

Winter-Spring, 2008-9
PMI Ministry Update
J. Nelson Jennings, President

Financial Support of Indigenous, National Missionaries:
What About Declining Support and Avoiding Dependency?

A prevalent U.S.-evangelical missions *modus operandi* is that financial support of indigenous, national missionaries and missions projects should be on a declining scale, for example 3-5 years. The foundational understanding for this widely accepted missiological practice is that indigenous, national ministries must be self-supporting and not dependent on outside money. Much has been written about the matter: See for example the influential material by Glenn Schwartz and World Mission Associates (www.wmausa.org). Schwartz has been a strong advocate of avoiding dependency and of self-reliance of mission-created institutions worldwide. Not surprisingly, there are also those who strongly advocate financially supporting indigenous missionaries and ministries, for example K.P. Yohannan and Gospel for Asia (www.gfa.org). These missiologists stress the effectiveness (including cost-effectiveness) of indigenous missionaries in such a way that overshadows any alleged problem of dependency.

The PMI Board is well aware of these issues related to financial support, and we discuss them regularly. Our discussions focus both on macro, theoretical levels as well as on concrete, particular situations. We take into account U.S. Christians' important concerns about dependency and effectiveness. We are also struck by the particularity of PMI Missionaries' ministry and living contexts. As an organization we are still small enough to relate to each situation on a case-by-case basis, although clearly we have guidelines and policies as well. As important as anything for anyone involved with PMI are the strategic, vital gospel ministries that are taking place through PMI Missionaries all around the world.

There are two other related factors that we on the PMI Board consider important: (1) Because all Christians and churches are sent by God into their corners of the worldwide mission field (including the United States of America), international *interdependency* is needed to help us all have a prophetic perspective to live and minister effectively within our own settings. For U.S. supporters, interdependent relationships with PMI Missionaries help give that needed prophetic perspective regarding affluence, political-economic corruption, unbelief, competing religious traditions, and other challenges that we all face. (2) While we on the PMI Board are thus reticent to impose an across-the-board declining support model (which would inevitably lead to declining supporter-missionary relationships) for the sake of a particular missiological ideology, we do see the need to *internationalize* the financial support of PMI Missionaries' ministries. We are encouraged by the fact that most all PMI-related situations have steadily increasing indigenous financial support. Furthermore, certain PMI-related ministries have contributed to other ministries around the world when they were in need of financial support. Such international, multi-directional sharing of financial resources reflects the reality that the worldwide Christian movement is in fact more global than ever.

Interdependency and international financial support: These two important values are part of PMI's efforts to be responsible in terms of how finances are administered. Thank you and thank God for your part in PMI's worldwide ministries through finances, prayer, interest, input, and prophetic living in your own life-situation.

Yours in Christ,
J. Nelson Jennings
President