

Encouraging and Inspiring... Biblically Based Business

Clarifying the Need in the Developing World

Excerpt of Chapter 3 of Workbook 0

*(Please be aware that this excerpt may contain traces
of references to other parts of Workbook 0)*

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3 Clarifying the need

He who answers before listening — that is his folly and his shame

Proverbs 18:13

There are very few things in life that are more difficult and less rewarding than trying to push things where they are not wanted. There is a real danger in ‘good products’ that they become seen as a panacea to every ill – as someone once put it *“It is surprising, when the only tool you have is a hammer, how all of your problems begin to look like nails!”*

The most important thing is not the training model, or even the willingness of your Church or community to engage with it and invest their time and money in supporting those in developing countries. The most important thing is the ‘need’ of those people in the developing countries, and that is where we should begin. When we clearly understand the ‘need’, we can see our part in fulfilling it, and that is where the training model we are talking about in these pages may be of considerable advantage.

But the model is not going to be right for every situation, and so we need to start with ‘their need’, rather than ‘our strengths’, and through this we can sensitively and prayerfully discern where we are really being called to make a difference. This may mean identifying somewhere which can best benefit from these materials, but we also need to be open to the possibility that the ‘need’ God is calling us to is something entirely different, and that this process to date has simply been a step to us identifying what is really on God’s heart.

However, our focus in these materials is situations where we can identify a need which we can fulfil through this model. And we can assure you, there are more than enough of those to go around.



But what happens if the need we find is not addressed by these materials?

- Listen
- Understand
- Pray
- Seek what God is placing on your heart for the situation
- Do what He is calling you to do

Accept that sometimes the path to doing God’s work is not straight.

And being willing to give up the ‘original’ line often leads to us rejoining the path in a much better place.

3.1 Needs in existing networks

The best place to start is those people who you already have contact with in some way shape or form. And the first question is, do you really know who those people are?

Understanding your existing links and relationships

Start by making a list of all of the people and situations in the Developing World where your Church has contacts. Look through the notice boards, past prayer lists, mission donations, and past speakers to gain any clues you can on what contacts the Church may have, and who in the Church is the main link to those contacts. You may even have people in your Church who have personally been involved in mission projects to the Developing World. When you have drafted your list, test it out with others in the Church to see if you have any important contacts missing, and if they are, add them.

Then review the list to see which of those contacts would be a good source of information about both the needs in their area of the Developing World, and about trustworthy organisations

What links do we have in our church?

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Did you know that many UK Dioceses are linked with Dioceses in the Developing World?

Some of these questions may be addressed through relevant websites and reference material, and this would be a good point to undertake some serious research on-line. One excellent source of base data is, believe it or not, the CIA; they publish an on-line World-Fact-Book:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

And this once again is a good place to lay the project before God, and to ask Him to guide you, and to raise the questions in your heart which you most need answered at this point.

Engaging in Dialogue

Once you are clearer on what you know of the situation, and what questions you need answering, and where God may be nudging you, this is probably a good time to get in touch with your contact to explore things further.

But in doing this you need to be especially careful about the danger of 'raising expectations', particularly if your contact is from a different culture.

For people you know well, who are from our culture, and who understand your Church, there is probably no risk in being entirely straight with them about what you are trying to do. But for people without that background, they may feel slighted if you then 'choose' to support somebody else somewhere else.

For people who may be subject to offense or disappointment in this way, you will need to be a lot more circumspect about how you gain information from them, but since you will probably be praying for them and their situation by this point anyway, this gives you an excellent opportunity to find out more about their situation both for the purposes of that prayer and for background information that you can share with the Church. The box on the right suggests some areas you might like to ask them about.

Possible areas of information to explore with your contact:

- *the poor in their community, and what hope there is for them*
- *how big a problem this is in the area, the number in this situation*
- *how they get money to buy what they need, and the options they have for pulling themselves out of poverty*
- *what has happened to those who have pulled themselves out of poverty and how they did it*
- *where they got the initial money from (if they set up a business or trade)*
- *what businesses there are around which might offer employment, however small*
- *what sources of aid or support currently exist for them*
- *the role of the local church in this*
- *what they most want prayer for in this situation*

3.2 Expanding your network

If your own Church does not have suitable contacts for this work in the Developing World, or if you feel God pulling on your heart to a different area, then you will probably need to consider how to expand your network of contacts, and there are several options for this.

Networks in neighbouring Churches

One is to speak to your neighbouring Churches with regard to their contacts. Find opportunities to go to things that they may be hosting about their own work or concerns in the Developing World, and see whether God moves your heart to any of these needs.

In many parts of the country there are Churches which contain a significant proportion, and in some cases a majority, of their membership who originate from the Developing World, and who still have very strong (*often family*) ties to areas of severe poverty and hardship. They may welcome an approach to hear what you have in mind, but once again you will need to be sensitive to the danger of raising expectations.

It seems wrong to raise the concept of 'poaching' in this context, but it is amazing how a poorly thought out approach and an insensitive initiative can raise that word in the minds of others. Please, if you are using neighbouring churches to extend your own network, approach it from a position of humility, seek to understand fully, and support primarily in prayer, and seek God's will for the right opening to appear – one in which the neighbouring Church will be grateful for your concern.

Considering charities and wider Church networks

If God has placed a specific area of the World on your heart, then it is often best to go straight to the organisations which you know have networks in that area, the most likely ones of these being the overseas church structure of your own denomination (*or indeed of a different denomination*) and the larger charities.

One of the best organisations we have found for this is YWAM, who seem to have energetic, young, faithful people, in a whole range of different areas of the world; people who are sympathetic to the need to resolve poverty through commerce, and who seem very keen to spend time with anybody who can help in this way. But that is just my limited experience, and I am sure that many other charitable organisations have similar 'angels' on their books.

Our recommendation is to set up a meeting to explore the local needs and to think through how you can work with the local partners of the charity in helping to address those needs. Two words of warning on this however: The first is that charities of this type are often heavily overworked and have little time for additional burdens, no matter how admirable; and that leads to the second – tailor your message to their needs (*as on page 24 in the preceding chapter*) so that you not only gain their full attention but also offer them a way of seeing you as an asset to help them achieve their existing goals.

Please also be aware that in dealing with charities, because of the overload point, you may need to firmly but politely be persistent in making contact. Our experience is that they are not always good at returning calls. But then again, neither are we!

Wandering around looking through Jesus' eyes

Where are you going on holiday this year? Why are you going there? To get away from it all? Or perhaps to go toward it all? How about a holiday somewhere in the Developing World? Somewhere nice of course, with a decent hotel, perhaps a pool, because it is a holiday. And if you think I am being cynical or sarcastic here, I am not! As I sit and write this I have three weeks holiday in Australia already booked, and I will be most disappointed not to get some time on a lounge with a nice cold iced drink in my hand.



But while you are there, take some time out to visit the poorer areas of the country. Take a guide/translator (*perhaps from the local church*) to keep you safe and ensure you get to the right places. And when you are at those places, try and look at them with Jesus' eyes (*although I cannot promise that they will not mist up on you at the most inopportune moments*) and listen to the stories with Jesus' ears. If God moves your heart, maybe this is the place where you can help, and since you are already here, maybe you can get some of the important questions answered?

And remember, not all of the Developing World is outside of the borders of the UK. Okay that may not be technically true, but you know what I am getting at. There are needs within our own countries which would benefit from the empowerment and dignity which can be brought through setting up a small business (*and preferably not one involving white powder!*)

Making contact

When you know where God wants you to engage, you are ready to make contact on the real topic at hand: *How you can help them through the basic business training model*. This is the subject of most of the rest of this chapter, but before you launch yourselves into it, consider for a moment – God has spoken to your heart about this, but has He yet spoken to theirs? And who are 'they'; who are you making contact with?

Let us deal with this last point first. And let us be absolutely clear about your role in this. In all probability you will only be there for two or three weeks over a period of one to two years, and whoever 'they' are 'they' will be the ones who have to pick up the pieces. In other words 'they' are the ones who have the real ownership of the problem, the real passion for getting it resolved, the real heart for the people; 'they' are the real heroes in all of this. So when you make contact, you are really offering to help them in their work to solve the problem, you are not asking them to help you to solve the problem – that will not work!

So the 'they' that you need to find to make contact with are those people (*that person*) who already has ownership under God, possibly informally, for making a difference in that place. Without that person, you can do nothing. We will call that person the 'Host'.

And with regard to the other point, please be mindful when you make contact that at present the need (*at least as you see it*) and the solution are only clear in your thoughts; they are not necessarily clear in the thoughts of the person you are speaking to (*or at least, not in the same way*).

So the first step is to understand how the Host sees the problem, and what they see as the potential of a training model which created 220 new businesses among the poor in just 12 months. And then you can move onto what God has been saying to your heart, and asking whether they would like you to help by introducing the model to them.

But before you head off too fast down the track of mutual collaboration and backslapping; before you are swept away on a tide of unbridled enthusiasm, please be aware that there are

About seagulls ...

'Seagulls' fly in, squawk a lot, flap about, create a lot of noise and commotion, steal all the attention and half of your chips, and then fly off, maybe never to be seen again, but leaving a "mess" behind for others to clean up.

Please do not be a seagull!

Who is the 'Host'?

The 'Host' is basically the person who will take ownership for the training and its impact in their area.

They are almost certainly a person of standing and respect in the community, who can influence things to happen there, and somebody with a God-given heart for the poor in that community, and a belief in business as a God-given staircase out of it.

They are probably a church or community leader.

still some practical bridges to be crossed, not least a clear scope for exactly what you are undertaking to do.

3.3 Clarifying the needs to be met

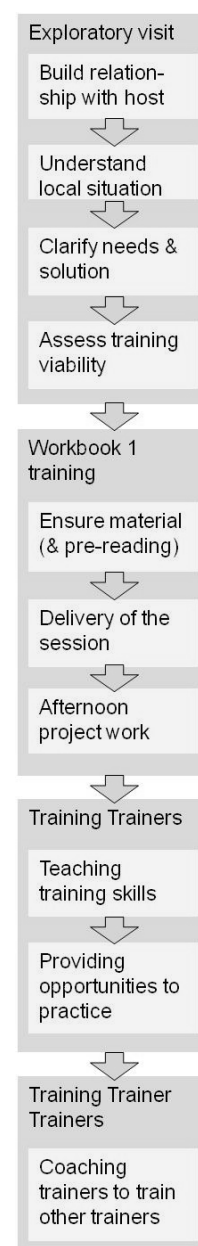
The first of these bridges is to be clear and explicit on exactly what of the needs you are helping to meet, and what is your role (*or rather the role of the training team*) within that, and key to scoping this out is your understanding of what is likely to be a manageable task.

What is a manageable task?

The model we have used to this point consists of the following interventions by a small team of people (*and, on occasion, a team of just one person*):

- Perhaps an initial visit to begin to build a relationship with the Host, and to understand the local situation and to meet some of those you will be training. This is also an opportunity to look at where and how the training will take place, how to get the printing done locally, what other services are available locally, and the most likely candidates for cascading the training on. The initial visit also helps the Host to understand their pivotal role in making it happen, particularly in regard to getting preparation and pre-reading to take place. We have not always made an initial visit, but we have found it very useful that one member of the team has physically met the Host, albeit not as part of this actual process
- A week-long visit to deliver the training in Workbook 1, consisting of four mornings spent going through the material with a group of up to 40 people divided into smaller discussion tables of 5 to 8 people, and three afternoons of project work, but with the training team available to support them on an ad-hoc basis. If interpreters are required for this work, find the best you can, and have one available for each member of the team, because if you have a large group there are some sessions when they will be in almost permanent demand
- A week-long visit to deliver the train-the-trainer course (*which is 3½ days long*). This is usually pitched about one year after the Workbook 1 training so that the new 'trainers' have had time to apply the skills successfully to their own business before they are required to go out and train others. In Uganda, however, we ran it just three months after the Workbook 1 course, because the people who wanted to cascade the training already had successful businesses (*even before the training*), and some had started to train other people anyway.
- Sometimes another week-long visit, perhaps 18 months after the last lot of training. This is to train new trainers who have come up through the cascade process, but more importantly to equip a small group of the existing trainers to train new trainers locally. After this training, the local group is not only self-sufficient, it is equipped to multiply up its impact by training new trainers as required.

From this pattern, the value of conducting the training through a local church structure can be seen more clearly, since people with an active faith often better understand the concept of *'freely you have received, freely give'* and feel a sense of responsibility of using their skills in voluntary



service to their fellow man or woman. Local Church structures also often: have a building suitable for conducting the training; are used to teaching and learning; feel a responsibility for the state of their local community; and are most likely to benefit from a financially healthier community in terms of tithing – which, to the shame of many of us in the West, is a common practice even among the poorest of the poor in many developing countries.

In addition to the training task there may be other responsibilities you choose to undertake. This may concern funding local production of the necessary training materials, and the payment of expenses for the volunteer trainers so that they don't end up paying (*out of their meagre income*) for the privilege.

But one responsibility that we would recommend that you do not undertake is the establishment of a local microfinance scheme – this really is best left to the experts who have the necessary local infrastructure and processes (*for instance, organisations like 'Five Talents'; see the box on page 91*). To understand why, please feel free to read the section of the Reconxile.org website that covers '*The Finance Issue*' (*also covered briefly at the end of section 6.1*), but suffice it to say that, for you, at a distance, it will not work!

This might however pose a problem where there is no other source of microfinance to provide start-up funding for the emergent businesses, and so you might need to consider one of two other options. The first of these is the existing banking infrastructure, who may be willing to support such small loans with limited collateral, as we discovered in the Xacbank in Mongolia. The other is the excellent Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) scheme, details of which can be found at www.vsla.net. You can read more about these in Chapter 6.

You may well find a local partner to deliver the necessary VSLA training, as we did with Care International in Kampala, but if not, you may need to consider how you can introduce this scheme yourselves.

Lay out with your Host, how you plan to help them, and point them in the direction of the Reconxile.org website for further clarification, but before you reach agreement, please ensure that the task you are taking on is manageable for yourself, your training team, and your Church. It is very important that we deliver what we promise and that we do not let them down.



Village Savings & Loan scheme in operation, courtesy of vsla.net

Be careful not to 'create' the need

When you talk through what you can offer to your Host, be careful not to 'create' the need. In some areas of the Developing World, people feel honoured and blessed to attract the attention of a 'Western' sponsor, and are keen to further this all they can, and are very keen not to create any offense, particularly in terms of rejection. So, for this reason, please start very clearly from what they need, before addressing what you can offer in support. And a key part of this is to understand clearly what your Host can do for themselves, and then establish a shared sense of responsibility for the outcomes.

Establishing a sense of shared responsibility for the outcomes

There are two levels to this. For the first batch of Workbook 1 training, your success depends on a shared sense of responsibility – you need them to do everything possible to ensure that all of the local things you will be dependent on are delivered to quality and to time. However, when we progress to cascading the training through the trainer-training, your success becomes fundamentally dependent on their full and complete sense of personal ownership for using what you have given them to make a difference.

For this reason you must do everything you can to maintain and grow their sense of responsibility. From the outset this is ‘their’ programme, not ‘our’ programme. Begin by getting them to think through what the programme might do for them and their community, and by suggesting that one option is for them to use the materials on the website to simply initiate the programme by themselves, and for you to support them in prayer. They will probably not feel entirely comfortable with this, but it does set the baseline before you move on to the more realistic option of: supporting them by piloting the training with them; then training their people to cascade it; and perhaps providing some funding to support the training itself; (and of course supporting them in prayer also).

3.4 Ensuring a practical framework of support

In the last section we glibly used the phrase “*all of the local things you will be dependent on*”, without providing any further clarification. In this section we explore what those things will be, because the final part of ‘Clarifying the Need’ is making sure that your teams needs are met also. Needs are a two way thing in a partnership.

Understanding what the team will need to make things work

Most of the things that the team will need to make things work are listed in section 4.2 of the next chapter “*Preparing the ground*”. In terms of the things they will need from the Host, these typically concern assured arrangements for (*rather than the actual funding of*): local travel and transport; accommodation and food; the training venue including tables and chairs; training equipment such as flipchart stands and pens; food during the training breaks; participant stationery (paper, pens); copies of the training materials (translated if necessary); participants, on-time, having done their preparation; and in some cases, personal security.

This rough list provides a start point, but it is vitally important that you develop your own list, as a checklist, and clarify who will be responsible for what. The background information which you gleaned in section 3.1 will be very useful input to this.

What will the team need to be provided locally?

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Sensitively probing what is possible

The checklist provides a very useful way of clarifying what is needed, and who is responsible for it, and for then managing delivery of those things in a timely manner. But there is a real danger that simply sending the checklist through may embarrass your Host, because they may not be in a position to fulfil all that you expect of them.

Instead, you will need to sensitively probe to find out what they are in a position to provide, carefully indicating your willingness to cover the costs without dishonouring or embarrassing them, and then clarify the responsibilities once you have this understanding.

In some cases, where they are unable to provide something that you are unable to provide for yourselves, you may need to look at alternative channels to provide what is needed, either other partners or suppliers in the area, or through agencies over here who can effect things over there. But through all this, please be careful that none of your decisions or choices undermine your Hosts sense of ownership for the programme.

Nailing things down

Once it is clear how everything will be provided, then is the time to make sure that you have everything nailed down. This is a sensitive but vital stage of the process. Our own approach is just to say very clearly that it is part of the process, without any inference that it is casting aspersions on their diligence. If they have read Workbook 1 by this stage they will understand the need for a direct and straightforward approach to this part of the planning process, and are unlikely to take offence.

The alternative, pussy-footing around the topic, has two major drawbacks: one, because it is not straightforward, it paradoxically has greater potential to cause offence; and two, it runs a far greater risk of leaving something important to chance, and the Devil loves that. In addition, we have found communicating by phone and email across continents and cultures a bit of a hit and miss affair, with the majority of conversations leaving us confused in some way shape or form as to what was actually said and agreed, and so the more direct and straightforward the process, the easier it is to make sure that you have the bases covered.

Managing the risks

But, sadly, things will still go wrong. So you need to make sure that the most important and risky of these are covered in some other way. Some risks you will have no contingencies for, but others, if you think about them beforehand, you can prepare something which will help you to pull the programme out of the fire at the last moment.

Having paper copies of everything, including their translation, and knowing where you can get some copies made is always a good bet – even if the copies will be at an extortionate price. Carrying your own flipchart pens and masking tape is another. A list of useful services, their telephone numbers, and a mobile phone which works abroad is a third. And on

Things to nail down:
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