

Cross-Cultural Perspectives from the Director



Stages of Transition

Missionary Steve Shirley, one year at School of Missions, unveiled the following stages of development in the national church. Understanding these will allow missionaries and national leaders to work more effectively and have greater results.

“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. For we are labourers together with God: (I Corinthians 3:6,9).

- **Pioneering Stage:** In this stage, the missionary does most or all the work. Finances come mostly through the missionary. He is the one who carries the majority of the burden and responsibility. Since money is limited, care must be taken so that the leadership will not feel that ministers and workers are competing for funds. The church cannot be allowed to develop the mentality of always wanting to receive.
- **Organizing Stage:** The church is organized into regions, districts, zones, etc. Policies and guidelines for administration are established. Emphasis is placed on training and developing national leaders.
- **Facilitating Stage:** In this stage, the missionary begins releasing the work and responsibility into the hands of the nationals. He emphasizes the training of successors and key men. Most of his time will be spent with leaders rather than with congregations or church members. The missionary learns how to delegate responsibilities and is actively preparing national leaders to assume the responsibility and leadership of the national work.

- **Nationalizing Stage:** The missionary now becomes the advisor and counselor as the day-to-day operation and responsibilities of the church pass into the hands of national leaders. The missionary may continue to serve in areas such as training, evangelism, and literature development. At this time, the missionary may be working in several countries, serve as an Area Coordinator, or have other responsibilities.

Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." For us, "All the church goes through stages, and all the missionaries are privileged to be part of it." What stage are you in?