief story about their conversion.

⁷⁷ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 21, 2019.

can be a combination of leaders and laity who teach classes or lead small groups, participation from all congregants is vital for continual growth.⁷⁸ Furthermore, missionaries can be part of the teaching process due to their experience and example.

Discipleship Training in the Church

Discipleship training in urban AGC churches places importance on joining together in groups. Teachers guide congregants through lessons from the discipleship curriculum while highlighting the Bible for application. Classes emphasize doctrine due to the prevalence of cults and false teaching in Cambodia.⁷⁹ Churches also use discipleship gatherings as opportunities for directing individuals toward Christian service and ministry. The importance of serving, such as personal evangelism, allows congregants to pass on what they experience so others can receive training.⁸⁰ Activity within the small group environment provides accountability throughout the learning process and ensures responsibility in local church ministry. Lessons for new believers and even non-believers promote the importance of faith and growing in the knowledge of God.⁸¹

⁷⁸ All four interviewees from Praise Church described how the congregation is included in the discipleship process. They did not discuss the head pastor yet spoke about all disciples learning from congregants and progressing toward leading and discipling others.

⁷⁹ Seang Chenda, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 24, 2019.

⁸⁰ Huot Malis, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 26, 2021.

⁸¹ Hin Makara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 6, 2021.

Discipleship Training outside the Church

Programs and opportunities for disciples can situate individuals in environments for learning from others outside their local churches. Seminars in Phnom Penh, hosted by urban AGC churches and non-AG groups, can direct Khmer Christians toward personal growth and development. While urban churches have leadership and discipleship classes, churches can also provide non-ministerial learning experiences with other believers from various walks of life.⁸² However, some head pastors select only mature and responsible disciples to attend special events or seminars outside their regular ministry setting.⁸³

Evangelism is regarded as a common aspect for disciples receiving training outside their local church. Tep Neary noted sharing one's testimony as a vital component for Khmer believers as they actively demonstrate their Christian faith among Buddhists.⁸⁴ Church leaders can use opportunities after Sunday services to lead teams and participate in local evangelism near their facilities. Evangelistic approaches were often mentioned during announcements at the research sites for congregants to apply their experiences.

Head Pastors' Roles in Discipleship

Although various leaders and laity assist in urban AGC discipleship programs, head pastors maintain responsibilities through teaching, encouraging, and overseeing. Their involvement remains significant due to their leadership within the local church and authority over ministries. When head pastors teach and train others through discipleship,

⁸² Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

⁸³ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 18, 2019.

⁸⁴ Tep Neary, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 30, 2021.

they situate themselves to guide, motivate, and inspire congregants.⁸⁵ The initial stages of discipleship require head pastors to ensure a foundation for church leaders and laity to instruct others. As head pastors serve as examples while overseeing discipleship ministries, progression can flow from the church leadership to congregants who will follow and make disciples.⁸⁶

Application is one of the most important facets of head pastors assisting the discipleship process. The evidence of studying and learning can be witnessed by the response of an individual's actions. Kun Rithy described teaching as only part of the head pastor's role among disciples. There should also be involvement by helping Khmer believers as they apply Christian service, evangelism, and living a surrendered life.⁸⁷ Pastor Nak Ponleu exemplified these approaches while joining with leaders and disciples at Life Church during participant observation. The congregation has captured his vision as they emphasize the importance of faith, baptism, and personal testimony throughout the discipleship process.

Missionaries' Roles in Discipleship

Urban AGC churches utilize missionaries for assisting in discipleship just as their involvement in leadership development. Their ministry of teaching, partnership, and encouragement can strengthen local churches and build relationships. As shown by the

⁸⁵ Huot Malis, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 26, 2021.

⁸⁶ Yen Seyha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 31, 2019.

⁸⁷ Kun Rithy, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 27, 2019.

historical connection between missionaries and church leaders, their cooperation in the disciple-making process yields advice on spirituality and sustainable growth.⁸⁸

Congregations' Roles in Discipleship

Interviewees recognized the importance of congregations assisting in the discipleship process. The primary means is recognized through evangelism as Khmer Christians share their faith throughout urban settings and invite non-believers to join services and fellowship gatherings. In addition to evangelism and being part of small groups in their local church, congregants can be active by helping church leaders and supporting new believers through encouragement.⁸⁹ Joining together with Bible studies and classes can situate all participants for making disciples in their local church.⁹⁰

Analysis of Education Findings⁹¹

Leadership and Discipleship Viewpoints from Head Pastors

The origin of Christian education for leadership and discipleship transpired from missionary involvement during the 1990s. Relationships between missionaries and future head pastors began through relief and development projects which later established initial ministries in urban AGC churches. From these ongoing partnerships, training and development spread throughout the Fellowship. As learning, serving, and growing

⁸⁸ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

⁸⁹ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 18, 2019.

⁹⁰ Yen Seyha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 31, 2019.

⁹¹ See Appendix C, "Education Data," which contains charts with additional educational data.

originated from the earliest years, missionaries entrusted head pastors with the responsibility to administer leadership and discipleship programs.

Interviewing the six head pastors at the research sites provided a foundation for comprehending Christian education methodologies directly related to leadership and discipleship in urban AGC churches. Understanding the training they received from missionaries provides insight into their ongoing efforts. Due to their significant role through authority and supervision, their views and approaches describe the purposes and results of leadership development and discipleship methodologies. Head pastors working with church leaders and congregants portray a functional structure as urban Khmer Christians join in fellowship, participate in ministry, and receive encouragement. My interaction through participant observation with head pastors, church leaders, and disciples provided a firsthand encounter of their ministries while meeting at the six research sites. Figure 32 shows the significant aspects of education for leadership and discipleship at urban AGC churches.



Figure 32. Education Aspects as Head Pastors Train Leaders and Disciples

Leadership Training from Missionaries

Missionaries trained future leaders by supervising classes and ministry involvement. Nationals received instruction in class settings as missionaries emphasized the Bible and leadership from available curricula. As future leaders gained experience and understanding, ministry opportunities were made available for serving in the local church.⁹² Throughout the learning process, missionaries used groups for studying and application.

⁹² Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

Pastor Bun Vithu explained the importance of groups as leaders receive training. Ministry opportunities and roles emerged as missionaries met with groups of future leaders at urban AGC churches.⁹³ These occasions instilled leadership principles for implementation through Khmer head pastors. Urban AGC churches embraced the group structure as the fellowship element is well-placed within Khmer culture. Furthermore, group utilization for leadership and discipleship created a strong impression on Pastor Vithu indicated by his current, continual usage at Peace Church.

Discipleship from Missionaries

Due to the limitation of curricula during the earliest years of the AGC, missionaries used available resources for teaching and training disciples. Nationals modeled the example of missionaries while learning and applying lessons for passing on their example throughout the discipleship process.⁹⁴ Using groups permitted time together for fellowship and building relationships in the local church setting.⁹⁵ Methodologies used by missionaries overlapped with leadership development and contained similarities.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

⁹⁵ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

⁹⁶ Pastor Heng Dara and Pastor Nak Ponleu spoke about the leadership and discipleship training resemblances they received from the same missionary at Life Church during the 1990s.

Most Important Areas Learned from Missionaries about Leadership and Discipleship

Head pastors described fifteen areas when asked about the most important points they learned from missionaries. Although various aspects were mentioned and rarely repeated, their responses showed continuity in the initial years of training and preparation. Missionaries balanced ministry engagement and character development while teaching future leaders and new disciples at urban AGC churches. As missionaries taught about humility and patience, future leaders applied lessons and participated in Christian service.⁹⁷ The lessons learned from the missionaries enabled Khmer leaders to serve in church ministry and become examples in daily life.

What Missionaries Did Right through Leadership Development and Discipleship

Missionaries emphasized application and responsibility as they trained leaders and disciples. These approaches taught individuals to work, think for themselves, and serve in ministry.⁹⁸ Group training for building relationships and enjoying fellowship situated missionaries and national leaders together as classes emphasized character and involvement. Furthermore, the emphasis on application and frequent gatherings through small groups provided awareness as local churches focused on community service.⁹⁹

Head pastors shared about the closeness missionaries exhibited while teaching and training during the 1990s. Pastor Phan Sokha remarked about the importance of

⁹⁷ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

⁹⁸ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

⁹⁹ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

missionaries setting aside time for helping individuals apply what they learned. Advice and wisdom were regularly shared to guide leaders throughout the development process. Moreover, he noted the missionaries' efforts were like the Old Testament example of Jethro assisting Moses.¹⁰⁰

What Missionaries Did Wrong through Leadership Development and Discipleship¹⁰¹

When asked about what missionaries did wrong while training nationals, each head pastor replied with a different answer. Due to the various missionary nationalities and their preferences involving leadership and discipleship, the responses reflect concerns related to ministry, character, and relationships. Any issues with strategies and approaches caused national leaders to make necessary changes and address ongoing challenges. Although head pastors freely spoke about areas of concern, their responses were minimal in comparison to the positive areas of leadership development and discipleship received from missionaries.

Methods Taught by Missionaries

Head pastors acknowledged the importance of receiving training from missionaries to teach others about leadership and discipleship. Methods used by missionaries were well-received and still incorporated through advising, commitment, and serving in urban AGC churches. Although some missionaries used one-on-one

¹⁰⁰ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹⁰¹ Five of the six head pastors listed areas of what missionaries did wrong regarding leadership development and discipleship. Only Pastor Mon Bopha did not mention any areas of concern or neglect.

training for future pastors, most interaction occurred through groups. Due to the cultural importance of example, nationals learned to embrace and replicate missionaries' actions.

Preparation for Future Ministry and Ongoing Support

Missionaries prepared head pastors for the future by advising and guiding them during the transition to national leadership in urban AGC churches. Due to the small number of churches in the Fellowship in the late 1990s and early 2000s, church planting was a priority for the following decades. As head pastors began to lead congregations with minor missionary involvement, relationships continued as missionaries occasionally served through preaching and teaching. The emphasis on sustainability impacted leadership development and discipleship methodologies as churches took the responsibility to enhance the AGC.

Choosing and Appointing Leaders

When asked about choosing and appointing leaders in their churches, head pastors mentioned sixteen areas necessary for leadership. They recognize the importance of choosing individuals who have existing relationships, understand the church's vision, and are familiar with training and ministry opportunities.¹⁰² Commitment carries significance as potential leaders demonstrate a willingness to receive teaching and build trust within the congregation.¹⁰³ Faithfulness through discipleship and learning also situates individuals for receiving leadership training and mentoring from current leaders.

¹⁰² Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

¹⁰³ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

Head pastors at urban AGC churches understand the significance of choosing leaders while remembering their own journeys. Pastor Heng Dara received training from an American missionary in the years before and after starting Faith Church in 1999. He recognizes the significance of his training and follows the example of the missionary who taught him for three years. The leaders and congregation at Faith Church recognize those who are regularly part of Saturday training sessions and other church events. While sharing thoughts about selecting future leaders, Pastor Dara spoke meticulously about acknowledging individuals who can be effective in ministry while remembering Christ's example about bearing good fruit.¹⁰⁴ He remains serious about choosing honest, committed believers due to the church's focus on children and youth.

Training Leaders in the Church

Training leaders requires hands-on involvement from head pastors as individuals join together regularly. Productivity comes from groups studying together and growing in their understanding.¹⁰⁵ As classes provide occasions for building on the knowledge of the Bible and preparation for ministry, application and responsibility follow through times of service in the local church.¹⁰⁶ Head pastors recognize the importance of being an example and guiding potential leaders with love and forgiveness as they learn to serve.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

Pastor Bun Vithu shared his training approaches by highlighting groups. My participant observation saw firsthand the value of children, youth, young adults, married couples, and elderly individuals participating in group settings. Staff pastors assist church leaders by ensuring ongoing training and instruction for their specific ministry. Focusing on responsibilities among leaders according to roles allows for the implementation of the necessary curriculum.¹⁰⁸ Peace Church extends its leadership training through regular seminars led by Pastor Vithu, missionaries, and special guests while using relevant themes for training.

Training Disciples in the Church

Head pastors utilize similar principles from leadership development as they train disciples. One unique facet includes an emphasis on surveying ability and helping congregants to progress in their ability.¹⁰⁹ Churches provide group structure for studying the Bible and discipleship curriculum while applying learning through ministry opportunities. Regular gatherings with class formats help disciples develop character and solve daily challenges in life.¹¹⁰

Urban AGC churches can use similar training methods for disciples in connection to their approaches to leadership development. An important facet of discipleship includes a focus on an individual's ability. Pastor Nak Ponleu shared an emphasis on the Bible and ministry assists congregants through a discipleship process including regular

¹⁰⁸ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

teaching, life application, and responsibility in service.¹¹¹ Encouragement is also added so disciples remain active in their studies and involvement.

Curriculum and Themes for Leadership Development

Available materials and resources in the Khmer language provide ongoing possibilities for leadership development in urban AGC churches. Curriculum series come from various countries and have been translated from partnerships with missionaries and nationals. Some churches emphasize studying in group settings while directing potential leaders to study on their own time and then join others for discussion.¹¹² Head pastors plan regular sessions for meeting with existing and potential leaders to ensure continuity and regular interaction. As head pastors and leaders meet for training, fellowship and encouragement naturally exist in each gathering.

Curriculum and Themes for Discipleship

The discipleship curriculum is like leadership development and provides opportunities for engagement and growth in local churches. Emphasizing evangelism, stewardship, and ability in ministry assists disciples as they learn about doctrine and Christian service. Working through books enables church leaders to guide congregants according to the local church's needs as they grow in knowledge and ministry experience.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

¹¹² Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹¹³ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

Choosing Teachers for Training Leaders and Disciples

Head pastors generally choose existing leaders and those with experience to serve as teachers within leadership development and discipleship. Mature individuals with a positive example serve as role models for the congregants who receive training. As shown by the principles of the Bible, head pastors watch for capable teachers who live in a godly manner, manage their families well, and exhibit spiritual gifts.¹¹⁴

One of the most common encounters during interviews and participant observation included the importance of leaders as examples. Pastor Dara shared mentioned choosing individuals who present themselves as good examples in addition to understanding the Bible and persevering in their work.¹¹⁵ He works with his church leaders at Faith Church to discuss possibilities for new leaders. After recognizing available congregants, the dialogue continues along with prayer.

Assigning Responsibilities for Leadership and Discipleship

As urban AGC churches assign responsibilities for ministry involvement with leadership and discipleship, head pastors typically allow congregants to step out and try as they serve with existing leaders. Some head pastors see it as essential to assign responsibilities shortly after conversion so congregants can find involvement and build trust through their commitment.¹¹⁶ Ministry groups provide opportunities for congregants

¹¹⁴ Phan Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 19, 2021.

¹¹⁵ Heng Dara, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 18, 2021.

¹¹⁶ Nak Ponleu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 9, 2021.

to learn about serving and then apply their learning as they minister both inside and outside the local church.

Interactions at Praise Church revealed a congregation focused on individuals receiving training for discipleship and leadership. One visit on a Sunday morning featured a young believer preaching and demonstrating his continued growth through the continual support of church leaders. Pastor Mon Bopha believes it is necessary to train leaders as soon as possible and delegate responsibilities for service in the local church.¹¹⁷ She views trust and commitment as the necessary components for disciples receiving training and progressing toward leadership roles.

Training Leaders and Disciples through Groups

Groups remain a vital component of training leaders and disciples in urban AGC churches. While some head pastors received one-on-one training from missionaries, groups are compatible entities as leaders obtain ministry responsibility and disciples learn about their ability. However, some churches incorporate mentoring opportunities with the head pastor for a closer, more direct impact on their respective leadership role. Others view leadership training as focusing on individuals while teaching classes for group interaction.¹¹⁸ Churches favoring groups for both leadership and discipleship typically align gatherings according to specific ministries, experience in service, and age.

¹¹⁷ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

¹¹⁸ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

Using Seminars in Local Churches

As missionaries handed authority and responsibility to national leaders by the end of the 1990s, the following decades allowed ongoing partnerships with missionaries and outside groups to conduct seminars. Urban AGC churches focus on specific themes to enrich and encourage their congregations while addressing leadership, discipleship, evangelism, and family ministries.¹¹⁹ While seminars have value for preparing congregants with information and service possibilities, fellowship and encouragement are viewed as the most important aspects.¹²⁰ Although some churches do not use seminars for teaching and training, they schedule regular gatherings for fellowship and building relationships in addition to leadership and discipleship classes.¹²¹

Head Pastors and Their Responsibilities with Leadership

During the initial field research interviews, head pastors described their responsibilities with leadership development. Their role includes teaching, helping leaders apply their training, and providing encouragement. Because of the significant influence demonstrated by head pastors, they remain strategically positioned to impact local churches while helping new leaders in ministry.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, July 27, 2021.

¹²⁰ Ti Samnang, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 14, 2021.

¹²¹ Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, August 22, 2021.

¹²² Mon Bopha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, December 14, 2019.

Head Pastors and Their Responsibilities with Discipleship

Head pastors identified ten areas connected to their role in discipleship. As with their role in leadership development, head pastors recognize the importance of teaching and encouraging. However, because some church leaders have regular interaction with disciples, head pastors maintain a supervision role by overseeing all aspects of discipleship. As churches conduct classes and sessions for discipleship training, head pastors provide vision, motivate congregants to study, and celebrate with those who complete discipleship programs.¹²³

Interpretation of Historical Findings

Insights from the Focus Group Discussion

The focus group provided information about historical interview data and missionary involvement in the 1990s.¹²⁴ Missionaries emphasized the importance of relief and development efforts and using whatever means to establish a ministry platform for growth in Cambodia. As ministries emerged in urban and rural settings, relationships among Khmer nationals provided a necessary foundation for subsequent years. A pioneering attitude coupled with church planting served as the impetus among missionaries who arrived in the 1990s.¹²⁵

¹²³ Bun Vithu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, November 7, 2019.

¹²⁴ A focus group was conducted with five veteran AG missionaries via Zoom on January 3, 2022. The five missionaries included Ann Greve, Ken Huff, Dareth Ly, Kelly Robinette, and Troy Tabor. Each missionary was chosen due to their service of more than twenty years in Cambodia and their prior involvement as interviewees in the historical research.

¹²⁵ Kelly Robinette, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

Missionaries mentioned the notable worldview differences in Cambodia and how this shaped the Fellowship's initial years of leadership development and discipleship. Potential leaders, often associated with relief and development projects, were selected to serve in positions of authority. Those who received an appointment for various roles obtained higher standing in their culture.¹²⁶ Although national leaders were needed for serving alongside missionaries, individuals chosen for roles and tasks became situated within the cultural hierarchy.

Historical Patterns from Data Interpretation

Data from the historical interviews revealed five areas related to missionaries, Khmer nationals, and progression. The five areas include a central focus on leadership and discipleship progression, relationships between missionaries and nationals, selecting nationals for ministry, influence from missionaries, and mentoring processes between missionaries and nationals. Each area points toward leadership development and discipleship among Khmer believers in local churches.

Strategy, methodology, and growth point toward the leadership and discipleship progression of the four mission groups and the AG. The relationships between missionaries and nationals include data about national leaders, tensions, and cooperation/fellowship. Interviews with missionaries from the four mission groups and AG missionaries addressed the significance of these patterns. Regular interaction demonstrated guiding individuals toward their ability to serve in ministry, providing influence, and mentoring participants in the local church. The integration throughout the

¹²⁶ Dareth Ly, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

process included continual efforts supporting leadership development and discipleship.

Figure 33 shows the progression and corresponding themes from the missionary interview data.

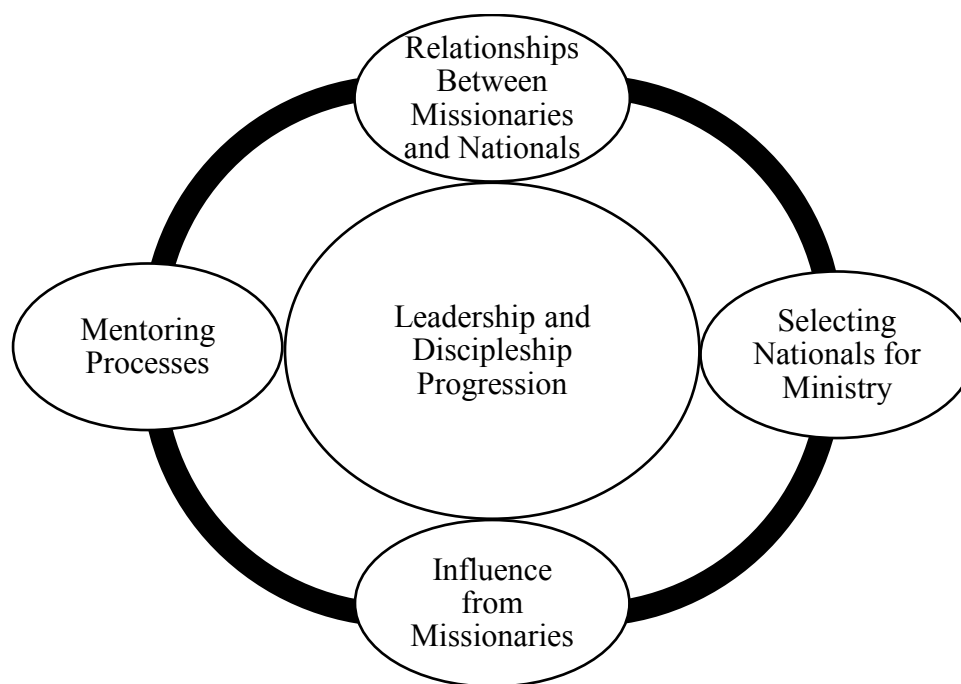


Figure 33. Historical Progression of Leadership and Discipleship in Cambodia

The Five Historical Patterns among the Four Mission Groups

Missionaries from the four mission groups based their leadership and discipleship efforts on relationships directed toward productivity. As worship sites launched and grew throughout Cambodia, selecting individuals occurred from within the congregations. Direct connection between missionaries and nationals enabled influence toward growth during mentoring opportunities. The five patterns exemplify service from relief and development projects and church planting initiatives.

Leadership and Discipleship Progression

Although C&MA, OMF, World Team, and YWAM experienced growth during the 1990s, the best strategies for leadership and discipleship included slow, steady progress with long-term goals.¹²⁷ Missionaries immediately recognized the significance of teaching and training Khmer nationals by providing leadership development and discipleship. Church-based approaches allowed interaction with new believers and opportunities for classes, worship, and fellowship.¹²⁸ Pragmatic and holistic strategies guided mission groups as relief and development efforts and church ministries expanded; however, methodological and philosophical differences caused tensions as missionaries tried to find a balance in projects and programs.¹²⁹

A forced hiatus caused a loss of previous successes before the years of civil war and genocide. Mission groups reentered Cambodia intending to rebuild indigenous local churches and training individuals to fill ministerial roles. Growth was evident as local churches increased, national leaders received training, and ministries spread throughout the country. Nevertheless, challenges emerged in the 1990s as discipleship did not grow as fully intended. Mission groups successfully addressed leadership development, yet long-term progression through discipleship remained seated behind efforts to train future leaders.

¹²⁷ Simon Porter, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 3, 2020.

¹²⁸ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

¹²⁹ Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

Relationships between Missionaries and Nationals

Missionaries successfully built relationships from the outset of their ministry in Cambodia during the 1990s. Initial priorities included building relationships while continually studying the Khmer language and culture.¹³⁰ The earliest years of ministry during the 1990s occurred with limitations as the government prohibited Christianity. However, joining together in homes for worship, training, and prayer provided necessary encouragement as Khmer nationals bonded with missionaries. Relational connections can still be acknowledged as a core component due to their enhancement throughout each mission group.

Although missionaries maintained productive relationships with nationals, challenges and tensions were present. Some nationals viewed relationships with missionaries as prestigious while earning respect and standing. Missionaries and their relationships, developed for unifying rather than dividing, caused criticism and comparisons among nationals.¹³¹ Furthermore, pouring into individuals based on prior relationships was pragmatic for training purposes yet did not continue to produce relational bonds from national to national.¹³²

Selecting Nationals for Ministry

Limitations surrounded missionaries from the four mission groups as they chose individuals for leadership development and discipleship. Selection rested solely on

¹³⁰ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

¹³¹ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

¹³² Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

missionaries and whoever would be available to receive training. As churches launched from relief and development sites, leaders emerged from faithful individuals connected to missionaries and existing projects.¹³³ A change in methodology included leadership selection from obedience-based rather than knowledge-based due to the small numbers of Khmer Christians.¹³⁴

Missionaries from C&MA, OMF, World Team, and YWAM did not make frequent references to Khmer nationals and their call to serve in ministry. One exception included the area of perseverance after being chosen by missionaries to receive training. It was noted the individuals who recognized their calling to serve as a leader and pursue ministerial training demonstrated tenacity while others chose to decline.¹³⁵ Overall, the specific focus on calling remained present among missionaries yet somewhat distant due to limitations on available participants.

Influence from Missionaries

Missionaries exhibited significant influence on Khmer nationals throughout the 1990s. Because hierarchy and example are prevalent facets of authority in Cambodia, relational bonds led to the recognition of potential supervision over local churches and ministries. Future leaders embraced personal learning opportunities with a life focus while acknowledging their ability to serve in leadership roles.¹³⁶

¹³³ David Manfred, interview by author, Phnom Penh, February 14, 2020.

¹³⁴ Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

¹³⁵ Simon Porter, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 3, 2020.

¹³⁶ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

Providing oversight through leadership development and discipleship situated missionaries to guide groups during the initial years and prepare for nationals to lead in the subsequent decades. Missionaries hoped leaders would naturally arise from fellowship and training, yet dependency issues emerged from the relationships.¹³⁷ Moreover, leaders and disciples chosen by missionaries soon displayed a higher standing due to receiving approval from foreign workers with influence. Issues stemming from dependency and hierarchy enabled nationals to obtain authority while displaying their influence on others situated below them.

Mentoring Processes in Leadership and Discipleship

Although mentoring from missionaries to nationals occurred in Cambodia during the 1990s, group efforts rather than one-on-one mentoring proved more beneficial for leaders and disciples. Being part of a ministry group is significant among the Khmer and provides a sense of satisfaction and belonging.¹³⁸ However, providing direct mentoring to charismatic leaders causes them to see it differently as they understand their role as authoritative leaders over others.¹³⁹ The mere potential of authority can cause individuals to seek out missionaries, receive their blessing, demonstrate how missionaries chose them, and exercise their position over other nationals.

Mentoring through discipleship demonstrated challenges during the initial decade of ministry opportunities. While discipleship from missionaries had limitations, situations

¹³⁷ Jeff Hogue, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 18, 2020.

¹³⁸ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

¹³⁹ Simon Porter, interview by author, Phnom Penh, March 3, 2020.

with nationals teaching and training nationals in informal settings or the workplace became advantageous.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these occurrences were exceptions rather than normal practices as focus continually steered toward leadership development.

The Five Historical Patterns in the Assemblies of God

Like missionaries from the four mission groups, relationships provided early growth in the AG. Khmer nationals received training upon selection and served at projects and church plants. Missionaries used personal involvement to continually encourage and guide individuals for future service in the national church. The five patterns of progression, relationships, selecting, influence, and mentoring demonstrate the Fellowship's expansion amid achievements and challenges.

Leadership and Discipleship Progression

The primary objective for the AG included the establishment of a national church. All aspects of ministry pointed toward the AGC and national leaders overseeing the Fellowship. As missionaries provided the necessary foundation through direct participation, they eventually handed authority to head pastors. Relief and development projects served as the initial impetus for the Fellowship to strategize for leadership development and discipleship. Surveying the country's needs and building connections with the government provided a platform for future ministries and growth.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

¹⁴¹ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

Personal preferences led to the lack of a unified strategy for leadership and discipleship.¹⁴² Missionaries used available curricula while training nationals at project sites and church plants while overseeing potential leaders. As leaders emerged, growth steadily occurred through the quality and quantity of the ministries launched by missionaries in urban and rural settings.¹⁴³ However, the lack of reciprocation demonstrated weaknesses in the 1990s as nationals failed to impart their learning experiences to other nationals.¹⁴⁴

The lack of consistent, unified discipleship methodologies caused some ministries to cease, limited growth in the Fellowship's first decade, and led to weaknesses in local churches.¹⁴⁵ Although missionaries led discipleship efforts in their particular way, urgency in leadership development overshadowed the potential for prioritizing a Khmer-led discipleship movement among congregants.¹⁴⁶ The succeeding decades reflected the Fellowship's expansion of new churches and ministries with vulnerabilities due to strong, centralized leaders and inadequate discipleship methodologies.

Relationships between Missionaries and Nationals

Relationships were the starting point for all endeavors between AG missionaries and Khmer nationals. There were no AG Khmer Christians following the years of civil war, genocide, the Vietnamese occupation, and displacement. Missionaries demonstrated

¹⁴² Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

¹⁴³ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

¹⁴⁶ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

their sincerity by building relational bridges through relief and development projects while investing in people.¹⁴⁷ Friendships and partnerships produced opportunities for leadership development and discipleship in urban and rural settings. Moreover, building relationships carried significance in a culture centered on sharing life together.¹⁴⁸

Although relationships led to progression, there was also a negative side among some field personnel. Relationships allowed missionaries to gather nationals for building credibility, situate themselves over nationals as the primary authority, and direct attention toward their ministries. Nationals did not have the power to act on their own due to missionaries overseeing them and being used to serve under their authority.¹⁴⁹ Tensions arose in the Fellowship as shown by both allegiances and factions among missionaries and nationals.

Selecting Nationals for Ministry

Missionaries utilized relationships for selecting Khmer nationals who could serve in church leadership positions. Although there was not an extensive list of available participants, individuals who were willing with potential were brought alongside missionaries and received training.¹⁵⁰ A desire to serve overshadowed a call to ministry due to the limited numbers of Khmer Christians during the 1990s. If young people showed enthusiasm for serving in church ministries, the missionaries would send them to

¹⁴⁷ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Ann Greve, interview by author, Phnom Penh, June 3, 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

Bible school and hope some might be able to return as church leaders.¹⁵¹ Overall, the entire selection process focused on missionaries finding available people and overseeing their training for future involvement.

The 1990s had few examples of nationals training other nationals rather than missionaries selecting individuals and sending them to Bible school.¹⁵² Throughout the first decade, missionaries continued to select people regardless of maturity, character, or a calling to serve as church leaders. As missionaries looked for available bodies, some nationals approached ministry while thinking about economic advancement and cultivating a patron-client relationship.¹⁵³ By the time churches emerged from the relief and development projects, leaders were firmly established and maintained authority in local churches without any other influence from potential national leadership. Some capable individuals emerged from orphanages and other projects, yet leadership development did not continue within each local body as missionaries handed over authority.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, those chosen by missionaries remained connected to them for advantageous purposes and could obtain higher authoritative positions in the Fellowship, such as serving on the AGC executive committee.¹⁵⁵ Church leaders appointed by

¹⁵¹ Sarah Ardu, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 9, 2020.

¹⁵² Sarah Ardu mentioned how a church leader in Takeo Province trained his people through on-site teaching and development. Some of the first AG missionaries in Cambodia encouraged him to teach and train others without sending them to Bible school. This example was an exception rather than the norm since none of the interviewees mentioned church leaders using this approach in urban churches.

¹⁵³ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

¹⁵⁵ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

missionaries received prestige coupled with authority in a culture favoring high-standing and supervision over others.

Influence from Missionaries

While teaching and training leaders and disciples, missionaries demonstrated a productive and respectable example. Regular instruction through classes allowed missionaries to connect with groups, share experiences, teach fundamentals of faith, and help individuals prepare for ministry.¹⁵⁶ Their role model helped Khmer nationals understand the importance of serving in urban and rural areas.

A committed focus on people shaped the Fellowship during the years of relief and development projects. Missionaries provided the necessary groundwork with care and concern as orphanages, medical clinics, and schools met basic needs in Cambodia.¹⁵⁷ Partnerships between missionaries and nationals aided projects and churches while providing leadership development and discipleship.

Mentoring Processes in Leadership and Discipleship

Relationships and influence positioned missionaries to mentor Khmer nationals at relief and development projects and church plants in the 1990s. The Fellowship's earliest years included mentoring as the means for learning and preparation. Some future pastors received continual one-on-one training at a specific site, and others attended Bible school while serving alongside missionaries.¹⁵⁸ The results included Khmer leaders at projects

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Kelly Robinette, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 4, 2020.

¹⁵⁸ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

and churches who oversaw ministries and implemented their supervision for the following decades.

Mentoring through discipleship generally occurred in groups. Missionaries used informal occasions to teach and encourage participants in a culturally familiar setting.¹⁵⁹ Regular group gatherings with available curriculum allowed a teaching platform while being an example for individuals coming from a Buddhist background. Although missionaries strived to incorporate consistent mentoring among disciples, trends typically shifted toward other endeavors such as emphasizing growth and evangelism.¹⁶⁰

Interpretation of Cultural Findings

Insights from the Focus Group Discussion

A Buddhist culture places a strong emphasis on working and doing.¹⁶¹ Due to this approach in life, the culture minimizes character issues. Khmer culture dictates an outward focus on productivity and accomplishments through one's actions. Khmer Christians place a high significance on a believer's character, yet research data indicate prominence toward active ministry in the local church.

Tangible encouragement exists in Cambodia as individuals aim to receive something in exchange for their efforts.¹⁶² Doing and being remain rooted in what you can get in life and fits within the general worldview.¹⁶³ The Khmer people focus on doing

¹⁵⁹ Troy Tabor, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 31, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Dareth Ly, interview by author, Phnom Penh, April 27, 2020.

¹⁶¹ Dareth Ly, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁶² Kelly Robinette, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁶³ Troy Tabor, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

to advance their standing and have a different view from how Westerners acknowledge servant-leadership. Overall, receiving tangible benefits while providing services and loyalty aligns with the patron-client structure in Cambodia.

Khmer leaders look for people who are faithful rather than having ability so there are no challenges toward those with authority.¹⁶⁴ Churches in Cambodia follow this pattern for maintaining loyalty even if more qualified individuals are not chosen to assist. The result points toward trusting leadership and not directing harm toward them.¹⁶⁵ If a person can be trusted, they are a candidate for assisting leaders because they will abide by the leadership structure.

Khmer Culture and Khmer Christian Subculture Data

Interviews at the six research sites allowed congregants to share definitions of Khmer culture and the Khmer Christian subculture. Leadership, discipleship, authority, and serving provided a foundation for constructing the cultural portrait at urban AGC churches. Definitions of the four terms illustrate the setting for leadership and discipleship while emphasizing group training.

Leadership and Authority Components

Leadership roles and authority are an integral part of Khmer culture. Individuals possessing leadership roles and authority are viewed as having the utmost ability and knowledge simply because they maintain control. Khmer culture dictates a leader remain separate and removed as shown by the hierarchy between leaders and followers. Any

¹⁶⁴ Ken Huff, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Dareth Ly, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

challenge or opposition to current leaders and their authority risks being removed from a group and losing face. As described by numerous interviewees during the field research process, government leaders exemplify a dominant presence through their authority.

Church leaders in Cambodia can follow authoritative patterns and align their methods according to Khmer culture. Because some leaders refuse to share authority, other potential leaders might face the dilemma of leaving, being cut off, or facing public rejection. While I did not experience this scenario firsthand during participant observation, missionary interviews mentioned the harsh environment of leadership in Khmer churches. Moreover, my interactions at the research sites revealed a deep admiration and respect exhibited by church leaders and congregants. Leadership development and discipleship methodologies are extended from the head pastor and his or her vision for the local church and its ministries.

Discipleship and Serving Components

Khmer culture views disciples and servants in a modest, indifferent way. Disciples and servants must demonstrate obedience, respect, and submission. Their primary role relates to following, yielding to leaders, and assisting people who possess authority. While personal effort does not ensure advancement, loyalty to leaders and dutifully aligning with authority can provide opportunities. Adherence to the example of leaders and authorities is a natural component of life, work, and education in Cambodia.

Trust is a significant component of discipleship stemming from the research data and participant observation at the research sites. Developing and maintaining trust between congregants and church leaders allows a progression of assisting and utilizing one's ability. Head pastors look for like-minded congregants who can serve and submit to

the church's vision. Disciples who do not pose threats to the church leadership structure can receive inclusion in ministry with the potential for responsibilities.

Maintaining the Group Structure

The collective configuration in Khmer culture emphasizes the importance of the group rather than individuals. Urban AGC churches conduct leadership development and discipleship through groups for teaching and training purposes. Head pastors, church leaders, and congregants acknowledge the importance of a group setting for ministry according to the congregation's preferences.

Although Christianity in Cambodia is a distinct subculture, many facets of Khmer culture overlap in the local church setting. Khmer Christians have a distinct identity; however, the collective elements remain strong as leadership development and discipleship exist in local churches. Head pastors include the group model as part of their vision for training individuals and maintaining close fellowship. Observing leadership and discipleship at the research sites confirmed the feasibility of groups in addition to the fondness expressed by participants rather than one-on-one scenarios.

One unique aspect of group functions in urban AGC churches relates to the understanding of salvation. Confession of faith is personal, yet there were no observations of acknowledging the religion on an individual basis. Believers come together as one of many by recognizing salvation in a corporate sense. Teaching and ministries emphasize the group and relate to Khmer Christians existing as called-out individuals unified by faith.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ One of the most common Khmer worship songs emphasizes how believers are one family in Jesus Christ. The song declares a strong focus on the Body of Christ in a corporate sense.

Christian Subculture Leadership and Authority in Urban AGC Churches

Head pastors' responsibilities reflect cultural influences and the necessity for providing leadership in local churches. Their service to ensure leadership development and discipleship includes an example, role, and the means through their authority as shown in Figure 34 below. These three areas portray how head pastors administer as congregants follow, obey, and apply.

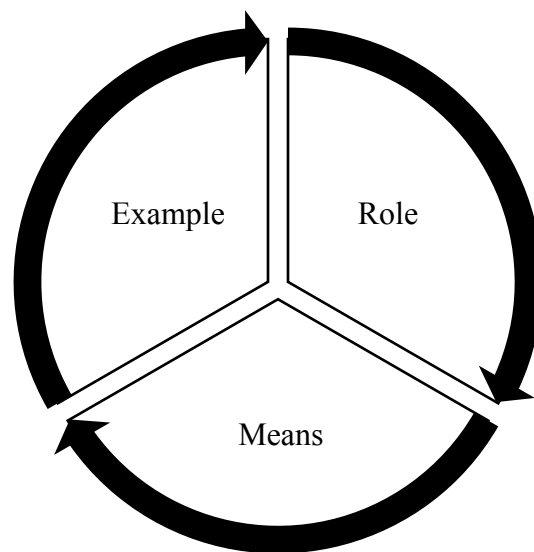


Figure 34. Responsibilities of Urban AGC Head Pastors

The primary aspect of a head pastor's leadership demonstrates actions and what they do through their authority. An emphasis on doing situates an example for others to observe and follow. Due to the importance of leadership examples in hierarchies, the head pastor remains the front individual with complete authority.

Roles are significant in authoritative hierarchies and signify a leader as a boss or ruler over others. Head pastors have authority yet are viewed as teachers and shepherds. The Khmer term used for a pastor, *kru kongveal*, has a literal translation as “teacher

shepherd.” The importance of imparting wisdom and instruction while overseeing and guiding reflects the magnitude of the head pastor’s role. Congregants recognize the uniqueness of this role as they submit and obey.

The means used by head pastors in urban AGC churches include preaching, teaching, and training directed toward leadership development and discipleship. While topical in nature, sermons, lessons, and instruction generally include themes for congregants. Essential growth occurs as learning and application function within a group structure.

Christian Subculture Discipleship and Serving in Urban AGC Churches

A Khmer congregation can be seen vertically and horizontally concerning the head pastor and ministries. The vertical aspect reflects responding to the head pastor’s leadership while following, submitting, and obeying. The horizontal feature describes the relationship with leadership and authority while learning and applying according to the importance of roles in the local church. Figure 35 shows the congregation’s response to leadership and authority in urban AGC churches.

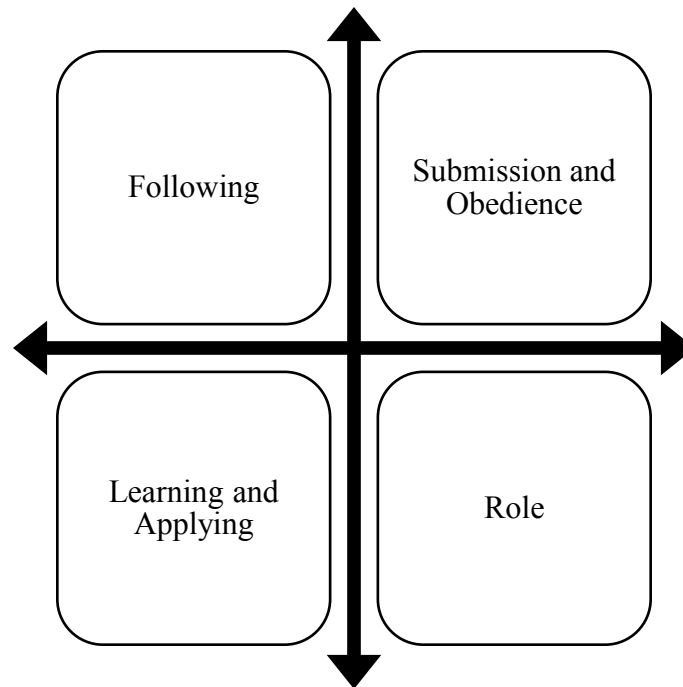


Figure 35. Responses to Leadership and Authority through Discipleship and Serving

Congregants are situated under the authority of the head pastor and follow his or her example. Submission and obedience are key components as teaching and guidance are administered. Just as the head pastor's example and role emphasize action and doing, congregants actively follow and obey through the church's focus on leadership and authority.

Learning and applying are natural responses from the congregation toward teaching and training. A group emphasis enables individuals to remain accountable while carrying out lessons and instructions. Ministry naturally progresses from active participants as they serve in roles emerging from leadership development and discipleship. These activities assist future and potential leaders and disciples in following the necessary patterns, recognizing authoritative structures, and remaining faithfully committed to one another in the local church.

Focal Points for Leadership Development and Discipleship in Urban AGC Churches

Three areas emerged from the cultural data about Khmer Christians as a subculture and their participation in urban AGC churches. The areas of a call to ministry, Christian service, and Christian character reflect the ongoing teaching and training in the leadership and discipleship processes. Growth in these three areas demonstrates a connection to the head pastor's example, remaining active through participation, and adherence to Christian principles. Figure 36 below shows how example, doing, and following exist as the foundation and goals as congregants acknowledge calling, service, and character.

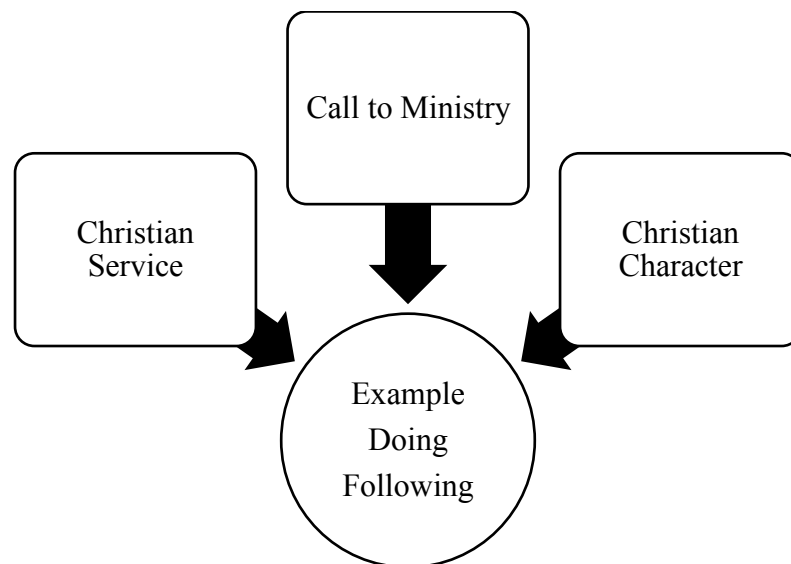


Figure 36. Areas of Focus for Participation in Leadership Development and Discipleship

Call to Ministry

During the interviews at the research sites, seven individuals mentioned a call to ministry while providing definitions of urban AGC churches. Two of the interviewees, both of whom serve as head pastors, described calling as reserved for leadership and

those who engage in vocational ministry. This includes individuals who pursue leadership development in a setting such as a Bible school. Five of the interviewees, all of whom serve in various non-head pastor roles, referred to calling as a component of responsibility and service in the local church. The notion relates to all congregants as they actively participate and utilize their abilities and giftings for enriching others.

The focal point of understanding a call to ministry includes an example. Active participants in ministry, both as pastors and congregants with other roles, represent an example for others to recognize. While head pastors acknowledge calling as a specific function for authority in the local church, congregants note its importance for all Christians to pursue. Others in the congregation can be encouraged and inspired by seeing examples of faithfulness while following God-given opportunities.

Christian Service

Serving in the local church was commonly discussed throughout interviews and viewed through participant observation. Urban Khmer Christians are willing to assist through Christian service during and after leadership development and discipleship. Head pastors, church leaders, and congregants emphasize the importance of believers serving while using the example of leaders and experienced individuals as a source of encouragement.

The most important facet of Christian service in urban AGC churches includes doing. By nature, Khmer people instinctively highlight responsibilities and tasks. Urban Khmer Christians reflect this same sentiment while demonstrating their involvement in the local church. As individuals receive training, leadership development and discipleship point toward being part of Christian service.

Christian Character

Because Christian service receives considerable recognition from Khmer Christians, Christian character typically follows behind doing. The being aspect is viewed as important while congregants develop internal qualities such as faith, love, patience, and morality. However, the emphasis on training directs individuals toward service while recognizing the example of leaders and those with experience. Data from the interviews commonly shows how service is accomplished outwardly rather than through internal qualities.

One's character may be acknowledged as a component of ministry and service, which is shaped by following others. As growth occurs from service, character develops and is enhanced over time. Leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches highlight the importance of character growth, yet the tangible, visible efforts receive more recognition due to the importance of doing.

Interpretation of Educational Findings

Insights from the Focus Group Discussion

Encouragement in education processes can be viewed as providing emotional support and tangible benefits for those who pursue leadership development and discipleship. The Khmer word for encouragement, *gah luk dtuk jett*, is translated as “raising the amount of water in a person's heart,” meaning to lift someone's heart or provide happiness. For many Khmer people, happiness is what they want, but it is not necessarily what they need.¹⁶⁷ Missionaries in Cambodia face the crucial task of

¹⁶⁷ Dareth Ly, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

providing leadership development and discipleship while not causing dependency. Challenges continue with patron-client tendencies, which provide mutual benefits between those in authority and those who follow.

Churches in Cambodia and their emphases on training are defined by what the head pastor is doing.¹⁶⁸ Because the head pastor is the primary authority and example for the congregation, this factor coupled with an emphasis on doing portrays ministries, activities, and training opportunities. An important variable includes responsibility in roles and people doing their duty as it aligns with the head pastor's work.¹⁶⁹

Leadership development and discipleship should be based on finding ways to mentor and help people grow in their character.¹⁷⁰ However, cultural issues can challenge opportunities for personal advancement and development. Patron-client notions arise causing some congregants to expect tangible dividends while receiving training.¹⁷¹ Clients may think about a patron who can fit the definitions they have in mind, even in the local church. Although these tendencies still occur in churches, playing the role in Khmer culture exempts patrons from having good character if they provide for clients.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Ken Huff, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁶⁹ Dareth Ly, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Ann Greve, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁷¹ Ken Huff, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

¹⁷² Kelly Robinette, focus group led by author, Willard, MO, January 3, 2022.

From Missionary Involvement to Head Pastor Implementation

AG missionaries utilized learning, serving, and growing as their primary emphases while guiding leaders and disciples. Their focus on training individuals and groups provided the initial foundations for leadership development and discipleship. While missionaries established ministries through projects and churches, some areas of neglect were present. The lack of a unified training system caused missionaries to maintain a territorial focus and train according to personal needs at each site.

As missionary involvement shifted to head pastor implementation, urban AGC churches highlighted fellowship, participation, and encouragement. Leadership development included overseeing congregants, responsibility in roles, and representing the leadership structure. Discipleship incorporated trust among individuals, learning through ability, and assisting in ministry. Head pastors modeled some of the areas learned from missionaries, yet their approaches typically included groups while accentuating doing rather than being.

Education and Training Leaders in Urban AGC Churches

Classes, fellowship times, and meetings provide a foundation for head pastors to teach and influence church leaders. The designated times for general training can include leaders and congregants receiving encouragement in their roles and responsibilities. Throughout the process, individuals are reminded about the importance of overseeing others in various ministries and representing the congregation's leadership base.

For considering new church leaders, existing relationships carry significance. Individuals who have proven themselves and demonstrated faithfulness may be

considered for new roles and responsibilities. Congregants notice a person committed to the local church and its regularly scheduled activities. While personal character remains important, the emphasis on doing reflects an individual's potential for service.

Education and Training Disciples in Urban AGC Churches

Small groups with informal discussions, Bible study, and classes with a set curriculum are essential for disciples and their progression. Scheduled times provide opportunities for building relationships, open discussion, and serving in the local church. Church leaders and experienced congregants can guide new believers toward growth while emphasizing the importance of continual development.

Following the example of others can position disciples to assist church leaders and establish trust. Before head pastors grant roles and responsibilities, classes and instruction can guide individuals to learn more about their abilities and potential for Christian service. Furthermore, fellowship times and group participation strengthen the congregation by building unity and connection among participants.

Preferences for Training in Urban AGC Churches

Although Bible schools exist in Phnom Penh, training at the local church remains feasible and practical for congregations to develop and enrich leaders and disciples. On-site groups provide the necessary support without requiring individuals to make significant adjustments to schedules, employment, and finances. Togetherness as a church family ensures individuals remain in a familiar place while receiving encouragement from like-minded congregants. Figure 37 shows how protection,

accountability, and commitment provide stabilization in education throughout leadership and discipleship processes.

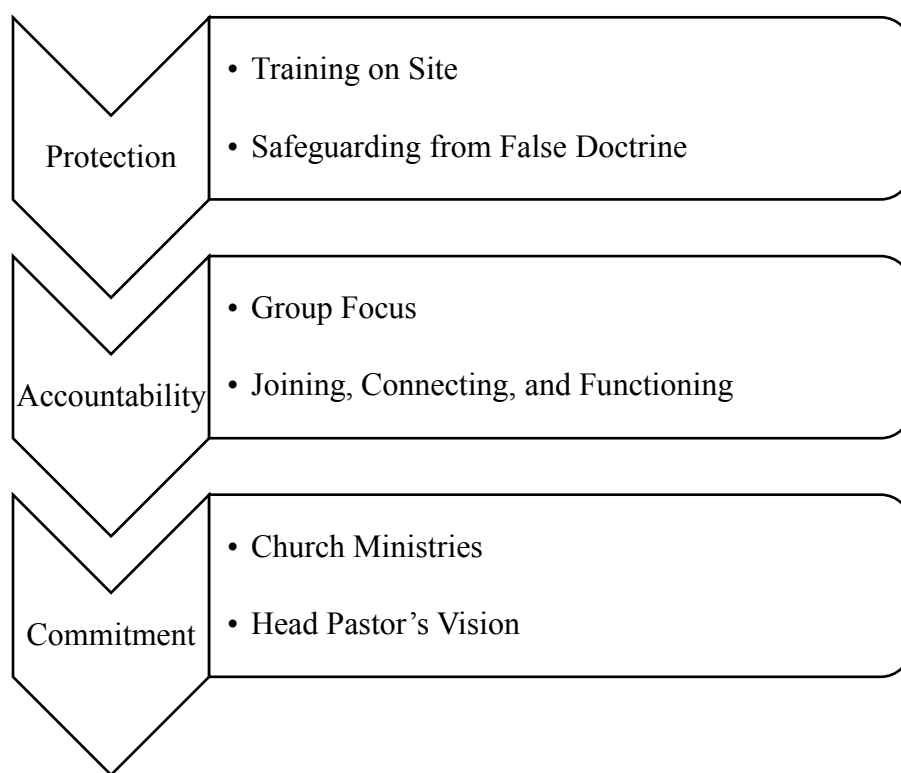


Figure 37. Education Stabilization for Leadership and Discipleship

Throughout interviews and participant observation, individuals mentioned concerns about false doctrine and cults. Although Phnom Penh is known for seminars at various churches and locations, pastors and congregants may remain somewhat hesitant to send people to any event with the possibility of incorrect instruction or confusion. Providing regular training at their site may provide protection and a safe environment with familiar leaders and appropriate teaching.

Maintaining the group structure is significant for leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches. Khmer Christians value fellowship and opportunities to join for classes and discussions. The life and value of the congregation

are noted by the opportunities for people to connect. Accountability is upheld as groups meet with one another and share life while experiencing growth.

Head pastors value congregants who remain faithful to their church and ministries. As individuals receive training, trust grows among church leaders and congregants. Learning experiences include the head pastor's vision and ways for people to remain active by serving and assisting. The result includes congregants who esteem fellowship and participation while receiving regular encouragement.

Unintentional Leadership Development and Discipleship with Intentional Benefits

Leadership development and discipleship at the six research sites demonstrate a functioning system of training men and women for service in urban AGC churches. Opportunities include a variety of settings and classes emphasizing fellowship and encouragement. Furthermore, five of the six sites referred to seminar usage for enhancing leadership development and discipleship.

Although Praise Church is the exception for not using seminars, their programs remain active at the church location, in homes, and during special events. One event includes an annual retreat to set aside time for fun, fellowship, devotions, prayer, and worship as a group. The content shared while traveling, such as testimonies and heartfelt conversations, has significance and value. It is not a class or teaching session and is unintentional; however, it carries intentional benefits as congregants share and listen to one another. Their togetherness while traveling or enjoying quiet moments at a beach campfire conveys opportunities for growth and enrichment in their leadership development and discipleship.

Unintentional times for leadership development and discipleship provide basic, meaningful instruction without seeking potential tangible benefits. Open discussion without books and lessons yields character dividends and can solidify bonds for long-term mentoring. Moreover, the fellowship among congregants deepens trust and accountability for the formal gatherings directed toward leadership development and discipleship. While most of my participant observation included classes and Bible studies, the informal settings and fellowship times demonstrated noteworthy substance. These moments provide the necessary trust among head pastors, church leaders, and congregants to continually move forward through leadership development and discipleship ministries.

Recommendations and Summaries

Twelve Areas of Consideration

Data obtained through historical, cultural, and educational interviews reveals twelve areas related to leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches. These areas address current scenarios in addition to contingencies for the future. As ten areas have been included in the historical, cultural, and educational components, the final two areas include aspects of integration and enhancement. Some areas contain data beyond the scope of my studies and require additional research as mentioned in the conclusions.

AG Growth in Cambodia

Table 28. AG Growth History in Cambodia

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Worship Sites 173</i>	<i>Number of Adherents 174</i>	<i>% Increase of Worship Sites</i>	<i>% Increase of Adherents</i>
1993	7	Unknown	N/A	N/A
1999	27	1000	285.71%	Unknown

<i>2000 to 2009</i>	<i>2010 to 2019</i>
New Worship Sites Added: 126	New Worship Sites Added: 52
Total Number of Worship Sites: 153	Total Number of Worship Sites: 205
Total Adherents: 12,887	Total Adherents: 14,114
% Increase of Worship Sites: 466.66%	% Increase of Worship Sites: 33.98%
% Increase of Adherents: 1188.7%	% Increase of Adherents: 9.52%

After modest growth during the first years of the AG, the second decade from 2000 to 2009 reveals expansive growth. A church planting program through CBI facilitated expansion throughout urban and rural areas. The number of adherents increased by nearly 12,000 during those years with many people added through the churches connected with relief and development projects.

The third decade from 2010 to 2019 shows slight increases in the number of churches and adherents. However, the growth greatly decreased after the second decade. By this time in the Fellowship's history, missionaries were not as active in church planting and handed over leadership positions to Khmer nationals.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ This number includes organized churches and house fellowships.

¹⁷⁴ Due to prohibitions on Christianity until 1993, the actual number of adherents is unknown because of discretion. Sarah Ardu, Ken Huff, and Dareth Ly spoke about a celebration service in the year 2000. The service commemorated a decade of AG ministries in Cambodia and 1000 adherents in the Fellowship. Although this is an estimate for the number of Khmer AG Christians by the year 2000, it is generally accepted as a plausible statistic.

¹⁷⁵ I spoke with field coordinator Ken Huff about statistics, especially the increases between the second and third decades. He believed a statistical plateau occurred around 2008 or 2009 as church planting efforts slowed and missionaries delegated more responsibilities to national leaders.

While growth continues for the Fellowship in its fourth decade, fewer individuals may receive training for leadership development and discipleship. The potential of the Fellowship's training capabilities has always been contingent on consistent growth. Four of the six research sites (Hope Church, Peace Church, Life Church, and Grace Church) are currently involved with church planting programs in addition to their regular ministries. As some church leaders have volunteered to relocate to new church plants, the need is evident for ongoing leadership development to fill any personnel gaps. Furthermore, churches must carefully balance their ministry efforts by keeping a proper emphasis on leadership development and discipleship.¹⁷⁶

The Head Pastor as the Ultimate Authority

Khmer culture is situated for a dominant individual to rule over others. In urban AGC churches, the head pastor is the ultimate authority who governs ministries, church leaders, and disciples. While churches usually incorporate an administrative structure with a church board, elders, or church leadership team, these entities can remain weak due to the head pastor's role.¹⁷⁷ The significance of head pastors and their leadership is cultural yet also has a connection to the fact they were chosen by missionaries to serve in a prestigious leadership position. From the start of CBI in 1994, missionaries searched for potential leaders and sent individuals for additional training to eventually assume authority over a local church. Now, existing churches already have a head pastor and

¹⁷⁶ Dareth Ly mentioned how Khmer Christians can view evangelism as exciting but discipleship as uninspiring. This challenge occurred in the 1990s as the Fellowship began to experience numerical growth yet overlooked the importance of discipleship as new churches launched.

¹⁷⁷ Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

fewer individuals are sent for leadership training because the local church is more about the head pastor than ministries or other leaders.¹⁷⁸

While abuses of authority may occur in Khmer churches, the health and vitality of each congregation will be determined by the head pastor. The continuance of leadership development and discipleship ministries rests on the shoulders of the head pastor. If they keep these essential ministries in the vision for the congregation, growth and progression can occur. Their example in the present generation will impact how the next leaders decide to pursue or neglect leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches.

A Call to Ministry

The Khmer word *gah dtra hou* in Christian circles refers to God's calling on an individual. While engaging in participant observation at the six research sites, preaching on Sunday mornings and teaching sessions for leaders and disciples revealed little about calling. Church leaders and congregants view calling as responsibility and serving which connects to the importance of doing. However, head pastors typically view their calling as a divine appointment for full-time ministry and leadership.

In the AGC at large, special attention and standing are placed upon head pastors for their authoritative role. The AGC has levels of recognition for head pastors and church leaders as determined by three categories of credentials.¹⁷⁹ However, the top level

¹⁷⁸ Nora Catipon, interview by author, Phnom Penh, September 3, 2020.

¹⁷⁹ The three credential categories include exhorter, recognized, and ordained. The AG credentialing structure in Cambodia is like that of the United States AG, which includes certified, licensed, and ordained.

of ordination is reserved only for a small number of Khmer head pastors. While other AG councils and fellowships allow ministers to receive ordination after two years of faithful service within prior levels of ministerial credentials, the AGC views ordination as the exception rather than the norm for its ministers. The reasons are connected to the leadership hierarchy of Khmer culture and historical precedence when a former AG missionary decided to personally select ordination candidates in the late 1990s. The result is a distance between individuals chosen by missionaries or the current national leaders with the potential for serving on the AGC executive committee.¹⁸⁰

Some potential church leaders face discouragement because of the inability to advance or succeed in their ministerial responsibilities. In the prior years, missionaries chose head pastors and the opportunities for advancement were more common. Now, positions of authority are cemented by those appointed by missionaries and still serving as authorities over local churches and the Fellowship. Due to Khmer culture's emphasis on authority and hierarchy, some may feel leadership development has advantages in the local church yet remains limited in the Fellowship. These frustrations can cause limitations on leadership development due to individuals not having the necessary connections for advancement.

Urban AGC churches need to emphasize the importance of a call to ministry based on character and service rather than relational connections. Each local church has opportunities to provide continual development for leaders and disciples as they grow in

¹⁸⁰ At the end of 2021, there were seventy-two credentialed ministers in the AGC with thirteen of those ordained. However, of the ordained ministers, only eight are currently available or willing to stand for election to obtain one of the seven positions on the AGC executive committee.

their abilities and responsibilities. For the Fellowship at large to understand the importance of calling, teaching and instruction must begin in the local church with the next generation equipped for serving both locally and nationally.

*Emphasizing Character and Christian
Service for Being and Doing*

After my first set of interviews at Faith Church, I realized the repeated references about what head pastors, church leaders, and congregants do rather than emphasizing character and internal qualities. The other five research sites confirmed the same descriptions followed by prominence on doing while I joined classes and fellowship times during participant observation. Leadership development and discipleship seemed to direct individuals toward responsibilities and gaining the ability for ministry participation.

A Buddhist culture like Cambodia continually stresses doing because actions can be seen, and work reflects value. Because the culture recognizes actions and work, it is easier for head pastors and church leaders to teach about doing rather than being. Furthermore, the many sermons I heard at the research sites were topical in nature and usually pointed toward doing something. A balanced approach to doing and being seemed absent each time I joined a class or service.

My interview with Ros Kunthea at Hope Church provided insight into the discussion between doing and being. I asked her to share thoughts regarding the importance of teaching about faith, doctrine, and theology in the local church. She shyly replied how congregants may listen to a sermon or lesson covering those areas, but they simply do not understand. Kunthea continued by saying doctrine and theology are

difficult to take to heart and merely make people sleep.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, regular discussion about doing is something that can be grasped and put into action in the local church.

Urban AGC churches can ensure teaching and training for congregants to grow in their doing and being. Course curriculum, such as the Christian Life Series, is common throughout the AGC churches in Phnom Penh. I have personally taught this curriculum in churches and know the strong doctrinal content for personal application and inner growth. Other missionaries are regular guests when churches have classes, and they can use their opportunities to emphasize being and Christian character rather than doing. However, the challenge is the cultural default, which holds doing at the highest level. The present need is for a balance between both areas throughout leadership development and discipleship.

Mentoring

Some of the head pastors described how they received one-on-one mentoring from missionaries during the 1990s and early 2000s. Mentoring has remained valuable in urban AGC churches as shown by the missionary examples decades ago. However, groups have typically remained the normative training practice in urban AGC churches.

Sending students to Bible school is not as prevalent as it was in the 1990s and early 2000s. Now, the focus remains internal through the head pastor's vision for the local church. Each urban AGC church faces the responsibility of training its leaders and

¹⁸¹ Ros Kunthea, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 14, 2019.

disciples. Mentoring in the local church is a way for corporate growth of the leadership structure and personal progression for serving in ministries.

Because cultural limitations cause a distance between teachers and students, the authoritative separation keeps head pastors above others as an example. One negative aspect includes possible abuses of authority. If head pastors dominate by commanding rather than guiding, individuals will view mentoring as merely following orders and serving head pastors instead of growing through the leadership development process.

Influence and Inspiration

During the field interviews, I asked each interviewee about a person of influence and inspiration during their Christian growth. Fourteen of the twenty-four interviewees referred to a missionary making a dynamic, lasting impact on their life. Although missionaries are not regularly active at all six of the research sites, congregants still value the work and service of missionaries in Cambodia.

We may not fully see the second generation of Khmer Christianity until all congregants acknowledge a Khmer head pastor or church leader as their primary source of influence. This will indicate that training and growth have occurred without direct missionary involvement but will occur directly through implementation from head pastors and church leaders. The next generations of discipleship will be regularly passed from Khmer to Khmer with congregants receiving influence and inspiration from fellow citizens.

There has not yet been an actual turnover to the second generation because the church planter is still the pastor.¹⁸² The planters still have historical connections to the missionaries who started the churches. As for now, the churches are in the first generation of Christianity in Cambodia. It will not turn over to the next generation until new leaders emerge without close missionary connections.

Overlap between Leadership Development and Discipleship

Leadership development and discipleship methodologies are both educational and relational in urban AGC churches. Rather than distinct categories for training leaders and disciples, the approaches are organic in nature and overlap. Ongoing efforts prioritize the importance of fellowship, encouragement, and participation for effective training.

As head pastors and church leaders continually emphasize leadership development and discipleship for congregants, overlap occurs throughout the training processes. While discussing teaching and training options with Van Narith, he mentioned it is sometimes hard to understand if the current focus is leadership or discipleship. The participants can be the same, the methods can appear identical, and the results include an impact on similar ministries. Urban AGC churches do not categorize everything implemented throughout the training process and simply prefer to blend strategies for the core leaders and congregants.

While most interviewees repeatedly emphasized generalized training in the local church, Chon Kanya, Yen Seyha, and Pastor Bun Vithu spoke about being intentional and

¹⁸² Ken Huff, interview by author, Phnom Penh, May 27, 2020.

specific. Their ideas include making sure training remains defined according to specific ministries, responsibilities, and roles. It appears the younger generation sees a distinction necessary for training purposes while keeping an emphasis on education and relationships throughout the process. Moreover, having fellowship, encouragement, and participation as a foundation for either leaders or disciples may keep classes and sessions relevant while providing growth.

Recognized Weaknesses in Leaders and Disciples

Table 29. Weaknesses in Leaders and Disciples

<i>Weaknesses in Leaders</i>	<i>Weaknesses in Disciples</i>
Time Management	Time Management
Lack of Studying	Spiritual Growth
Faith	Relationships

During interviews with Khmer nationals, I asked why weaknesses exist in leaders and disciples in urban AGC churches. Although answers varied, the most common denominator among leaders and disciples related to a lack of time management and commitment issues. The issue stems from the doing factor as people remain extremely busy as dictated by cultural norms and expectations. Interviewees acknowledged that doing too many things in life and ministry leads to weaknesses and challenges for those who give their time to urban AGC churches. Other areas include deficiencies in personal devotions, not adequately growing in faith, and the lack of quality relationships with others.

Although the culture places a high emphasis on doing, interviewees acknowledged the challenges for Khmer Christians. The issue of quality over quantity appears to remain evident as leaders can feel overwhelmed and disciples become frustrated. Urban AGC churches can rely on fellowship and relationships to avoid the

tendency of planning extra teaching and training events. Furthermore, emphasizing spiritual disciplines can direct individuals toward growing in character while maintaining their well-being.

The Significance of Groups in Leadership and Discipleship

Observing classes and asking the participants questions provided insights into the importance of groups. There are benefits in leadership development and discipleship as groups join for fellowship, encouragement, and participation. The overall structure fits well culturally and provides the necessary feasibility for teaching and training. Figure 38 below shows four significant aspects of leadership and discipleship groups at the six research sites.

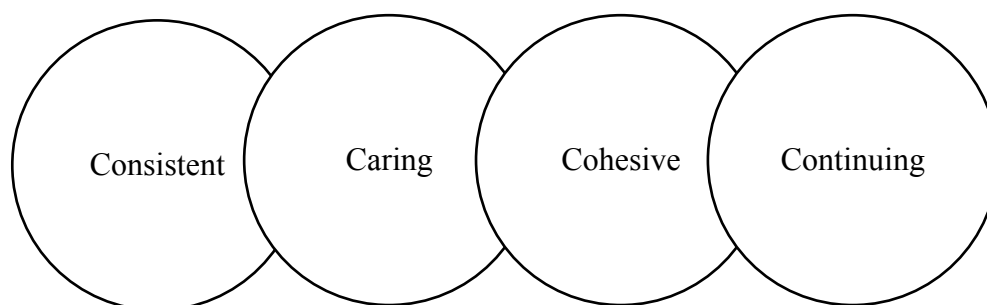


Figure 38. Group Aspects in Urban AGC Churches

Data from the interviews show the importance of regularly scheduled occasions for training leaders and disciples. Consistent gathering times provide familiarity among teachers and congregants. Developing a routine through the times allows a continual flow of learning and engagement in each group.

One of the most often repeated aspects of leadership development and discipleship is encouragement. Head pastors, church leaders, and congregants continually

remarked about the necessity of Khmer Christians receiving caring through encouragement as they study, learn, and apply training. A caring group environment situates leaders and disciples for personal growth and beneficial ministry.

Although curriculum may vary at urban AGC churches, using familiar sets of lessons greatly assists the education process. Cohesion throughout training allows teachers to become familiar with the content and students to easily apply their instruction. Groups can function in the best possible way by utilizing relevant materials which are directed toward participation in the local congregation.

Head pastors and church leaders indicated the importance of continually providing classes in group formats. Allowing a continuation of levels and series provides a positive learning atmosphere for congregants to learn and progress. As urban AGC churches keep a regular schedule in place, leaders and disciples can complete levels, celebrate their accomplishments, and advance to new opportunities for learning.

Looking toward the Next Generation

The next head pastors and church leaders will carry personal responsibility for the continuance of leadership development and discipleship. Turnover in urban AGC churches will prove inevitable in due time. The vision set by head pastors and initiated by committed leaders and congregants will determine the effectiveness of the second generation of Khmer Christians in Cambodia.

Regarding the preparation of future ministries, I asked head pastors to share their views about what will be needed for leadership development. Discipleship was the most common response as urban AGC churches implement leadership development. However, when asked about the ways and means for ensuring discipleship, each head pastor

provided a different answer according to their ministry philosophy. Overall, the continuance of discipleship will likely endure through the diligence of each congregation while emphasizing various aspects of teaching and training.¹⁸³

Another vital area to consider will be the transition from the current head pastors to the second generation of Khmer Christians. Only one of the six research sites has experienced a transition in the head pastor role. The head pastors spoke about the possibility of grooming a new head pastor, calling the elders or board together for discussion, or allowing the congregation to vote. Nevertheless, the issue of selecting new head pastors in urban AGC churches remains ambiguous as culture dictates a leader keeps authority for as long as possible. When the time comes for new leadership, the necessity of leadership development and discipleship will be equally important as congregations experience change.

*Seven Points of Integration in Leadership
Development and Discipleship*

The points of integration represent areas from the interview data and participant observation at urban AGC churches. While similar points can be made between leadership development and discipleship, distinctions indicate the progression as leaders and disciples receive training for character and service. Each step carries significance as an appropriate cycle for congregants in the local church as shown in Table 30.

¹⁸³ The six areas mentioned for future discipleship include a focus on youth, personal life, relationships, studying the Bible, accountability in methods, and support.

Table 30. Integration Points for Leadership and Discipleship

<i>Leadership Development Integration</i>	<i>Discipleship Integration</i>
Choosing * By head pastor or leadership team	Receiving * Being part of the congregation
Training * Classes and meetings	Instructing * Initial teaching about doctrine
Mentoring * Guidance from the head pastor	Mentoring * Following examples
Valuing * Recognizing and appreciating growth	Valuing * Recognizing and appreciating growth
Launching * Allowing service to begin	Mobilizing * Preparation for service
Assisting * Leading ministries with others	Assisting * Opportunities for service
Encouraging * Continual support	Encouraging * Continual support

Because groups are regularly used in urban AGC churches, the seven points of integration can be used as a primer for ongoing leadership development and discipleship. Current teaching and training can link individuals according to their needs while meeting for classes, receiving mentoring, and serving in ministry. Primary implementation including fellowship, encouragement, and participation are used accordingly in the process. Furthermore, leadership and discipleship functions align within the approaches as shown by responsibilities and abilities in the local church.

Enhancing Integration in Leadership Development and Discipleship

Four areas of enhancement for leaders and disciples emerged from participant observation, focus group discussion, and the perceived needs of Khmer leaders and laity in urban AGC churches. The focus on leadership development includes more of an independent approach for leaders to recognize how they can improve their character and service. The aspects of humility, expectations, learning, and perspective can better guide leaders in a balanced manner while using their authority in the Khmer Christian subculture. As for disciples, most of the components relate to necessary connections with

others, especially groups, while adding to character and service. Learning, interaction, fellowship, and experience provide regular opportunities for growth throughout the discipleship process. The acronyms HELP and LIFE serve as reminders for leaders' ministries in the local church setting and disciples receiving enrichment as followers of Christ. Table 31 below shows the areas to enhance integration in leadership development and discipleship.

Table 31. Enhancement Aspects of Integration for Leadership and Discipleship

<i>Enhancing Leadership Development H.E.L.P. Focus</i>	<i>Enhancing Discipleship L.I.F.E. Focus</i>
Humility * Authority balanced with humility	Learning * Personal studies
Expectations * Spiritual disciplines	Interaction * Small group of three to five people
Learning * Continuing education	Fellowship * Larger group of six to ten people
Perspective * Roles in church, community, and kingdom	Experience * Service with others

Conclusions

Functionality through Leadership Development and Discipleship in Urban AGC Churches

Missionaries who entered Cambodia during the 1990s through relief and development projects provided a necessary foundation for Christian mission. Their initial service pointed toward the long-term goal of Khmer congregations spread across the country. Relationships and partnerships among nationals in projects opened the first doors for leadership development and discipleship following a civil war, genocide, and displacement.

Like other denominations, fellowships, and mission groups, the AG entered Cambodia through relief efforts while maintaining a vision for establishing the AGC. Labors amid challenges through education centers, medical clinics, and orphanages

linked missionaries and nationals as the national church received official recognition in 1997. While projects led to church ministries, missionaries continually poured into nationals through teaching, training, and mentoring. Ongoing commitment from missionaries guided the Fellowship toward expanded training opportunities.

The Khmer culture provides a unique setting for leadership development and discipleship. Due to the hierarchy of leadership, the head pastor maintains complete supervision over the congregation and church ministries. Their administration and vision direct local churches while focusing on leadership development and discipleship. As these ministries progress, leaders and disciples emphasize doing as reflected by Khmer culture. Aspects learned from teaching and training point toward application and diligent service. Furthermore, the combination of the head pastor's management coupled with application results in congregants following the head pastor's example.

Missionaries established early efforts of leadership development and discipleship at urban AGC churches. Their emphasis on learning, serving, and growing enabled nationals to obtain leadership positions for training others. As missionary involvement progressed through head pastor implementation, the platform for training leaders and disciples included fellowship, participation, and encouragement. The means for integration and continuation centered on groups with leaders demonstrating responsibility and disciples indicating ability. Although leadership development and discipleship continued, areas of neglect surfaced throughout the continuance of the Fellowship. Missionaries used leadership and discipleship methodologies by personal preference rather than a unified field strategy. Head pastors emphasized group training rather than individual mentoring while stressing the importance of doing over being.

The six research sites demonstrate active ministry through leadership development and discipleship in their respective areas of Phnom Penh. Their historical connection to missionaries represents successful church planting and evangelism from the earliest relief and development programs. Ministry perpetuation exists through group activities as urban Khmer Christians receive training. While missionary activity continues through encouragement and teaching, head pastors guide churches with loyalty and support from leaders and disciples. Ongoing fellowship, participation, and encouragement within each congregation ensure a model for local growth and expansion through mission. Figure 39 below indicates how history, culture, and education have led to the functionality of leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches.

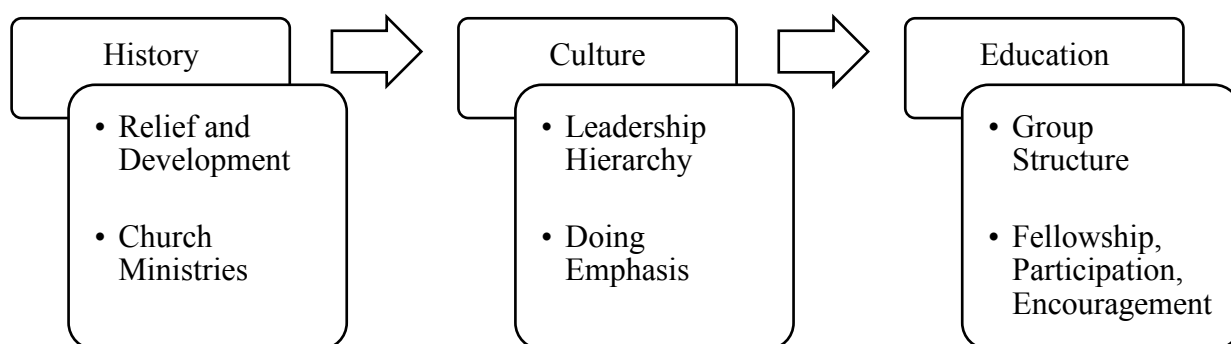


Figure 39. Functionality through Leadership and Discipleship

Areas for Additional Research

Throughout my research journey, I realized the uniqueness of conducting field research related to ministry among the Khmer people in urban AGC churches. Although some colleagues in Cambodia from the AG and other mission groups have completed doctoral studies with a dissertation or capstone project, many areas remain unexplored. The focus group members voiced their agreement about our fellowship encouraging more

missionaries to pursue field research for enhancing our present ministries. Due to the three decades of active participation coupled with the current leadership development and discipleship within the AG, five areas emerged for missionaries to conduct further research in urban AGC churches.

*Leadership Development and Discipleship in
Other Urban AGC Churches*

My ethnographic research included six urban AGC churches in Phnom Penh with specific criteria. Each church has existed for over a decade, is recognized by the AGC, and has a head pastor with ministerial credentials. The data and results from the ethnography emerged from the sites concerning their focus on leadership development and discipleship. However, there are seventeen additional AGC churches and worship sites in Phnom Penh which have not been researched. New research can be completed in connection with the sites and their congregants through an ethnography or a different approach to inquiry. A narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, or case study about leadership development and discipleship would be valuable for understanding the similarities or differences from the research I have presented through ethnographic research. The other churches are younger, have different standings in the Fellowship, and some do not have head pastors with credentials. Their approaches toward leaders and disciples may yield new data for understanding history, culture, and education in urban AGC churches.

Post-COVID-19 Research in Urban AGC Churches

While noticing the declining attendance at the six research sites in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I realized urban AGC churches might change their

approaches toward leadership development and discipleship. The situation became even grimmer after February 2021 as Phnom Penh experienced city-wide mandates, lockdowns, and curfews to curtail the spread of the virus. Churches were forced to abandon regular schedules, change worship formats, incorporate more small group practices, and begin streaming sermons. As of March 2022, churches were still in the rebuilding process as not all congregants returned for regular services or classes emphasizing leadership and discipleship. Additional research about urban AGC churches can provide insight into ministries, especially leadership development and discipleship, following the pandemic.

The Continuation of Leadership Development and Discipleship in Urban AGC Churches

Some of the discussions with head pastors focused on the future of leadership development and discipleship methodologies in urban AGC churches. Regarding the potential of leadership development, head pastors indicated the importance of vision and discipleship for training leaders. The key facet includes the head pastors' views of providing discipleship by emphasizing youth ministries, personal life, relationships, Bible studies, accountability in methods, and support. These six areas can be used as a foundation for additional research by addressing ongoing leadership and discipleship efforts in urban AGC churches.

Khmer Head Pastors and Leadership Transitions in Urban AGC Churches

Head pastor transitions are relatively uncommon throughout AGC churches because the country is still in the first generation of Christianity. The current head pastors were chosen by missionaries or planted their current church by themselves. Due to the

nature of authoritative, top-down leadership in the culture, more research is needed to understand the dynamics of current leaders and the eventual transition to a new leader. Some head pastors referred to the possibility of congregational voting, grooming a new leader before retirement, or appointing a committee for the selection process. However, the notion of keeping authority reveals there are no set guidelines for head pastor transitions. Additional research would allow a better understanding of the authoritative structure in churches and the processes congregations experience while receiving a new head pastor.

*Second and Third Khmer Christian Generations
at Urban AGC Churches*

Influence and inspiration remain significant in urban AGC churches, especially in connection with the missionaries who established congregations during the 1990s. While more congregants recognize head pastors, church leaders, and other Christians as a source of inspiration, many still look to missionaries and their legacy as the patron of the local church. As Khmer Christianity enters the second and third generations, new worship sites will reflect unique aspects of being planted by Khmer nationals rather than missionaries. While urban AGC churches undertake more efforts to plant churches in urban and rural areas, their direct implementation will inspire and influence the next generations without missionary involvement. Researching the churches from a historical viewpoint may show Khmer Christians planting churches, training leaders, and guiding discipleship resulting in continual multiplication from Khmer to Khmer.

Concluding Thoughts

I started preaching in the Khmer language in March 2012. It was a time in my life filled with numerous emotions and circumstances during the first half of our initial missionary term. Our family moved to Siem Reap Province to assist with discipleship ministries and serve alongside young adults and youth. Language studies acquired at a university in Phnom Penh were put into practice, and we added to our understanding of Khmer culture. My family experienced many firsts in life and ministry, endured the pain of two miscarriages while remaining thousands of miles from our family in the United States, and felt the provoking sway of cultural stress that greets new missionaries during the initial years. Nevertheless, ministry opportunities continued as I began to teach and preach in Khmer.

My first Khmer sermon was from Matthew 4:18-22, where Jesus calls His first disciples. Although only five verses, the passage sets into motion the Kingdom work of individuals being called, following a leader, connecting with people, and going out to reach others. The cultural context of siblings working with their father and friends is easily grasped in Cambodia. Moreover, it was quite fitting preaching this sermon in Siem Reap, adjacent to a large lake with many fishing villages.

I often find myself analyzing the scenario of Jesus with the disciples and the importance of leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Cambodia. The timeframe the Lord shared with His closest companions is like missionaries and their time during a term. Three years move quickly while teaching, training, and equipping individuals in their journey of spiritual progression and development. It can be challenging for any missionary to provide clear answers even after spending multiple

mission terms in a particular context. I usually find myself with a list of more questions than answers each time returning to the United States for a furlough.

My two years of engagement at the six research sites in Phnom Penh showed me the structures of leadership development and discipleship in urban AGC churches. Missionaries paved the way and provided a necessary platform for future ministry. Cultural intricacies are present as role, standing, and example are vital components in a top-down, authoritative setting. Preferred methods of implementation depend upon the head pastor and how they view the best means for training congregants. These factors combined with the uncertainties of a pandemic cause me to wonder about the next generation of Khmer Christianity. However, I am reminded of the near extinction of Christianity in Cambodia during the 1970s and 1980s followed by new possibilities in the 1990s. The veteran missionaries who experienced these many changes remarked how God showed up and is still working under the radar in many parts of the country.¹⁸⁴

Visiting the research sites, encountering new experiences, scribbling comments in notebooks, and reflecting on the Khmer Christian subculture in Phnom Penh filled me with a sense of inspiration and gratitude. I experienced inspiration from individuals belonging to a people group who have encountered many challenges for decades. I felt gratitude while realizing the Fellowship's intention to train leaders and disciples both now and in the future. The efforts of faithful brothers and sisters in Phnom Penh exhibited how the kingdom of God remains in action among the Khmer people.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Scott, interview by author, Phnom Penh, January 29, 2020.

Leadership development and discipleship continue in urban AGC churches. It is a joint effort worked out through God's sovereign design, enduring mission efforts, committed head pastors, and eager congregants. I am encouraged by the ongoing legacy and potential for the years to come in Phnom Penh. People like Seang Chenda, an elderly survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime, reminded me firsthand how there was no Christian movement a few decades ago. Now, Khmer Christians have a testimony about their progression. Her simple words, "We must continue," serve as the impetus for future leadership development and discipleship.¹⁸⁵ May the next generation never lose sight of the previous decades as they represent the kingdom of God in Cambodia.

¹⁸⁵ Seang Chenda, interview by author, Phnom Penh, October 24, 2019.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY DATA

Strategy Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
Strategy	• Relief and Development • Church Ministries • National Church	• Missionary Focus and Personnel

<i>Theme – Strategy</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Opportunities for training nationals within projects • More religious freedom after the 1993 elections led to training in churches
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Lacking a unified field strategy for training nationals • Some relief workers lacked ministerial training for instructing nationals.
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Leadership development superseded discipleship. • Limited reciprocation of training passed from national to national.

Methodology Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
Methodology	• Discipleship • Leadership Development • Leadership Selection	• Discipleship Strategies and Implementation • Leadership Strategies and Selection • Resources

<i>Theme – Methodology</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Building long-lasting relationships, which led to training nationals • Bible schools opened for vocational ministry training.
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Limited resources for leadership and discipleship training • Few Christian nationals available as potential leaders
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Character issues among those selected for leadership development • Mostly group training with limited examples of one-on-one mentoring

National Leaders' Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
National Leaders	• Mentoring • Patron-Client • Contextualization	• National Leaders' Characteristics • Contextualization and Organization

<i>Theme – National Leaders</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Investing into nationals' lives and future ministries • Preparation for churches with national leaders rather than missionaries leading
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Inexperienced field personnel training leaders and disciples • Difficulties creating national churches and organizations with a Khmer identity
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Nationals hoped for a patron-client structure within projects and churches. • Allegiance to specific missionaries rather than the Fellowship at large

Growth Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
Growth	• Roles • Urban and Rural Settings • Government Protocols	• Ministry Sites • Transformation

<i>Theme – Growth</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Opportunities to serve through relief and development projects • New churches and worship sites in urban and rural areas
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Requirements to fulfill government protocols • Misunderstandings about missionaries and their roles in Cambodia
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Lack of discipleship emphasis among missionaries and nationals • Rushing to succeed in leadership and discipleship

Tensions Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
Tensions	• Communication • Finances • Dependency	• Tensions

<i>Theme – Tensions</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Ongoing ministry opportunities in projects and churches despite tensions • Investing into nationals despite tensions
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Differences in ministerial philosophy among missionaries • Distractions due to government protocols
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Dependency issues emerged. • Financial disagreements

Cooperation and Fellowship Data Tables

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Assemblies of God</i>	<i>Four Mission Groups</i>
Cooperation and Fellowship	• Relationships • Group Focus • Individual Focus	• Fellowship • Collective and Individualistic Tendencies

<i>Theme – Cooperation and Fellowship</i>	<i>Assemblies of God and Four Mission Groups</i>
Successes in Leadership and Discipleship	• Building relationships and training nationals • Growing churches and opportunities to train more nationals
Challenges in Leadership and Discipleship	• Limitations on resources within each group, denomination, and fellowship • Concerns about favoritism during training
Weaknesses in Leadership and Discipleship	• Predominantly group training rather than one-on-one mentoring • Minimal training passed from national to national.

APPENDIX B: CULTURE DATA

Khmer Leadership Traits According to Culture

* Ability	Above Everything	* Above Others	Achievements
Administering	* Age is Important	Authority	Big People
* Boss	Clever	* Different from Christians	* Doing Whatever You Want to Do
Example	Experience	First	Force
Front	Head	Highest	Influence
* Instilling Fear	* Knowledge	Leading Others	Master
Mature	Money	Never Wrong	Not Lacking
People Desire to Lead	* People Follow	* People Respect	* Power
Pride	Results	* Self	Skilled
Strong	Telling Others What to Do	Value	Worth

* Denotes Areas Mentioned Most

Khmer Discipleship Traits According to Culture

Afraid	Courses	Doing Accordingly	* Exams
Expecting to Receive Something	Experience	Following the Leader	* Following the Teacher
For the Future	Information	* Knowledge	* Learning
* Levels of Classes	Listening	Love for the Teacher	Low
Not Having Received Everything	* Obedience	People Do Not Like It	* Research
* Respect for Teachers	Role for Studying	Similar to Servants	Small
Students are Below Teachers	* Students are Fearful of Teachers	* Studying	* Submission
Success	* Teachers are Always Right	Wisdom	Young People

Khmer Authority Traits According to Culture

Above	* Above Everything	Above the Law	Administer
Appointed	After Education	Allowing Others to Do Something	* Big Person
* Boss	Complete Freedom	Daring	* Different from Christians
Doing What the Leader Says	* Doing Whatever You Want to Do	Example	* Forceful
* Giving Commands and Orders	Government	High Role	Influence
Job	Judge	* Leader	Leadership
Master	Money	Never Wrong	Not About Serving
Not Afraid of Laws	* Other People are Below	Overseeing Others	People Must Listen
People See if Good or Bad	People Serving Leaders	* Power	Respect
* Self	Telling Others What to Do	Using Others	* Working

Khmer Serving Traits According to Culture

Applying	Big People Are Not About Serving	Commitment	* Different from Christians
Difficult	Doing	Doing According to Commands	* Doing for Those in Authority
Doing Something Yourself	* Doing Work to Receive Something	Expecting Something	Experience
Following an Example	Getting Something You Want	* Helping	Job
Instrument for Someone/Something	Listening	* Low	Normal
* People Do Not Enjoy Serving	Poor	* Role in Society	Salary
* Serving Big People	Serving Others	Short Duration	Similar to Biblical Example
* Small People	Taking Care of Things	Those Who are Under	Volunteering
Weak	* Working	Working for Money	Young People

Leadership Traits in Khmer Christian Subculture

Ability	Advising	* Being an Example	Biblical Principles
Calling from God	Casting off Things	Character	Coordinator
Different from the World	* Encouraging	* Example of Christ	Experience
Fearing the Lord	From the Heart	Front	Growth
Guided by God	* Helping	Humility	In the Church
* Leading People the Right Way	* Leading People to Know God	Learning/Studying	* Listening to God's Direction
* Love	* Making Disciples	Not by the Flesh	Not Easy
Not Forcing	Not Receiving Rewards	Obedience	Patience
People-Oriented	Preparing	Right Way/Path	* Serving
Submission	* Teaching/Preaching	Training	Working

Discipleship Traits in Khmer Christian Subculture

According to the Leader	Advising	* Applying	Being a Student before Leading
Carrying Your Cross	Casting of Things	Change	Character
Commitment	Disciples of Christ	* Example from Teachers and Others	* Following
Great Commission	* From Teacher to Student	Humility	Leading
Leaders Teaching Those Below Them	* Learning	Listening	Love
* Making Disciples	Mentoring	Not a Fixed Timeframe	* Obedience
Path/Way of God	Responsibility	Serving	Student
* Studying	* Submission	Taking Things to Heart	Teachable
Teaching	Trustworthy	Understanding the Will of God	* Walking and Doing Accordingly

Authority Traits in Khmer Christian Subculture

Administering	Apostles	Biblical Example	Education
Encouragement	* For Believers	Forgiveness	* Given by God
Helping	Humility	* Leadership in the Church	* Leading
Love	Methods	Ministry Role	* Not for Self
Not Forceful	Obedience	* Over Evil Spirits	Peace
* Power and Empowerment	* Prayer for the Sick	Responsibility	* Relationship with God
Serving	Situational	Solving Problems	Spirituality
* Teaching/Preaching	* Through the Holy Spirit	Unity	Using with the Will of God
Victory	Wisdom	* Working/Doing	Worship

Serving Traits in Khmer Christian Subculture

Actions	Biblical Example	Called to Serve	* Caring
* Casting off Things	Character	Discipleship	* Example of Christ
Example of Others	* Following	Forgiveness	* From the Heart
Growth	* Helping	* Humility	* Love
Mission	Not About Money	Not Easy	Not Receiving Something in Return
Not Thinking about Self	Peace	Responsibility	Role
* Serving God	* Serving in the Church	Serving Others	Showing How to Serve
Similar to Leadership	Spiritual Gifts	* Submission	Surrender
Teaching the Word	Through Difficulties	Volunteering	* Walking and Doing Accordingly

Selecting Leaders

Ability	* Bible Knowledge	Biblical Example	* Character
Experience	* Faith in God	* Faithfulness	Humility
* Love	Mature	Morality	Obedience
Prayerful	Reputation	Responsible	Role Model
* Service	Spiritual Gifts	Teachable	Wisdom

Training Leaders

Bible School	* Bible Study Classes	* Christian Service	Community Service
Encouragement	* Fellowship	Meeting Together	Personal Application
Prayer	Relationships	* Seminars	* Training from Church Leaders

Personnel for Training Leaders

Bible School Staff	Church Board Members
Elders	Head Pastor
Missionaries	Other Church Leaders

Overseeing Leaders

Church Leadership Team	Congregation at Large
Elders	Head Pastor

Allowing New Leaders to Preach or Teach

After Receiving Training	Applying and Trying Soon
Having Ability and Understanding	Head Pastor Makes the Decision

Leadership Programs in the Church

General Biblical Studies	Regularly Scheduled Group Classes
Seminars with Specific Themes/Topics	Training from Church Leaders

Leadership Programs outside the Church

Bible School	Business	Communication Skills	Computer Training
Cultural Studies	Discipleship	* Education Classes	English
Evangelism	Fellowship	Games	* General Skills Training
Hobbies	Leadership Classes	* Seminars	Serving

Head Pastors' Roles in Leadership Development

All Activities	Application	Discussion	* Encouragement	Evangelism
* Fellowship	Inspiration	Leading	* Overseeing	* Planning
Praise and Worship	Structure for Church Leaders	* Teaching	Vision	Visitation

Missionaries' Roles in Leadership Development

Cooperation	Discussion	* Demonstrating Experience	Discussion	* Encouragement
* Fellowship	Management	* Partnership	Showing a Good Example	* Teaching

Congregations' Roles in Leadership Development

Application from Instruction	Becoming Church Leaders
Coming Together at Church	Encouragement
Helping in the Congregation	Listening to Church Leaders

Teaching Disciples

Activities	* Application	Baptism	Bible School
Character	* Curriculum and Resources	* Doctrine	* Encouragement
Experience	Faith	Fellowship	Following Examples
* General Bible Studies	Growth	Leadership Classes	Obedience
One-on-One Training	Relationships	Self-Study	Seminars
Serving	Small Groups	Study Books	Visitation

Discipleship Duration and Emphases

Baptism	Classes	Continually Studying	Doctrine
Growing in Faith	Learning	Levels/Segments	Maturing
Personal Testimony	Serving in Ministry	Starting Immediately	Teaching Others

Personnel for Teaching Disciples

Church Leaders	Disciples	Elders
Head Pastor	Missionaries	People with Experience

Discipleship Training in the Church

* Biblical Studies	Character	Community	* Doctrine
Evangelism	Family	Fellowship	Leadership
* Levels/Segments	Life of Christ	Making Disciples	Mission
Obedience	Prayer	Remaining Active	Responsibility
Seminars	* Serving	Small Groups	Stewardship

Discipleship Training outside the Church

* Bible School	Computer	English	* Evangelism
* Experience	Family	* General Education Studies	Groups
Leadership	Making Disciples	Mission	Personal Study of the Bible
Relationships	* Seminars	Studies for Families and Singles	Worship

Head Pastors' Roles in Discipleship

Baptism	Celebration	* Encouragement	Evangelism
Example to Others	Fellowship	Inspiration	Leading
Motivation	* Overseeing	* Teaching	Vision

Missionaries' Roles in Discipleship

Assisting	* Encouragement	Evangelism	Example to Others
Fellowship	Helping	Inspiration	* Partnership
Resources	Solving Problems	Supporting	* Teaching

Congregations' Roles in Discipleship

Advising	Application	Appreciating People	Coming Together
Commitment	Contributing	* Encouragement	* Evangelism
Example to Others	Fellowship	* Helping	Inviting People
Knowledge	* Making Disciples	Patience	Prayer
Resources	* Small Groups	Studying Together	Submission
Supporting New Believers	Training Others	Visitation	Wisdom

APPENDIX C: EDUCATION DATA

Leadership Training from Missionaries

Bible School	* Classes and Courses	Discipleship	In-House Training	Leadership Principles
* Ministry Involvement	Opportunities for Service	Relationships	Roles	* Small Groups

* Denotes Areas Mentioned Most

Discipleship from Missionaries

Administrative Work	Being with other Disciples	Bible School	* Classes/Courses	* Example
Fellowship	Helping	Resourcing	* Small Groups	Time Together

Most Important Areas Learned from Missionaries about Leadership and Discipleship

Application	Community Focus	Contextualized Ministry	Encouragement	Example
Humility	Mission	Patience	Regular Life	Resourcing
Serving	Teaching	Trust	Vision	Visitation

What Missionaries Did Right through Leadership Development and Discipleship

* Application	Casting Things Off	* Community Service
Devoting Time	Emphasis on Bible Studies	Encouragement
Example	Giving	Helping
Leading	Meeting Together	Prayer
Preaching	Resources	Seminars
* Small Groups	Special Events	Teaching People to Work

What Missionaries Did Wrong Through Leadership Development and Discipleship

Problems with Non-Government Organization (NGO) Work
Promoting Self Rather than National Leaders
Spending Extra Time with National Leaders and Causing Favoritism
Different Methods and Vision Among the Missionaries
Legalistic in Methods and Ministry

Methods Taught by Missionaries

Advising	Biblical Example	Commitment	Contextualized	Grace
One-on-One	Serving	Small Groups	Teachable Attitude	Trust

Preparation for Future Ministry and Ongoing Support

Advice	Church Planting	Fellowship	Helping
Ministry	Preaching	Sustainability	Teaching

Choosing and Appointing Leaders

Ability	Casting off Things	Character	* Commitment
* Faithfulness	Love	Maturity	* Relationships
Role	Small Groups	Spiritual Gifts	Studying
Submissive	Teachable	Trust	Vision

Training Leaders in the Church

Bible Study	* Curriculum	Example	Fellowship
* Groups	Forgiveness	Independent Study	Love
Meeting Together	Ministry	Prayer	* Responsibilities

Training Disciples in the Church

* Ability	Application	Bible Study	Character Development
* Curriculum	Faith	* Groups	Prayer
Responsibilities	Solving Problems	Support	Water Baptism

Curriculum and Themes for Leadership Development

Bridge Commentary	Christian Life Series
Church Development Program	Doctrine of the Assemblies of God
Examples in Ministry Themes	Intentional Moves Series
Leadership Themes	Parenting Themes
Responsibility in Ministry Themes	Train and Multiply Series

Curriculum and Themes for Discipleship

Ability Themes	Christian Life Series
Christian Service Series	Church Development Program
Evangelism Themes	Intentional Moves Series
Ministry Themes	Stewardship Themes
Train and Multiply Series	Water Baptism

Choosing Teachers for Training Leaders and Disciples

Bible School Training	Chosen by the Head Pastor	Christian Living	* Church Leaders
Commitment	* Completed Courses and Study Levels	* Gift of Teaching	Good Example
Managing Their Family Well	Mature	Missionaries	Spiritual Gifts
Teachable	Trust	Trying Hard	Understanding the Bible Clearly

Assigning Responsibilities for Leadership and Discipleship

Ability	Commitment	* Encouragement	Faithfulness
* Groups	Helping	* Letting People Try	Maturity
Prayer	Serving	Starting at Salvation	Supporting
Trust	Voting	Watching	Working

Using Seminars in Local Churches

Church Administration	Church Planting
Discipleship	Encouragement
Evangelism	Family Emphasis
Fellowship	Leadership
Youth	Worship

Head Pastors and Their Responsibilities with Leadership

* Encouragement	* Helping with Application
Inspiration	Leading
Overseeing	Preaching
* Teaching	Vision

Head Pastors and Their Responsibilities with Discipleship

Celebration	* Encouragement
Inspiration	Leading
Motivation	* Overseeing
Preaching	Supporting
* Teaching	Vision

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CONSENT

FORM AND QUESTIONS

Interview Consent Form

My name is Joshua Lovelace, and I am a doctoral student at Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina. I am enrolled in the Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies program and will be conducting research in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. My research will focus on leadership development and discipleship methodologies in Assemblies of God churches. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, I will conduct interviews to obtain information from local congregations.

Your participation as an interviewee in the study will be treated with anonymity. You may withdraw from the study at any time, even after having been interviewed. If you would like, I am willing to share the research findings and the dissertation in its final form. Also, if you are mentioned in the final product of the research, a pseudonym can be used for precautionary measures.

Interviewee Name and Signature

Joshua Lovelace
3029 Dogwood Trail
Spring Hill, TN 37174
417-942-2041
josh.lovelace@agmd.org

Date of Interview

Columbia International University
7435 Monticello Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29203
(800) 777-2227

ទម្រង់បរិបទសម្ភាសន៍

ខ្ញុំបាទឈ្មោះ Joshua Lovelace ហើយខ្ញុំជានិស្សិតថ្នាក់បណ្ឌិតនៅសាកលវិទ្យាល័យអន្តរជាតិកូឡុមប៊ី (Columbia International University) ក្នុងក្រុងកូឡុមប៊ី រដ្ឋខាត្រីណឺ រដ្ឋអាមេរិក។ ខ្ញុំបានចុះឈ្មោះសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្ឌិតក្នុងផ្នែកកម្មវិធីសិក្សាវប្បធម៌ចម្រុះ ហើយត្រូវរៀបចំការស្រាវជ្រាវក្នុងទីក្រុងភ្នំពេញនៃប្រទេសកម្ពុជា។ ការស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់ខ្ញុំនឹងផ្តោតសំខាន់ទៅលើការអភិវឌ្ឍភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ និងយុទ្ធសាស្ត្របង្កើតសិស្សក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំនិកាយក្រុមជំនុំព្រះជាម្ចាស់។ ដើម្បីបង្កើតការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះកាន់តែមានគុណភាព ខ្ញុំនឹងធ្វើការសម្ភាសន៍ ដើម្បីបានទទួលព័ត៌មានពីសមាជិកក្រុមជំនុំតាមតំបន់។

ការចូលរួមរបស់អ្នកដែលផ្តល់ជាការសម្ភាសន៍នៅក្នុងការសិក្សានេះ នឹងមិនត្រូវបានបញ្ចេញឈ្មោះឡើយ។ អ្នកអាចដកសិទ្ធិចូលរួមជួយក្នុងការសិក្សាមួយនេះបានគ្រប់ពេលវេលា ទោះបីជាអ្នកធ្លាប់ផ្តល់ការសម្ភាសន៍រួចមកហើយក៏ដោយ។ ប្រសិនបើ អ្នកមានបំណងចូលរួមចំណែក ខ្ញុំនឹងចែកចាយពីលទ្ធផលការស្រាវជ្រាវ និងអត្ថាធិប្បាយក្នុងទម្រង់ចុងបញ្ចប់។ ប្រសិនបើ ឈ្មោះរបស់អ្នកត្រូវបានលើកឡើងក្នុងពេលចុងក្រោយនៃការស្រាវជ្រាវរហស្សនាមនឹងត្រូវបានប្រើផងដែរសម្រាប់ការវាស់វែងដ៏ប្រុងប្រយ័ត្ន។

ឈ្មោះអ្នកដែលធ្វើសម្ភាសន៍ និងហត្ថលេខា

កាលបរិច្ឆេទនៃការសម្ភាសន៍

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Interview Questions with Missionaries from Various Mission Groups

Personal Information

Name:

Mission Group:

Years with Current Mission Group:

Arrival in Cambodia:

Present Ministries:

Previous Ministries:

Christian History of Cambodia in the 1990s

1. What was the situation in Phnom Penh?
2. What did Christianity look like in Cambodia?
3. What were denominations, fellowships, and mission groups like in Cambodia?

Mission Group History in Cambodia in the 1990s

1. How would you describe the earliest practices of the mission group and its missionaries?
2. What was the mission group's primary ministry focus?
3. What methods did the mission group use for leadership development and discipleship?
4. What did the mission group do right?
5. What did the mission group do wrong?

Mission Group Methods in the 1990s and the Continuation of Mission

1. How were leaders selected in the 1990s?
2. How would you describe leadership training in the 1990s?
3. How would you describe discipleship in the 1990s?
4. How would you describe teaching and training among individuals and groups in the 1990s?
5. What tensions did missionaries experience during the 1990s?
6. How would you describe the growth of Christianity in Cambodia?
7. What ministry trends have you seen as missionaries have served in Cambodia?
8. How would you describe the progression of training leaders and disciples in Cambodia?

Interview Questions with Assemblies of God Missionaries

Personal Information

Name:

Years with the Assemblies of God:

Arrival in Cambodia:

Present Ministries:

Previous Ministries:

Christian History of Cambodia in the 1990s

1. What was the situation in Phnom Penh?
2. What did Christianity look like in Cambodia?
3. What were denominations, fellowships, and mission groups like in Cambodia?

Assemblies of God History in Cambodia in the 1990s

1. How would you describe the earliest practices of the Assemblies of God and its missionaries?
2. What was the Assemblies of God's primary ministry focus?
3. What methods did the Assemblies of God use for leadership development and discipleship?
4. What did the Assemblies of God do right?
5. What did the Assemblies of God do wrong?

Assemblies of God Methods in the 1990s and the Continuation of the Fellowship

1. How were leaders selected in the 1990s?
2. How would you describe leadership training in the 1990s?
3. How would you describe discipleship in the 1990s?

4. How would you describe teaching and training among individuals and groups in the 1990s?
5. What tensions did missionaries experience during the 1990s?
6. How would you describe the growth of Christianity in Cambodia?
7. What ministry trends have you seen as missionaries have served in Cambodia?
8. How would you describe the progression of training leaders and disciples in Cambodia?

សំណួរសំភាសន៍នៅតំបន់ស្រាវជ្រាវ

Interview Questions at the Research Sites

ព័ត៌មានទូទៅ General Information

ឈ្មោះ Name

អាយុ Age

ឆេក Gender

ស្ថានភាពគ្រួសារ Marital Status

កម្រិតវប្បធម៌ Education

ឈ្មោះវិទ្យាល័យ និង សកលវិទ្យាល័យ Schools Attended

មុខរបរ Occupation

ថ្ងៃខែឆ្នាំដែលអ្នកក្លាយជាគ្រិស្តបរិស័ទ Date of Salvation

ថ្ងៃខែឆ្នាំដែលអ្នកទទួលពិធីជ្រមុជទឹក Date of Water Baptism

តួនាទីក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ Church Role

ចូរកំណត់អត្ថន័យនៃពាក្យទាំងនេះ ដោយយោងទៅតាមអត្ថន័យរបស់ព្រះគម្ពីរ។

Describe the meaning of each word according to the Bible.

1. ភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ Leadership
2. ភាពជាសិស្ស Discipleship
3. សិទ្ធិអំណាច Authority
4. ការបម្រើ Serving

ចូរកំណត់អត្ថន័យនៃពាក្យទាំងនេះ ដោយយោងទៅតាមវប្បធម៌ខ្មែរ។

Describe the meaning of each word according to Khmer culture.

1. ភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ Leadership
2. ភាពជាសិស្ស Discipleship
3. សិទ្ធិអំណាច Authority
4. ការបម្រើ Serving

ទស្សនៈវិស័យនៃភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំ

Church Leadership Perspectives

1. តើគួរតែជ្រើសរើសអ្នកដឹកនាំពីក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំដោយរបៀបណា?
1. How should church leaders be chosen?
2. តើគួរតែហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំពីក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំដោយរបៀបណា?
2. How should church leaders be trained?

3. តើអ្នកណាគួរតែហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំ?
3. Who should train church leaders?
4. តើអ្នកណាគួរតែជាអ្នកមើលការខុសត្រូវអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំ?
4. Who should oversee church leaders?
5. តើប្រភេទកម្មវិធីហ្វឹកហ្វឺនបែបណា ដែលអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំគួរតែទទួលនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
5. What type of training programs should church leaders receive inside the church?
6. តើប្រភេទកម្មវិធីហ្វឹកហ្វឺនបែបណា ដែលអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំគួរតែទទួលក្រៅពីក្រុមជំនុំ?
6. What type of training programs should church leaders receive outside the church?
7. តើពេលណា ដែលអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំគួរតែត្រូវបានអនុញ្ញាតឱ្យអធិប្បាយ បង្រៀន និងដឹកនាំអ្នកដទៃ ទៀត?
7. When should church leaders be allowed to preach, teach, or lead others?
8. ក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ តើគ្រូគង្វាលមានតួនាទីអ្វីខ្លះ ក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍអ្នកដឹកនាំ?
8. What is the pastor's role in church leadership development?
9. តើបេសកជនមានតួនាទីបែបណា ក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំនៃក្រុមជំនុំ?
9. What is a missionary's role in church leadership development?
10. ក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ តើសមាជិកមានតួនាទីអ្វីខ្លះ ក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ?
10. What is the congregation's role in church leadership development?

ទស្សនៈវិស័យភាពជាសិស្ស

Discipleship Perspectives

1. តើសិស្សត្រូវតែទទួលបានការបង្រៀនដោយរបៀបណា?
1. How should disciples be taught?

2. តើរយៈពេលប៉ុន្មាន ដែលសិស្សត្រូវតែទទួលបានការបង្រៀន?
2. How long should disciples receive teaching?

3. តើអ្នកណាគួរតែបង្រៀនសិស្ស?
3. Who should teach disciples?

4. តើវគ្គហ្វឹកហ្វឺនប្រភេទណា ដែលសិស្សត្រូវតែទទួលបានក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
4. What type of training should disciples receive in the church?

5. តើវគ្គហ្វឹកហ្វឺនប្រភេទណា ដែលសិស្សត្រូវតែទទួលបានក្រៅពីក្រុមជំនុំ?
5. What type of training should disciples receive outside the church?

6. តើគ្រូគង្វាលមានតួនាទីអ្វីខ្លះ ក្នុងការបង្កើតសិស្ស?
6. What is the pastor's role in discipleship?

7. តើបេសកជនមានតួនាទីអ្វីខ្លះ ក្នុងការបង្កើតសិស្ស?
7. What is a missionary's role in discipleship?

8. តើសមាជិកមានតួនាទីអ្វីខ្លះ ក្នុងការបង្កើតសិស្ស?
8. What is the congregation's role in discipleship?

សំណួរសម្ភាសន៍សម្រាប់គ្រូគង្វាល

Interview Questions for Head Pastors

បេសកជន Missionaries

1. តើបេសកជនរូបណាដែលមានចំណាប់អារម្មណ៍យ៉ាងខ្លាំងលើជីវិតនិងព័ន្ធកិច្ចរបស់អ្នក?
1. Which missionary had the greatest impression on your life and ministry?

2. តើបេសកជនបានបង្រៀនអ្នកឱ្យហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំបែបណា?
2. How did missionaries teach you to train church leaders?

3. តើបេសកជនបានបង្រៀនអ្នកឱ្យបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិស្សបែបណា?
3. How did missionaries teach you to train disciples?

4. តើអ្វីជាកិច្ចការសំខាន់បំផុតដែលបេសកជនបានបង្រៀនអ្នកអំពីភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្សនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
4. What is the most important thing missionaries taught you about leadership and discipleship in the church?

5. តើអ្វីជាកិច្ចការតូចតាចបំផុតដែលបេសកជនបានបង្រៀនអ្នកអំពីភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្សនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
5. What is the least important thing missionaries taught you about leadership and discipleship in the church?

6. តើបេសកជនបានធ្វើត្រូវអ្វីខ្លះ នៅក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្ស?
6. What did missionaries do right in church leadership development and making disciples?

7. តើបេសកជនបានធ្វើខុសអ្វីខ្លះ នៅក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្ស?
7. What did missionaries do wrong in church leadership development and making disciples?
8. តើយុទ្ធសាស្ត្ររបស់អ្នកស្រដៀងទៅនឹងកិច្ចការដែលបេសកជនបានបង្រៀនអ្នកដែរឬទេ?
8. Are your methods similar to the things that missionaries taught you?

ការជ្រើសរើស និង ការតែងតាំង Choosing and Appointing

1. តើអ្នកជ្រើសរើសអ្នកដឹកនាំនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំដោយរបៀបណា?
1. How do you choose leaders in the church?
2. តើអ្នកហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំដោយរបៀបណា?
2. How do you train leaders in the church?
3. តើអ្នកបង្រៀន និងជួយដល់សិស្សនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំយ៉ាងដូចម្តេច?
3. How do you teach and assist disciples in the church?
4. តើសៀវភៅ និងយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រអ្វីខ្លះ ដែលល្អប្រសើរសម្រាប់ការហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
4. What books and methods are best for training leaders in the church?
5. តើសៀវភៅ និងយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រអ្វីខ្លះ ដែលល្អប្រសើរសម្រាប់ការបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិស្សនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំ?
5. What books and methods are best for training disciples in the church?
6. តើអ្នកជ្រើសរើសអ្នកណាជាគ្រូបង្រៀន ដើម្បីឱ្យបង្រៀនដល់អ្នកដឹកនាំ និងសិស្ស?
6. Who do you choose for teachers in order to train leaders and disciples?
7. តើអ្នកចាត់ចែងការទទួលខុសត្រូវចំពោះភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្សយ៉ាងដូចម្តេច?
7. How do you assign responsibilities for leadership and discipleship?

8. តើយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រសម្រាប់ការជ្រើសរើស និងការតែងតាំងរបស់អ្នកស្រដៀងទៅនឹងរបៀបដែលបេសកជន
បានបង្រៀនអ្នកដែរឬទេ?
8. Are your methods for choosing and appointing similar to the ways missionaries taught you?

ក្រុម Groups

1. តើចូលចិត្តហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំជាក្រុម ឬ តែម្នាក់ៗឯងជាង?
1. Do you prefer to train leaders in groups or individually?
2. តើចូលចិត្តបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិស្សជាក្រុម ឬ តែម្នាក់ៗឯងជាង?
2. Do you prefer to train disciples in groups or individually?
3. តើក្រុមគួរតែជួបគ្នាតាមភេទ អាយុ ឬ បទពិសោធន៍ដែរទេ?
3. Should groups meet by gender, age, or experience?
4. តើបេសកជនបានបង្រៀន ឬ ហ្វឹកហ្វឺនតាមក្រុម ឬ តែម្នាក់ៗឯង?
4. Did missionaries teach or train in groups or individually?

អនាគត Future

1. តើអ្វីដែលគ្រូគង្វាល និងសមាជិកក្រុមជំនុំគួរតែធ្វើ ដើម្បីហ្វឹកហ្វឺនអ្នកដឹកនាំនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំបន្ថែម
ទៀត?
1. What should pastors and congregations do to train more leaders in the church?
2. តើអ្វីដែលគ្រូគង្វាល និងសមាជិកក្រុមជំនុំគួរតែធ្វើ ដើម្បីបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិស្សនៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំបន្ថែម
ទៀត?
2. What should pastors and congregations do to train more disciples in the church?

3. នៅពេលអ្នកចូលនិវត្តន៍ពីការបម្រើជាគ្រូគង្វាល តើអ្នកណានឹងគ្រប់គ្រងក្នុងនាមជាគ្រូគង្វាលថ្មី?
តើសមាជិកក្រុមជំនុំនឹងជ្រើសរើសគ្រូគង្វាលថ្មីនៅពេលអនាគតយ៉ាងដូចម្តេច?
3. When you retire from serving as a pastor, who will take over as the new pastor?
How will the congregation choose a new pastor in the future?
4. តើបេសកជនបានជួយអ្នកឱ្យរៀបចំផែនការសម្រាប់អនាគតយ៉ាងដូចម្តេច?
4. Did missionaries help you plan for the future?

សំណួរទូទៅ General Questions

1. តើអ្នកដឹកនាំក្រុមជំនុំប៉ុន្មាននាក់នៅក្នុងក្រុមជំនុំរបស់អ្នកបានសិក្សានៅសាលាព្រះគម្ពីរ?
1. How many church leaders in your congregation have studied at a Bible school?
2. តើក្រុមជំនុំរបស់អ្នកប្រើសិក្ខាសាលាសម្រាប់ភាពជាអ្នកដឹកនាំ និងការបង្កើតសិស្សដែរឬទេ? តើអ្វីជា
ចំណុចសំខាន់ៗប្រសើរបំផុត?
2. Does your church use seminars for leadership and discipleship? What are the
best themes?
3. តើយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រនៃការបង្រៀន និងការបណ្តុះបណ្តាលអ្វីខ្លះ ដែលអ្នកបានប្រើអំឡុងសម័យ
COVID-19?
3. What teaching and training methods have you used during the COVID-19 era?
4. តើបេសកជនបានជួយដល់ក្រុមជំនុំរបស់អ្នកក្នុងប៉ុន្មានឆ្នាំថ្មីៗនេះយ៉ាងដូចម្តេចខ្លះ?
4. How have missionaries helped your church in recent years?

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