



Report on the North America Diaspora BRIDGE Consultation

Crossover Bible Fellowship

Houston, Texas



Building Relationships Intentionally with the Diaspora for Global-Gospel Expansion

INTRODUCTION

The MANI BRIDGE Consultation was held August 24-25, at Crossover Bible Fellowship, Houston, Texas, USA. The BRIDGE Consultation was a two-day intensive learning and networking event designed to encourage collaborative partnerships among the African diaspora to further expand gospel movements in Africa and the world.

The BRIDGE Consultation exceeded expectations in that there were over 100 participants representing 20 missions organizations from North America and Africa. The participants gathered to engage in deep and strategic conversation to address the important topic of missional engagement among the African Diaspora in North America. The historic gathering also promoted Gospel-centered networking partnerships among the African Diaspora, who desire to advance the gospel in their particular ministry contexts. Countries of the Diaspora represented were: Nigerian, Ghana, Ethiopia, Cote D' Ivoire, Cameroon, Mozambique, Eretria, Congo, Gambia, Burkina Faso, and Guatemala.

The BRIDGE Consultation concluded with an expression of participants' desire to be involved in ongoing conversations in order to move the discussions toward praxis.

KEY ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED

- ❖ WorldVenture
- ❖ One Challenge
- ❖ New Frontiers
- ❖ Horn of Africa Evangelical Mission
- ❖ African Inland Mission
- ❖ Calvary Ministries International (CAPRO)
- ❖ African Christian Fellowship
- ❖ Development Associates International (DAI)

Of significant importance was the participation of two regional officers of the Missions Council of the African Christian Fellowship (including two past National Presidents of ACF). One of the strategic outcomes of the BRIDGE Consultation was the interest of ACF to aid in facilitating regional gatherings of the Historical African Diaspora (HAD) and the Contemporary African Diaspora (CAD) fellowships to begin collaborating for joint missional engagement. The North American branch of ACF desires to partner with and benefit from the existing MANI networks in Africa to further develop their outreach on the continent.

MANI OVERVIEW

An overview of MANI was given by Reuben Ezemadu (MANI Continental Coordinator) and Dean Carlson (MANI Advisory-International Liaison) given the fact that the Movement for African National Initiatives is not as familiar to many in North America.

There were three dominant thoughts that captured the core of the MANI overview:

- ❖ How can those in the US partner with MANI?
- ❖ The time has come again for the African church, and Africa to play a prominent role in God's Plan, especially in these end times.
- ❖ The dependency syndrome that has plagued the African church has changed, and Africans are sending out missionaries themselves and taking responsibility for facilitating missions with the resources they have.

The MANI overview provided a powerful format of explaining the mission, vision and history of MANI, and highlighting how the Lord is using MANI networks to demonstrate ways HE is on the move in and through Africa.

STRATEGIC TOPICS DISCUSSED

The BRIDGE consultation emphasized four major strategic topics:

- ❖ Dr. Alex Mekonnen spoke on the topic, *“West to West: Fostering creative partnerships between African American and Diaspora churches to spread the Gospel among the unreached in North America.”*

This session addressed how African American Churches and the African Diaspora in the West should be collaborating in new ways to reach the unreached in the West. Dr. Mekonnen reminded participants that Diaspora churches historically have been equal partners in mission and that, in fact, the first missionaries of the early church were themselves scattered immigrants and refugees. Of note was the lack of missional engagement by the African American church was emphasized; however, this disparity presents a tremendous opportunity to engage African Americans and Africans in the West in global mission.

- ❖ Nosa Tukura spoke on the topic, *“South to North: Discovering mission initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa that are being mobilized to reach the Islamic areas in North Africa.”*

This session addressed how Sub-Sahara African churches and mission initiatives are finding creative ways to reach out to the unreached in the strong Islamic regions of North Africa. Nosa provided a history and vision of the MANI “Go North” initiative, which was a significant outcome of the Abuja Consultation in 2011. Four “Go North” models were presented to give different perspectives of outreach implementation to North Africa. (1) South to North Africa Partnership (S2NAP), (2) The Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA), (3) the Go International Mission, and (4) the Missions Supporters League (MSL). It was emphasized that ongoing partnerships between missions organizations, churches, and collaboration between the global south and north networks is that only way that the “Go North” vision will be successful.

- ❖ Dr. Femi Adeyele shared on the topic, *“West to East: Encouraging collaborative partnerships among the African Diaspora for effective engagement with the church in Africa.”*

Dr. Adeyele made a compelling argument of how African American churches and African diaspora in the West should be looking to the “East” to think about and partner with the mission-minded initiatives already happening in Africa. The primary concern is connecting the African Diaspora with the Church on the African continent. The participants were given an understanding of the African Diaspora; the African Diaspora includes ‘HAD’- (Historical African Diaspora) and ‘CAD’- (Contemporary African Diaspora). The challenge becomes creating a

mission directed bridge between the 'HAD' and 'CAD'. The 'HAD' left Africa by way of the Atlantic Slave Trade. However, as harsh a reality as it is, the pains of slavery are nothing compared to the God of mission, and we must examine Diaspora on the backdrop of the sovereignty of God. Dr. Femi concluded his presentation by emphasizing that intentionally is critical if 'HAD' and 'CAD' demographics are to learn from one another.

- ❖ Dr. Yaw Perbi closed the consultation addressing the participants on the topic, *"Africa to the Rest: Emulating the African response of obedience to the Great Commission to reach the unreached around the globe."*

Dr. Perbi shared from mission history, his personal testimony and from contemporary examples of how God is raising up Africans and the African Diaspora in powerful new ways to reach the unreached in the world. He strongly emphasized that mission is no longer a "West to the Rest" movement, but it is indeed polycentric, meaning that 21st Century mission involves mobilizing everybody to everywhere. There is a significant shift in missionary sending, and the African diaspora is a vital part of this movement. Dr. Perbi suggested that we empower the people who ALREADY are moving, to DO missions, rather than waiting to train up missionaries. Dr. Perbi ended the session by casting a vision that *"EVERY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN MIGRANT will be envisioned and empowered to transmit the Gospel and become a catalyst for an evangelical church for every people, Christ-like leaders for every church, and kingdom impact in every sphere of society."* This is a vision that MANI can embrace unequivocally.

After each plenary speaker, time was allotted to interact with the plenary topic and discuss practical solutions that participants could apply in their local context.

THE BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

Nosa Tukura presented on *"The Role of Women in Finishing The Task"*

Nosa communicated powerfully a history of women's role in missions and the current realities in mission, underling several opportunities for women to be involved in missions and highlighting the challenges that women typically face in missions participation. The breakout session's primary focus was that women are a vital part in God's missionary enterprise. Key to the total scope of the biblical witness, the Lord Himself realized the importance of including women on His ministry team. Both male and female attendees alike were reminded that to be fruitful and multiply is not about bearing children, but bearing fruit. The believer's ultimate call is to be and image bearer.

Dr. Moussa Bongoyok presented on “*Mission among the Urban Muslim Immigrants in the West*”

Dr. Moussa provided a detailed overview of the demographic of urban Muslim immigrants in Europe and North America. It was noted that Muslim immigrants leave their countries for various reasons, some of which are: safety (refuge due to unrest, civil wars, ethnic and religious persecutions), economic opportunity, and university studies. Compelling reasons to do mission among urban Muslim immigrants were given as well as strategic approaches to reach this underserved population. The breakout concluded with a challenge to do mission among urban Muslim immigrants seeing that the Lord has opened a door of opportunity to develop our spiritual muscles and share the Gospel with them.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS FROM THE CONSULTATION:

- ❖ What is the primary challenge you have encountered to partnership between African and Diasporic believers?
- ❖ How can Africans and African Americans partner to reach unreached people groups in North America with the gospel of the kingdom, and to work for justice?
- ❖ How do we recruit a younger generation for African missions?
- ❖ What are the factors that make the Church in North America hesitant to address the issue of immigration from a Biblical perspective?
- ❖ How can we help mobilize more African Americans to the mission field (especially for long-term service)?
- ❖ What are the root causes of the victim mentality and what is the best strategy to overcome it now and to sow positive seeds in future generations of Africans?
- ❖ How can people of color bypass personalized wounds and be active participants in the Global Missions?
- ❖ What is the structure MANI intends to use in America?
- ❖ How can we who understand the sovereignty of God and understand He has a purpose for us, offer help the African Americans who still have a negative mindset?
- ❖ What would it look like to ‘put feet to’ our time together by meeting monthly (or some other regular time) to pray?
- ❖ What are the causes of Diaspora movement?
- ❖ What support is available for African tent-making missionaries in the area of business mentoring, and working capital funding and financial systems support?
- ❖ What are the challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa in the S2NAP initiative for which the North American church can be of help?

ACTION ITEMS

The BRIDGE Consultation concluded by dividing into affinity groups of the Historic African Diaspora (HAD), Contemporary African Diaspora (CAD), and Mission Organization Leaders. The groups engaged in a discussion entitled, What Can We Do Together? What follows is a summary of the BRIDGE Consultation Affinity Group Discussions:

CBF – Crossover Bible Fellowship

- Develop a training module that is culturally appropriate for people of color. *Perspectives* is good but does not reach the hearts of many African American people.
- Send HAD and CAD on mission trips together in partnership with Africans on the continent and ensure that they are trips of substance and not returns to the 'mother land'
- Change the way our younger generation works together. Bring HAD and CAD children together to change the future; even finding ways to connect them with children on the continent.
- Take part in worship with one another; HAD visiting CAD worship services and vice versa

HAD (Historic African Diaspora) Church Leaders

- Organize an annual missions conference at our churches
- Participate on short-term mission trips, but prioritize partnership instead of going with a "savior" mindset.
- Look for mission training resources other than *Perspectives*, which does not seem best for our "cultural context." Efforts must be made on how to reintroduce missions in our churches.

CAD (Contemporary African Diaspora) Church Leaders

- Develop a collaboration that includes the perspective of all points of view. This should be a church movement, not an African movement alone.
- Train CAD churches to be more inclusive, church planting in North American should be for all, and not only from one ethnic group or nationality. We should refrain from call churches, "Nigerian" or Ethiopian. The goal is to go to a church that is multicultural.
- Motivate CAD children to help them to have a missionary mind-set through teaching and mission exposure.
- Train CAD churches in evangelism and mission.
- Emulate CAD youth's desire to work together. The youth want to collaborate regardless of their country of origin.
- Break down cultural walls by serving other cultures.

- Encourage more collaboration among CAD church leaders.

Mission Organization Leaders Feedback

- Engage in inter-organizational, mission-oriented partnerships.
- Encourage a collaborative network among influential Africans involved in mission organizational leadership in North America.
- Invite male delegates of future meetings to bring their wives.
- Leverage strong links and partnerships with churches and church leadership to help compile resources for African and African Diaporan mission endeavors.

SUMMARY

The MANI BRIGE Consultation was an event that God used to show that He is at work among the African diaspora around the world. A significant theme occurring throughout the consultation was the need for more missional partnership among HAD's and CAD's. Even though cultural differences and misunderstand exist; the consultation kindled a desire to move toward each other for the purpose of the Great Commission. There are tremendous opportunities for partnership between these two groups. The synergy of the BRIDGE Consultation provides the motivation for intentional collaboration between the African Diaspora in the West to have significant Gospel influence, not only in Africa, but also around the globe.

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