

Management of God's Resources

Global Interaction Resource Paper June 2007

Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide guidelines for members of GIA teams working with Emerging Faith Communities (EFC) in unreached people groups, although the principles outlined could well be used in other contexts such as with our established partner churches or in Australian churches. The paper is presented in three sections: Section 1 is a summary of the key principles for the management of God's resources; Section 2 provides the Biblical basis for these principles; Section 3 looks at lessons which can be learned from our past history.

Section 1: KEY PRINCIPLES

- a) All resources are God given **and are to be used in partnership with the EFC's with whom we are working. Too often we, as members of mission teams, have taken a narrow view of our responsibility as stewardship of our money, possessions or skills. We need to take a broader view that encompasses the fact that all we are and have belongs to God and He has called us to share the Gospel and ourselves with the EFC's with whom we are working.**
- b) **Our attitude is important.** We are not talking about what we have done, but rather about who we are and how we live. True Christian management of God's resources recognises creation, redemption, providence and calling as the motive, and the life and ministry of Jesus as the pattern, for our mission. Therefore we should live humbly and sacrificially as servants of Jesus and of the people whom he has called us to serve.
- c) **Structures and practices** need to be carefully developed in partnership with the leadership of the EFC so that they are sustainable and empowering rather than leading to dependency. We need to help the EFC to understand what is necessary, culturally appropriate and sustainable in their situation, rather than to give them elaborate expensive Western structures which they will be unable to sustain and which will hinder their mission. (See Rick Wood, Appendix 1)
- d) **The use of their funds** needs to be carefully considered. Too often we try to impose Western processes that are culturally inappropriate. We need to recognise factors such as responsibility to relatives and lack of accountancy skills. We need to help the EFC leadership to understand accountability in ways that are both culturally appropriate and acceptable to donor agencies.
- e) **Self determination under the Holy Spirit's guidance** is the key to the development of a successful EFC. We must help the EFC leadership to work out the biblical principles and culturally appropriate ways of managing God's resources in their own unique situation. The two major elements are:
 - i. **Biblically sound** – Our teaching and example for the management of God's resources needs to be based on careful exegesis of the biblical text. Section 2 of this paper provides resources for this.
 - ii. **Culturally appropriate** – Each culture is unique. We need to recognise our own cultural bias in the management of God's resources and to understand elements in the cultures of the EFC which either reinforce or block a correct understanding. This is not something we do, but something which we help them to do. Section 3 provides examples of our successes and failures in the past which we hope will inform GIA staff as they seek to facilitate the development of Biblically sound and culturally appropriate management of the resources which god has given them.

Section 2: BIBLICAL MATERIAL

The Old Testament

Being the image of God

The first description of humanity in the Bible is that we are created “*in the image of God*”. When written this was radical: in surrounding cultures only kings were ever so described but here all people have that status and responsibility. As his “image” men and women are God’s representatives in his ruling care of the world (Genesis 1:26-28). The task is given in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15) and is renewed after the expulsion from the Garden (3:23).¹

The (mis-)use of the command to “subdue and rule” illustrates how biblical statements that support one’s own inclinations can be isolated, read out of context and without the checks and balances of other statements. In the world of ancient Mesopotamia (the region of modern Iraq) and certainly in the Bible the ideal was that a king’s rule was to be for the benefit of the ruled! Solomon was a wise king when all the people enjoyed peace and shared the prosperity, unlike the end of his reign which focused on self-aggrandizement.² The image of “subdue” is certainly strong, suggesting positive actions, not to exploit but to bring peace and harmony.

The parallel command to “till the ground” significantly uses a word elsewhere translated as “serve” while the linked phrase, “to keep it” speaks of guarding and watching over (as a shepherd “keeps” sheep, or as God “guards/protects” people; Gen 2:15). Responsible care and use of the natural environment is a God-given command!

Care of the environment

In a variety of ways later texts speak of care of the environment: ranging from rescuing animals (Gen 6-9),³ to providing for sustainable crops (giving the land opportunity to be renewed in the Sabbath year [Exodus 23:10]), to caring for trees (Deut 20:19; contrast Hab 2:17). The purpose of the Sabbath command is to give freedom from tasks in order to enjoy what God has given. That freedom and joy is to be shared with domestic animals, servants, and immigrant labourers (Exod 20:8-11; 23:12). The regular giving of “firstfruits” and the “firstborn” is an ongoing reminder that all belongs to God (Exod 22:29-30; 23:16).

Tithes and offerings – reflection of values

The use of resources is a reflection of values. The “*tithe/tenth*”⁴ was commanded to *support the religious leadership and activities*, cementing their importance in the community (and so the critique of Mal 1:6-14; 3:8-9 is that the people treated their political leaders with more respect than God). There is support of the tribe of Levi responsible for the worship at the tabernacle and teaching of the people (Numbers 18: 8-31; one twelfth of the population), and also some provision for the poor and landless (Exod 23:11; Deut 14:22-29).

The actual tithe (and their number) is complex but at least part was used for celebration by the whole community (Deut 12:17-19; 14:28-29; similarly, the Festivals, 16:11, 14-15). Added were special offerings to atone for sin and to express gratitude to God (Leviticus 1-7). This giving may be either of animals and crops, or of cash.

¹ E.H. Merrill, “Image of God”, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T.D. Alexander and D.W. Baker (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 441-45.

² The contrast is between 1 Kings 3:28; 4:20 and the complaint of the people in 12:4.

³ The first covenant God makes is not simply with Noah and his family but also with “every living creature that is with you” (six times in Gen 9:10-17).

⁴ The background and practice of the tithe (and the relationship of two or three tithes) is complex. Refer to any Bible Dictionary, e.g., E.E. Carpenter, “Tithe”, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), vol. 4, pp. 861-64.

The giving of “tithes” is linked with the blessing of the land. Clearly a tithe is based on what *has* been produced. Similarly freewill offerings at Israelite festivals were to be “in proportion to the blessing the Lord your God *has* given you” (Deut 16:10, 13-15, 17). Giving is thus related to how God *has* blessed and not in order to obtain blessing.⁵ At the same time, blessing is linked with obedience (Malachi 3:8-12), not in a mechanical way, but as an expression of the totality of obeying God. The intertwining of human and divine giving is well expressed in Deuteronomy 26: repeated use of the verb *natan* “give”⁶ highlights reciprocity between God’s gracious giving and the giving required of Israel:

The tithe-law of Deut ... effectively pictures the obedient people of God enjoying the plenty which he has promised them in return for their obedience... The enjoyment of benefits of the land depends upon readiness to relinquish them... Blessing is contained in the very act of obedience.⁷

The community shares together in God’s presence

Throughout there is awareness of relating with God and so with others. As the “image” points to relationship, seen in the fellowship in the Garden, so in the Sabbath rest God commands us to participate with him in his “rest” from tasks, enjoying what we have. The bringing of the tithe includes a joyful feast “in the presence of the Lord your God”. Further this enjoyment (of Sabbath and of tithe) is always communal, shared by all irrespective of social or economic situation (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 17:22-29).

The responsibility to care for all in the community is throughout the Old Testament: “The right to property was in principle subordinated to the obligation to care for the weaker members of society” (Amos 5:10-12, 8:4-8, Isa.5:8-10, 10:1-3).⁸ The incident of Naboth’s vineyard illustrates the way in which property was held in trust for future generations (1 Kings 21:1-3), putting into practice the belief that the Lord was the owner of the land and that he had assigned it to the families (Leviticus 25). By the time of Jesus however the impact of Greco-Roman colonization led to extensive exploitation (reflected in the treatment of labourers, e.g., James 5:1-6).

Restoring livelihoods

Various laws recognise the vicissitudes of economic and climatic conditions, but seek to give long-term protection of the economic viability of all extended families throughout the generations.⁹ These range from the immediacy of the limitation of profits, allowing the poor to collect from crops (Lev 19:9-10 – part of “being holy”), not charging interest (Lev 25:35-38¹⁰) and amelioration of debt-slavery (Lev 25:39), to long-term laws relating to land and debt-bondage. Particularly striking are laws of the “sabbatical year” and “jubilee”,¹¹ the fiftieth year when one is “to proclaim liberty throughout the land”, forgive debts, release people from debt-bondage (working for others) and return land (Leviticus 25).

How these were implemented is unclear: the jubilee is mentioned as a reality in Num 36:4, and as a future ideal in Ezek 46:17. The sabbatical year is implemented in Neh 10:31 (compare Jer 34:8-22). Non-implementation was due no doubt to the initiative belonging those in power. Sadly the biblical narrative reflects wider society through the centuries in ways those who have cling to what they have and even devise ways to gain (and justify having) more!

⁵ This explains the unexpected commandment in the context of festival celebration for judges not to take bribes (Deut 16:18-20). Human leaders are to be like God who does not act on the basis of bribes (gifts to gain attention or favour).

⁶ Vs 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19.

⁷ J.G.McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 82-84.

⁸ M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 13.

⁹ C.J.H. Wright, *Living as the People of God: the relevance of Old Testament ethics* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983), espec. pp. 183-87 [extensively revised and updated in *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), pp.154-80]. See also his *God’s People in God’s Land* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

¹⁰ The NIV’s “excessive interest” appears to be a modernization! The TNIV (2005) rightly has just “interest”. The point is that one is not to take advantage of the economic difficulties of a brother or sister (as distinct from loans in an industrialized society that are made for investment purposes).

¹¹ The English “Jubilee” is a from the Hebrew *yobal*, the ram’s horn, the blowing of which inaugurated the fiftieth year. For discussion of the sabbatical year and jubilee and relevance for today see the works of C.J.H. Wright (note 9), also P.A. Barker, “Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee”, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, pp. 695-706.

The New Testament

Freedom and the sharing of resources

Jesus' proclamation in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19) uses "jubilee" language in "proclaiming liberty to the captives". There is probably association also in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4). The language Luke uses in Acts 4:34 ("There were no needy persons among them") echoes God's promise regarding the sabbatical year, that with obedience "there will be no poor among you" (Deut 15:4)¹². The sharing of resources by the community of believers is an outworking of the coming of the Spirit (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). *Koinōnia*, commonly translated "fellowship" or "sharing" (Acts 2:42), refers to being in partnership, having things in common. It is used of sharing resources in Rom 15:26 and 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13. The great passage on giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9 relates to care for the poor in Jerusalem, an offering which Paul describes in Romans 15: 25-27 as an act of ministry (*diakoneō*), fellowship (*koinōnia*; NIV weakly "contribution"; NRSV "share their resources"), and a "public duty, serving others" (*leitourgia*).

The long passage in 2 Cor 8-9 emphasises giving as an act of "grace" responding to Christ's "grace" (*charis*) - a good translation would be "generosity".¹³ Again God's action and his people's are tied together: God's generosity (seen especially in Christ, 8:9) is to be the pattern of generosity within the Christian family, while in turn we can be "generous" because God provides the resources (9:8). Verses often quoted in individualistic Western congregations concerning God supplying our needs are in the context of being generous in giving to others (2 Cor 9:6-11). Paul cites the incident of the "manna" (Exodus 16) to highlight God's desire for "equality" (2 Cor 8:13-15). It is God's desire that resources be shared amongst his people.¹⁴ Earlier (1 Cor 16:1-2) Paul had said that giving was to be related to one's resources. This principle was evident in the freewill offerings in Deuteronomy 16. Sharing of resources was common in the early centuries of the church. The early second-century *Didache* commands, "Do not turn away the needy, but share everything with your brother, and do not say that it is your own" (4:8), while in 250 the church in Rome was supporting about 1500 people in distress with only about 100 clergy.¹⁵ One characteristic of the early church that drew attention to the difference Christ made was their practical care for one another and for others (including prisoners).

Wholistic – food and the preaching of the Gospel

The New Testament speaks also of *adequate support of itinerant evangelists and of other Christian workers* as an expression of Christian sharing of resources, both spiritual and material (1 Cor 9:4-18; cf. Matt 10:8, 10; Luke 10:7; 1 Tim 5:17-18). From the New Testament there is no place for the view that a pastor should of necessity live poorer OR wealthier than the community – although clearly a person may choose to live sacrificially (as did Jesus and many apostles). Similarly there is no warrant for separating spiritual and socio-economic needs. Indeed there is close correlation between believers caring for one another economically and the fruitful proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 2:44-47; 6:1-7; 2 Cor 9:12-15). Blended together are God's blessing and the sharing of those blessings with others. God's gifts are used responsibly, shared with others.

¹² Later in the chapter is recognition that due to human disobedience "there will always be poor people in the land" and so the command is to be "open-handed" (Deut 15:11).

¹³ *Charis* occurs in 8:1 ("grace"), 4 (NIV, NRSV: "privilege"), 6 (NIV: "act of grace"; NRSV: "generous undertaking"), 7 (NIV: "grace of giving"; NRSV: "generous undertaking"), 9 (NIV: "grace"; NRSV: "generous undertaking"), 16 ("thanks"), 19 (NIV: "offering"; NRSV: "generous undertaking") and in 9:8 (NIV: "grace"; NRSV: "blessing"), 14 ("grace"), 15 ("thanks").

¹⁴ An exposition of 2 Corinthians 8-9 by John Stott outlines (1) Christian giving is an expression of the grace of God, (2) Christian giving can be a gift of the Spirit, (3) Christian giving is inspired by the cross of Christ, (4) Christian giving is proportionate giving, (5) Christian giving contributes to equality, (6) Christian giving must be carefully supervised, (7) Christian giving can be stimulated by a little friendly competition, (8) Christian giving resembles a harvest, (9) Christian giving has symbolic significance and (10) Christian giving promotes thanksgiving to God. [J. Stott, *Stott on Stewardship: Ten Principles of Christian Giving* (Chattanooga, Tenn: Generous Giving, 2003), based on a sermon summarised at <http://www.generousgiving.org/page.asp?sec=72&page=294#Stott1> (accessed December 2004)].

¹⁵ Hengel, p. 44.

We are responsible as “stewards”

Some of Jesus’ parables speak of responsibilities for what is “entrusted”: the Tenants (Matt 21:33-41), the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1-16), and the Talents¹⁶ (Matt 25:14-30). In each case what is entrusted belongs to God. There is clear personal responsibility for what one does with what God has given, but it is never individualistic – responsible use involves bringing benefit to others (see also 1 Pet 4:8-11).

The word “steward” is sometimes used in discussions of the use of resources. The word is used historically for people (servants) who manage the affairs of a household on behalf of the owner.¹⁷ Thus we read of the “household manager” (Luke 12:42; 16:1-3). As the church is also described as God’s “household” (Eph 2:19-22) there is responsibility for “stewardship” of the variety of gifts given by God to the community: “stewards of God’s mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1 NRSV; NIV: “those entrusted with the secret things of God”), leaders as “faithful stewards” (Titus 1:7) and all are “stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV; NIV: “faithfully administering God’s grace in its varied forms”).¹⁸

Paul’s use of *oikonomos* in 1 Cor 4:1-2 provides insight into Paul’s ministry. The TNIV explains well: “those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed”. Paul’s conversion and calling showed to him that “the mystery hidden for long ages past (was) now revealed and made known.... So that all the Gentiles might come to faith and obedience” (Rom 16:25-26; cf. Eph 1:9). Paul had been given this amazing Good News and therefore he was accountable to God for what he did with this message (also 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 3:2,9; Col 1:25). The Gospel was not his for his personal benefit alone, nor his to alter. The message belonged to God. He would allow no obstacle or difficulty to prevent or discourage him and also he would not allow anyone else to dilute or add to the message (hence the depth of feeling in Galatians). In the same way he held that church leaders were accountable to God for how their “stewardship” was exercised. No leaders can say “my church” as if somehow the church exists to serve them (giving power, status and wealth). Rather they are accountable to God for how they manage God’s “church” (Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 3:15).

Property

The complexity of matters relating to *property*, both acquisition and use, is illustrated in the differences between the commanded practice in pre-exilic Israel (focus on community relationships) and that of a royal-urban culture (property bought and sold for personal benefit; seen in Ahab’s attitude and practices in ancient Near Eastern, Persian, Greek and Roman societies). Both Old and New Testaments recognize the impact of human greed and selfishness, and the reality of oppression and injustice.

The New Testament recognizes “private property” as a reality, while giving examples of how “the church is an association where all partners renounce the sole right to their possessions ... to abolish extremes of wealth and poverty”.¹⁹ Throughout the focus is on sharing being voluntary, not compulsory.

Beyond tithing

The issue of “*tithing*” amongst Christians is much debated.²⁰ The only specific references in the NT to contemporary practice are to the Pharisees (Matt 23:23-24; Luke 11:42; 18:12). Some draw attention to Jesus stating that the giving of tithes is “not to be neglected”, although it is important to see how Jesus puts “tithing” in the wider context of “justice, mercy and faithfulness”. “Tithing” in the OT was related to the fair and equitable

¹⁶ A *talanton* was a measure of weight (28-36 kg), equivalent to 3,000 Hebrew shekels. It was thus also a large sum of money whose value varied depending on the metal involved (gold, silver or copper). Christian application of the parable has led to the use of a “talent” as being an aptitude or ability given by God.

¹⁷ It is interesting to see the journey of a word. In Greek the word translated “steward” is *oikonomos*, the person responsible for *oikonomia*, the management of the *oikos* “household” – and hence the modern English “economy”.

¹⁸ J. Goetzmann, “House, Build, Manage, Steward”, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology i(Exeter: Paternoster, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 247-56.*

¹⁹ Stuart Murray, *Beyond Tithing* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), p. 207.

²⁰ A good analysis of tithing in the OT, NT and later church history is in Murray (previous note). Tithing is given little mention in the early church and only comes into the church after Constantine (so a system of funding a state church). It came to be oppressive and far removed from “justice, mercy and faithfulness”.

support of the Levites and provision for people suffering economically. At the very least it raises the issue for any Christian group as to how it is to share the total resources of the community for the whole purposes of the kingdom of God, including the ministry of the Gospel.

“Jubilee” is wider than tithing (which applies equally to all and can lead to stopping at individualistic “doing my share”). It places more obligations on those with more resources and power to act in ways that lead to greater justice and equity, setting people free, providing a viable livelihood for all. It places more focus on the betterment of the community as a whole, along with connotations of freedom and joyful celebration.

Two Kinds of Development

The Bible affirms the benefits that can accrue from technology and urbanization. But there is also awareness of the dangers: technological development may focus on weapons, and cities may exclude. Spiritual conditions and attitudes are at the core.

In particular there is a typology of two kinds of cities, represented by Babylon and Jerusalem. *Babylon* is first mentioned in the tower of Babel story – a people whose focus is on self-preservation and their own reputation, their own benefit to the exclusion of others.²¹ The final description (a veiled allusion to Rome, the centre of the powerful empire) conveys a sense of wonder at the wealth that comes from being a world power:

gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots,

but the end gives the chilling cost, “human bodies and souls” (Rev 18:11-13).

The contrast is *Jerusalem*, also described in Revelation as wealthy, with its walls and buildings being of rich jewels and gold. But its gates are open, and a river flows from it, surrounded by trees that bring healing to all nations (Rev 21:1 – 22:5). Elsewhere the vision of the new Jerusalem is of leaders and citizens alike being concerned to do what is right and just for all (Isa 1:21 – 2:4; 65:17-25; cf. Matt 5:14-16). The new Jerusalem is the “bride of Christ” – a living relationship with God is at the centre of its life.

Two cities, two visions: one with a technology which brings wealth to a few, and death to the rest; the other with technology with a human face, which sees justice and doing what is right as prior²² (and not the result) and which has a relationship with God in Christ at the heart. The focus is on all people, not just “my group”.

Because “the earth is the Lord’s and everything that fills it” (Psalm 24:1), men and women have a God-given responsibility to manage and develop the resources God gives us: physical (land, climate, plants, animals), socio-economic (possessions, finances, social structures, family links) and spiritual (the Gospel and the resources of the Scriptures and the Spirit; leadership responsibilities and spiritual gifts). The reality of human sin and misuse of resources is countered by the grace of God that continues to provide for us. Through Christ we are brought into God’s “household” and so by the Spirit we are set free to use rightly all that God gives us, using them for the benefit of all.

The principle of stewardship is closely linked to the concept of grace. Everything comes from God as gift and is to be administered faithfully on his behalf. There is thus both stewardship of the earth and stewardship of the gospel; stewardship of personal resources of time, money and talents, and stewardship of the resources of church and society. Along with questions of mission strategy and support there are issues of personal and corporate lifestyle, just wages and fair prices, poverty and wealth, all related to explicit or implicit theologies of the kingdom of God, work and nature.²³

Material in the Scriptures and the practices in the early centuries of the church provide an impetus for Christians today to work out practical solutions to issues of wealth, greed and inequality, whether this be local, national or global, and to the proclamation of the gospel amongst our communities and beyond. Christian groups will vary in their abilities to change and act, but as the early church illustrates much can be done.

²¹ Genesis 11:4. A “city” is a settlement that has walls.

²² Psalm 72 is a prayer for the reign of a new leader, culminating in prosperity. Unlike the thinking of many societies, here peace and economic prosperity is a *result* of care for the weak and powerless.

²³ P.N.Hillyer, “Stewardship”, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), pp. 814-15.

1. BUPNG – Management of Resources (Past & Present experiences)

1. Management of Resources in the Past

(a). Human Resources

Missionaries worked together as a team although some of them were located in very isolated areas in PNG in terms of communication. Some missionaries were committed to their call and they spent more time with the people and even opened their homes to anyone who came to see them. Others kept to themselves and worked in isolation from the people. Sometimes this group of missionaries found it hard to communicate with the people whom they came to serve.

(b). Material Resources

Missionaries had the luxury of everything they needed in terms of household items, etc. They lived comfortably and enjoyed life although some were struggling with various kinds of tropical disease. They had enough money to buy whatever they needed because they were able to raise the required amount of money in Australia or New Zealand before they were allowed to leave their homeland.

(c). Financial Resources

ABMS had enough money to ensure that everything planned for the year was properly completed. There was enough money to run hospitals, health centres, Aid Posts, schools and enough money to purchase materials. Sufficient funds were made available for construction of new buildings as well as funds for maintenance.

All in all resources were properly managed and new projects were completed as planned. Agricultural Projects were established and national people were trained how to manage them. National people were also trained in other skills such as carpentry, mechanical, nursing, business, etc. as well as training in Pastoral work. However, there was lack of training in leadership and management and this is evident today.

2. Management of Resources at present

(a). Human Resources

We have more than 300 men trained in Pastoral Ministry at various levels (i.e. Certificate & Diploma and less than 15 at degree level) but 95% of them lack leadership and management skills. About 90% of them have not completed High School and so find it difficult to speak fluently in English or Pidgin. They feel incompetent and struggle to preach quality messages or sermons in their churches. Senior Pastors at local Unions and Associations find it difficult to effectively manage the affairs of their respective organizations. The majority of the Pastors also lack the same skills and struggle to manage the affairs of the local church. They all struggle to co-ordinate church programmes and activities. There is widespread corruption and misuse of financial and material resources by many of our Pastors and church leaders. We are struggling to identify good and reliable Pastors for our Urban Churches thus the National Baptist Union headquarters.

(b). Material Resources

The average income per household is very low and so many Christians struggle to give their tithes and offerings to the church. Therefore, it takes quite a while for churches to build permanent church buildings and Pastors' houses. Many, if not all pastors in the rural villages do not receive fortnightly wages. Most of the churches give a small amount of money to their pastors on a monthly basis and so most of the time the Pastors have to work hard on the land for a living. Many churches allocate enough land for their Pastor to make garden and also raise chicken and pigs for sale. Some churches also plant a block of land with coffee for the church.

(c). Financial Resources

As mentioned above most of our churches don't have enough money to undertake major projects. The Pastors and church leaders lack management skills and so they are unable to plan and co-ordinate activities in a more organized manner. They also struggle to find sufficient funds to maintain current assets. Because of this they don't have a proper budget and often there are no annual financial reports.

3. Remedial Action

The Baptist Union of PNG has undertaken a capacity building programme and it is progressing well. This has been made possible by financial assistance from ABWAID as well as other international donor agencies. Recently the Church Partnership Programme has been introduced and this is providing sufficient funds for our community projects. However, these funds are not available for pastoral ministries nor new church buildings or maintenance. BUPNG has recently introduced a training programme for church leaders to be trained in management and other aspects of church administration and this is progressing well although it is in its infant stage.

This management training is in collaboration with Regional and Association leadership. We view that if any organization is going to achieve the purpose of their mission, then capacity building at the national level is most important than exhausting resources at a regional or association level. The national Headquarters must play the key role which will certainly filter through to the regional and association level.

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2. A Case Study from Papua New Guinea

The Kyaka Enga people of the Western Highlands of PNG were evangelized by Australian Baptist missionaries from 1949 and the first baptisms took place in 1956. A Revival Movement, which began in 1973, led to a dramatic increase in the size and vigour of the indigenous Baptist church, which is now a major part of the Baptist Union of PNG, which has over 40,000 members in more than 400 congregations.

When the first missionaries arrived in 1949, the Kyaka Enga were stone-age subsistence farmers, cultivating sweet potato and husbanding pigs. Their religion was based on the worship of ancestral spirits who were placated by gifts of roast pork, although the spirits were content with the aroma and the people ate the meat. They believed that if there was a supreme being, he was too remote to affect their daily lives or to be influenced by prayer or sacrifice.

The missionaries worked hard to befriend the Enga people, understand their language and culture, and present the Christian gospel to them in ways they could understand. Within the limits of a first-contact situation, they tried to live simply, share generously the resources they had, and teach carefully the main elements of the Christian faith. There were however, some misunderstandings. The vast difference in resources available to Europeans and their unwillingness to share them in the way Enga people expected, through reciprocal relationships, caused some tension. The introduction of wages for some Enga who worked for the missionaries caused tensions in the family system.

From the beginning the missionaries encouraged Enga Christians to bring some of their produce as an offering to God each Sunday, and this was used to support the native pastor and his family. Once coffee was introduced as a cash crop, Christians were encouraged to give cash to support the work of the church, but this was less successful. Whether it was what the missionaries said or the way the Enga Christians understood it, the story of the Widow's Mite became the basis of their understanding of Christian stewardship. There was a dramatic change during the Revival. Christians became more aware of the extent of God's gifts to them, especially the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and responded with great generosity. Thousands of Kina were given at Revival meetings and large quantities of food were provided for fellowship meals. Unfortunately, the new spirit of generosity engendered by the Revival Movement gradually waned as the local churches became disillusioned by the way some of the money was handled by church leaders their failure to develop the mission work they hoped their gifts would support. Since then the church has had to work hard to develop leadership, management skills, and better stewardship.

The PNG experience teaches a number of important lessons: Firstly, the need for sound Biblical teaching carefully applied to the local culture; Secondly, the need for a truly contextual ministry, not only in what is taught but also in how it is lived; Thirdly, the need for training in management and the encouragement of good management and leadership rather than dependency; Fourthly, the need for continuing spiritual renewal to provide the motivation for good management of God's resources.

What would we do different now? Be even more concerned to befriend and identify the local people, work even harder at contextualizing our ministry, be more careful to avoid the creation of dependency, give more thorough training in management to church leaders, and try to understand better and support more wholeheartedly spiritual movements such as the Enga Revival.

Seton Arndell
former Global Interaction cross-cultural staff worker in PNG

3. Australian Aboriginal (Walpiri) Context

- 1. What was your understanding of the concept of stewardship/resource management when you began your missionary work (i.e. in the context of your ministry)?**

In keeping with my experience of 'church', and of my understanding of correct mission strategy, I was aiming to help develop a church that would be, amongst other things, financially self supporting.

- 2. Has that understanding changed since? If so, how?**

As I have come to a different understanding of mission strategy and as I began to understand something of the whole matter of contextualisation, I came to understand that whilst it is important for God's people to be good stewards of the bounty that God has given them, and that God's people should express their gratitude to God in goods as well as by praises, that it is not necessary for a church to have any finances at all.

- 3. How did the concept of resource-management work out in practice between GIA/ ABMS and the church? What were the major issues which arose?**

To the best of my knowledge all missionaries working with the Warlpiris sought to teach and encourage them to care for church property, to develop responsible stewardship of their belongings, and to have financially self-supporting churches. The Warlpiris (and the Gurringis and Alyawarras) have really struggled with this. The difficulty they experience with church finances is seen in that mostly none of the church members wants to be responsible for handling church offerings. If the missionaries are not present on the community, the offering monies are virtually always given to some non-indigenous person to hold. This situation is not helped by the absence of any banking facilities on most communities, but even if such facilities were available, it would still be a very difficult matter, to be avoided if at all possible.

- 4. What do you think have been the major influences which have contributed to the national church's understanding of resource-management?**

The primary reason for the existing situation is that these people have for many years, and most for all their years, lived in a welfare situation that has resulted in dependency. There is always some special funding source that can be called upon for special needs. Further, the individuals concerned have never developed any sense of personal stewardship or management of property or money. Consequently, whilst at times, due to firm teaching and some measure of pressure from the missionaries, it has appeared that better practices were being developed, this did not continue. These people are very much 'special event people.' When they are aware of some special need, such as special appeals for crisis situations overseas, they respond very generously.

Ivan Jordan
Global Interaction Indigenous ministry consultant

4. Bangladesh

1. What is your understanding of the concept of resource-management in Christian ministry?

(a). Human Resource (as the best creation of God)

Associates, spouse, family member, church leaders and congregational members, office colleagues, religion organization and non-religion organization, government, officials, inland and overseas donors, well wishers, country peoples.

(b). Materials or Tangible Resource

Books and literature, journals, commentary documentary books reports, audio visual, money/funds, land and properties, equipment, furniture, vehicles, technology communication media.

(c). Skill and Capacities

Training, workshop, seminar, advocacy, model life witness, counselling, exposures trips, pilgrimage, spiritual activities or movements.

(d). Institutional Resources

Formal and non-formal education, believers community/group, health care centres, theology seminary, hostel and boarding, mother and child care centres, vocational training centres.

2. Has that understanding changed over the years? If so, how?

Of course the notion has been changed over time. Previously we understood resource means institution fund and equipments, machineries, technical manpower etc. But in course of time the clarification about the concept has been changed.

Now the resources has a broader meanings which is not only the materials aspects but Man, Materials, Money, Professionalism, Skill technology, Communication Media are playing significant role as independent resources in various spheres of life.

3. How has the concept of resource-management worked out in practice between GIA/ABMS and the church? What have been the major issues which have arisen?

In previous time as a recipients country the understanding was – the Missionary people are only responsible to manage the religious and social caring ministry with the foreign fund. (Fatherhood mentality) But at present the foreign Missionary organization and the National Church organization has developed a Partnership Model of sharing the resources together. Where each other are sharing their God given resources for their own development as required.

The major issue as may be defined that the ownership is not only the one way rather it is in both way as partnership.

4. What do you think have been the major influences which have contributed to the national church's understanding of resource-management?

For example:

- the teaching of the missionaries
- influence of the Holy Spirit
- reading of Scripture on the part of Christians/ church leaders

- cultural practices/ worldview

We believe the teaching of the Missionaries, influences of the holy spirit, reading of scripture on the part of Christian/Church Leader and cultural practices/worldview all together played a significant role of making influence on the understanding of resource management in national churches.

Among these areas, the cultural practices/worldview is influencing much more in our societies.

5. Are there any other aspects of the topic which you believe GIA ought to consider in its work?

We consider if the GIA can arrange an exposure visit for the National Leaders to sharing their country experience of God's work among the host countries.

6. Feel free to add a statement regarding biblical or missiological principles on resource-management.

- (a). *"Jesus Feeds 5000 People"* For there is nothing to eat here in this deserted spot, they said. But Jesus replied, *"you feed them!" Luke 9: 12-13*. Here Jesus taught us to be responsible for each other and share the resource among each other for the glory of God.
- (b). *Intellectual personal dialogue resource:* "Jesus replied, *"if you only knew what an wonderful gift God has for you, and who I am, you would ask me for some living water! John 4:10.*

Here we can see how beautifully Jesus addressed this lady (who has got a bad reputation in her society) to her felt need and the result after Jesus conversation with her.

Stephen P. Singha
Business Manager
ABMS, Bangladesh.

5. Papua, Indonesia

1. Resource management in Christian ministry is a God-given ability to identify, seek and utilize all resources (human, economic/natural) for the ultimate benefit of the Christian community/church and for the extension of God's Kingdom. This ability firstly comes from God as a part of the gift of leadership as it is stated in Romans 12: 8 and 1 Corinthians 12: 28. Later on the Holy Spirit will develop this ability when a person opens his/her life to be led in training and following examples of other gifted persons in ministry.
2. To a certain extent yes, in terms that during the ministry of a young national church, the national leaders have to learn a lot from their fellow missionaries on how to manage resources within the community of believers. Then as the national church matures, the national leaders themselves have to exercise this task for the good of the national church. Here the quality and ability of the leaders were important.
3. In practice over the years between GIA/ABMS and the church, we see first the missionary take the lead while seeking potential nationals to be trained at home and abroad, to take over the future leadership. Some of the major issues to arise were shortage of human resources as well as funds, and to a certain extent, rivalry and jealousy among clans or tribes within the community of churches.
4. As I have expressed in point one above, I believe two major influences have contributed to the national church's understanding of resource management: they were the influence of the Holy Spirit and the understanding of what the Scripture teaches concerning management. It has to be admitted that the teaching and examples of the missionaries were also important. They teach the church leaders to manage all resources wisely and carefully. My experience during working together with Rev Keith Jobberns at Kotaraja Baptist Theological College in the 1980's has brought valuable progress for the College because of wise and careful management of resources exercised by Keith.

On the other hand it seems to me that cultural practices/world view in Papua in particular has become a hindrance toward the understanding of resource management, because leadership follow the practice of traditional leadership which can only give small room for trained and skilled leaders, while the practice of festivals and ceremonies influenced by their culture and habit are always wasting economic resources.
5. In the context of Indonesian society, I suggest at least two other aspects ought to be considered. Firstly the pluralistic and complex society and secondly, the fast development within the nation. For Papua, in particular during the special autonomy era, natural and economic resources were plentiful, while human resources lacking – in other words poor resource management or bad stewardship.

Richard Pangendahan
Former Principal Theological College of the Baptist Churches of Papua

Management of God's Resources – Discussion Questions

Section 1: Key Principles

- Q.1 How far have you and your colleagues moved from the traditional narrow view of stewardship to a broader and more wholistic view of the management of god's resources?
- Q.2 Are the structures being developed in your area sustainable and empowering or likely to develop dependency?
- Q.3 To what extent are these structures Biblically sound and culturally relevant?

Section 2 - Biblical Material

- Q.4 Which of these OT principles speaks most powerfully into your situation?
- Q.5 To what extent are these NT principles being reflected in your work?
- Q.6 Which of these Biblical principles need more careful consideration and application to your situation?

Section 3 - Case Studies

- Q.7 What mistakes or misunderstandings can you see in any of these case studies that may be applicable to your situation?
- Q.8 What steps can you take to avoid similar mistakes in your ministry?

Seton Arndell