

A SEMINAR PRESENTED AT THE URBANA15 MISSIONS CONFERENCE
IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, USA

SERVING IN MISSIONS IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Mission is fulfilling the great commission; that is reaching out to all nations with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is much more than just preaching to someone or group of people but it includes living among the people, sharing in some of their culture, and gradually help them understand who Christ is by one's life and conduct as a missionary. The gospel does not fall from the clouds like rain or by accident, but is brought by the hands of men to whom God has sent it, this is by John Calvin. This could be within ones culture or cross cultural. Therefore serving in missions in African context one must understand somethings things about Africans.

Africans are people guided by many strong cultural beliefs, which fashions their perception about life in general. This is so because of the generational link successfully built by her ancestors through time up until now. She attributes success and failures alike to their beliefs which often times than not could be fetish. They don't believe man's decision can bring mishap on himself, someone or something is always seen responsible to that.

OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICA CONTINENT

GEOGRAPHY

Africa covers about 30,244,000 square km; 20.3% of the world's surface area. Of this, 20.6 million sq. km are in countries south of the Sahara, and 9. 68 million people in the nations of North Africa.¹

PEOPLE

Africa has nearly 2,500 ethnic groups, Sub-Saharan Africa has 67.1%. 2,111 peoples. The 53 people clusters can be grouped into three major blocs such as West Africa, Sudanic and Bantu.

The Continent is divided into the following:

East Africa	-19 countries
Middle/Central Africa	-9 countries
North Africa	- 8countries
South Africa	- 5countries
West Africa	- <u>17countries</u>

(MANDRYK)¹

We have 58 countries in this continent with a total population of (1,163,895,000) (1.163billion) people, a total of 3,712 people group out of which 981 are unreached, the percentage of the unreached people groups is 26.4% and a population of 329.9 million, this makes for 28.3% of the total population in Africa.

A total of 0.8 billion people have been reached with the gospel of Christ.

Before you can serve in Mission in an African context, you need to know which Region-Nation and people group you are called to work with.

We have what is called the **10/40 Window**

In this rectangular area are: North Africa, Middle East and Asia and it is popularly called “**The Resistant Belt**” and includes the majority of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhism. About 4.83 billion individuals reside in the region with approximately 8,067 people group. This is the home of the largest unreached people groups in the world.

The Arab world has so much influence in the Northern parts of the Africa continent and as such they are trying hard to force their way to Islamize the entire continent with their religion.

Sudan has the largest unreached people group, 10 of Sudan’s 164 people groups have Christianity as their primary religion while 131 have Islam as their primary religion.

WORLDVIEW OF THE AFRICA CONTINENT

John Fowler defines the term worldview as “a construct about the make-up of life as if struggles with the questions of reality, truth, ethnics and history. It is a construct that provides a point of departure, a sense of direction, a locus of destination, and a strategy of unity for human thought, life and action.” This construct satisfy

- the need to unify thought and life,
- the need to define the good life and find hope and meaning in life.
- the need to guide thought
- the need to guide action

African’s worldview therefore, exerts a strong shaping influences and power on their lives. For any effective mission to be accomplish in Africa, the challenge of the traditional worldview needs to be tackled expeditiously not just to proclaim the gospel, but also to render a complete service of discipling them and providing for the formation of these same people into a new worldview.

CTR====ATR

The earliest missionaries packaged the gospel with colonialism and western culture for the African and so that did not make so much impact on their lives, but brought about schizophrenia in the lives of the Africans.

- Traditional faith in the case of sickness or death.
- Believes in hierarchies and entities of power:

God divinities, ancestors, mystical powers **Human**

sacred days with specific factures and events, rites of passage, religious specialist and prohibit hue laws and taboos.

In all, they see God as the ultimate of powers. Africans believes in a supreme God, they also believe that this God lives far from those who are alive. In order to reach Him, His power, and all His other benefits the living have to go through intermediaries who are between those on the level of human existences and the supreme God Himself. They can only benefit from God or they recognize the entities of power in their descending order through the elders and other specialists.

This kind of worldview should be taking seriously when traditional Africans are being evangelized and discipled. Some scholars refer to this aspect of the traditional Africa worldview as the religio-cultural heritage of the Africa that must be adhered or the person who claims to have been converted to Christianity has only a veneer (surface) of Christianity.

- **Community Solidarity**: one of the greatest gifts of the Africans to the world consists of a strong sense of community. In the turbulent environment of our contemporary world, redemptive communities have become important in shaping human beings for the traditional African, harmonious relationships are central to the information of people and are therefore, imperative to cultivate and maintain relational harmony within the community. African view of man says:

‘I am because we are, and sense we are, therefore I am’

- **Orientation to power**: their quest for power cannot be overemphasized and so, how to acquire and retain power for protection and prevention against forces of evil is the order of the day for most Africans. There are many African Christians who profess to be worshippers of the true God, but secretly, in times of crisis, visit medicine men, traditional healers and other specialists.
- **Mystical Power**: the most distributing element of African tradition worldview can be identified as the fear of power that maybe harmfully used, as evil magic, witchcraft and sorcery are considered to be at work all the time. Bad people, who know how to tap this power, use it to harm other people. It therefore, means that there is a need for good people who have access to good power that can be used to counteract power from evil forces to use them. Acts 17, Gal 6.

It takes a person with strong interpersonal relationship skills to break into them as they can be defensive even to the detriment of a foreigner with no apologies. Patience and tolerance is encouraged in dealing with them, but if broken into, they are the nicest people you can meet.

Another feature is illiteracy. Because of the priority they give to traditional beliefs and the likes, they give very little attention /interest to modern learning so communicating with an African man can be a lot of stress. One's ability to learn their dialect (language) gives them a sense of love and security thereby, making audience less stressful than should.

Africans are strong willed. They are very determining people so letting go of an already embraced life is insanity to them so one will need a lot of time to talk them out just as already stated in the aforementioned on patience and tolerance.

Africa can be called a land of contrasts: as one moves across the continent, extreme differences, envies in wealth and poverty, land scopes of rivers, forests and deserts, mankind and planning, Mineral- rich resources under destitute land scopes, and European values superposed on cultural practices.

THE UNREACHED/UNEVANGELISED PEOPLE GROUPS

Africa has 13 of the world's 20 least-evangelized countries by percentage. There are many clusters of unreached peoples in Africa. The largest majority are the Muslim of varying degrees of commitment and orthodoxy. **The Arabs of North Africa** number nearly 210 million from Mauritania across to Egypt. The Nubian Arabs, Nubian Fedicca-Mohas and Nubian Kunuz who speaks Egyptian Arabs Nobiin, and Kenzi languages form about 1.3 Millions of the Egyptian population, they are 100% Muslim. **The Imazighen, or Berber** are about 18 million in 76 distinct sub-groups living in 17 countries. Major groups include the Kabyle (3.3m), Riff (2.6m), Shilha (8.7m) and Shawiya (1.9m). Only among the Kabyle has there been a significant turning to Christ. Less than 0.4% might be considered Christian. Several partnerships of agencies concerned for them exist. **The Tamacheq (Tuarg)** are related to Berber, but have a unique culture and live in the central Sahara Desert. They number 2.5million in seven countries and comprise 16 sub-groups. Believers among them are increasing, but only in Niger and Mali are there established groups. There are 17 unreached people groups out of the 33 Ethnic groups in **the Gambia**. The country is 90% Islam, it has a population of 1,847,000 but 1,554,000 are unreached. **Guinea Bissau** is a Portuguese speaking West African Nation with a population of 1,593,000 with unreached population of 792,000. Islam is 52% of the population, 21 out of the 35 people groups are unreached. While the 295,000 **Fulakundas** are unreached, the 271,000 **Balantas** and the 218,000 **Crioulos** are reached with the gospel. There are 23,851,000 Arabic speaking Algerians in Algeria; they form the largest unreached people group in the country with 35 unreached people groups.

Guinea Conakry has 48 people groups out of which 30 are unreached with the gospel. Out of the 10,626,000 population of the country 9,149,000 are yet to be reached with the gospel. Christians form only 4.27% of the population of Guinea; Islam is the largest religion of the country and has 88% of the population.

Libya has 42 people groups, 30 of them are unreached, and the total population is 6,448,000, Christians are 3.15% of the population. 5,810,000 Libyans are unreached and 96% of the Population are Muslims. There are 1,857,000 Arab Libyans in Libya, next to their population are **Cyrenacian Arabs** 1,664,000 in number, both of these two major ethnic groups in Libya are unreached.

There are 538 people groups in **Nigeria** with a population of about 181,939,000 people; according to Joshua project 113 tribes are unreached forming a population of 60,696,000

CHALLENGES/NEEDS OF THE AFRICAN

Islam is the major challenge for Christianity today, both the 182 million Muslims north of the Sahara and the 246 million in sub-Saharan Africa. The “race” to win people to Christ from the traditional religions in West Africa and across the Sahel has largely been lost.

Africa’s urban population has rapidly increased from 130 million in 1990 to 390 million in 2010. It is the world’s most rapidly urbanizing continent, lack of economic and poor infrastructure have made the cities a focal point for dire poverty, squalor, crime, prostitution, disease and misery.

HIV/AIDS: HIV still afflicts nearly 23 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone. In some areas, one-third of the adult population were infected. This region accounts for 68% of new infections among adults, 91% among children and 72% of AIDS-related deaths. Life expectancy fell by half in parts of southern Africa. About 14.2 million children lost one or both parents to AIDS, a UN report states that if HIV still infects millions of Africans by 2025, it will not be because there was no choice, but because of a lack of political will.²

TYPES OF MISSIONS AVAILABLE IN AFRICA CONTINENT

The types of mission work available in Africa continent are one-on-one: evangelism (preaching to a set of beliefs for the purpose of conversion); and humanitarian work, especially among the poor and disadvantaged. There are a few different kinds of mission trips: short-term, long-term, and relational and ones meant simply for helping people in need. Some might choose to dedicate their whole lives to missions as well. Missionaries have the authority to preach the Christian faith (and sometimes to administer sacraments), and provide humanitarian work to improve economic development, literacy, education, health care, and orphanages. Christian doctrines (such as the "Doctrine of Love" professed by many missions) permit the provision of aid without requiring religious conversion, however through this act many will come to know Christ.

² (MANDRYK)

EXAMPLES OF MISSIONARIES TO THE AFRICA CONTINENT

- 1. David Livingstone (1813-1873)**
- 2. Mary Slessor (1848-1915)**
- 3. John G. Lake (1870-1935)**

They had some form of education, learnt how to work in a system, had someone at one time or the other that served as an influence in their lives, they were all particular of the place/people they were going to reach with the gospel of Christ.

As evangelical missionaries they were expected to preach the word and heal the sick, learn the language of the people and read about the continent of Africa

Note that in some parts of Africa, they are affected with diseases that are not common to the western world, e.g. Malaria, Typhoid. Most of the African countries are still developing (poor roads and network or lack of basic infrastructures). Some Africans are poor and drunkards. The continent is associated with lots of traditional beliefs (ATR) and its culture is mostly not women friendly.

Africa continent is seasoned with snakes and wild animals.

Some basic questions to answer are:

Aside the gospel message, what else can you pass on to the people you are going to reach (platform)?

What changes are you introducing to those you hope to reach?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Christian mission is "an organized effort for the propagation of the Christian faith." Missions often involve sending individuals or groups, called "missionaries," across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries, for the purpose of proselytism (conversion to Christianity, or from one Christian tradition to another).

The Apostle Paul was an early proponent of the expansion, and contextualized the Christian message for the Greek and Roman cultures, permitting it to reach beyond its Hebrew and Jewish roots. What then is your own role in the propagation of this same gospel of Christ to the Unreached/Unevangelized people group of your generation? The Africa continent is waiting for you to come and share the love of Christ with them.

Peter Omo-Erigbe
NIFES, Director of Missions and Evangelism
December, 2015

REFERENCES

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Ref: The Africa worldview a section challenge to Christian discipleship- Zacchaeus Mathame

Practical Details:

If you're able to accept this invitation, I will work with you to define the focus of your topic(s) and a two-sentence description. The seminar rooms range in size from 200-1000 people. All seminars will be offered once or twice the afternoons of December 28-30. There are two seminar slots per afternoon; each is one hour in length from 2-3pm and 3:30-4:30pm. Seminars will provide a combination of content, practical suggestions for life application and interaction with participants, therefore we ask the content of the seminars be limited to 20-30 minutes, leaving plenty of time for questions and answers. Past Urbana evaluations strongly support a shorter TED-like teaching component with ample opportunity for questions from the participants. Participants have also voiced a vigorous preference to restrict the promotion of missions organizations solely to the exhibit hall and not in the seminar context, therefore I ask speakers not to bring promotional materials or promote their organizations in their seminars.

My expectation is for seminar speakers to attend the entire conference, from December 27 until midnight December 31, 2015 in order to meet one-on-one with participants outside of your seminar times. If you have concerns about staying the entire time, please let me know when you respond to this invitation. All seminar speakers are required to attend the seminar speaker orientation on the afternoon of December 27.

Dear Peter,

Greetings from the Urbana planning team, I pray this email finds you well! We have just surpassed 10,000 registrations for Urbana and our prayer intercessors are already praying for you and your contribution to the seminar program. I would like to request a **one page outline of your Urbana seminars by November 1, 2015**. This will enable us to interact on the content and direction of your seminar. Main issues/concerns and bullet points are acceptable.

Your seminar has been scheduled. Here is your seminar date, time, location and room capacity.

Seminar Title: Serving in Missions in an African Context

Date and Time: 29 December, 2-3pm

Location: Convention Center, Room 103

Room Capacity: 220 people

PEDAGOGY

The vision for Urbana 15 is, ***“To compel this generation to give their whole lives for God’s global mission,”*** focusing on select passages in the gospel of Matthew, please see attached. Our prayer as we delve into the gospel of Matthew, is that participants will experience an eye-opening, life-transforming, commitment-producing call to join in God’s global mission in both word and deed. The Urbana 15 Seminar Program strives to enhance and expand the overall Urbana program in conjunction with our current global missions reality.

Critical questions we need to ask as we prepare seminars for Urbana are outlined in the Urbana 15 Vision and Strategic Framework Paper[1] by Tom Lin, Vice President, Director of Missions & Urbana for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA:

- What does it mean to lift this student generation’s eyes to the nations?
- What does it mean to provide a sacred space for them to wrestle with the world’s biggest problems, not just first-world problems?
- What does it mean to challenge this generation to literally give their lives for Christ?

Urbana is an amazing conference because while the world changes rapidly and each student generation changes, the sweet spot and purpose of Urbana in many ways has stayed constant

since 1946. While worship styles have changed, while the ethnic diversity and religious backgrounds of students have changed, Urbana has always been focused on missions mobilization to the ends of the earth as well as to our own backyards in North America. This focus was well articulated by Stacy Woods in 1946 and continues to hold true:

“We are praying that this convention might be just the beginning of a mighty missionary movement on the part of thousands of Christian students throughout North America. We hope that we may be an instrument in God's hands, not only as a home mission, preaching the Gospel to America's college students, but also as a foreign missionary recruiting agency ... supplying a stream of trained missionary candidates, a pool of consecrated manpower for the evangelization of the world.”

SEMINAR PROGRAM

Topics for the seminar program have been selected based the Urbana vision, the Urbana conference theme, *“What Story Will You Tell?”* pressing missions issues of today and global trends. The program also seeks to address critical topics this generation of students encounters on their campuses and in their communities, from foundational subjects to high-level engagement. The aim is to provide Urbana participants with programming that informs, inspires, and equips towards missions mobilization. We encourage participants to pursue a richer understanding of foundational missions topics through 200 seminars, specialized tracks, hospitality lounges, Hack4Missions, prayer ministry rooms, exhibit hall and bookstore. Advisory committees, global missions leaders, InterVarsity leadership and the Urbana program team have all contributed to developing a robust seminar program.

TRACKS

In an effort to enhance the Urbana experience for various participants in 2015, we have carefully selected tracks that align with the vision of Urbana 15. They offer specialized programming, serve to reinforce the message of Urbana and speak more effectively and powerfully to an identified group. The significance of topic-specific content, community-oriented processing and intentional gatherings adds to the Urbana experience for this generation of students.

- Business
- International Students
- Pastors and Church Leaders
- Poverty

LOUNGES

There are a number of ethnic specific and special interest-area lounges at Urbana that aim to provide a safe and hospitable space through prayer to help process what they're learning at Urbana. We hope these welcoming spaces will be a hub to meet friends, be mentored by like-minded leaders, discuss how to implement what they're learning as they return home as well as mobilize and prepare particular groups for missions engagement.

HACK4MISSIONS

For the first time in Urbana's long history, we will be hosting a hackathon at the conference, called Hack4Missions. Our aim is to compel students in technical fields to give their whole lives to God's global mission by inviting them to apply their specific gifts to real-world ministry opportunities and challenges. Project managers, software developers, computer programmers, visual designers, and user experience designers will explore how their skills and interests can be used to serve God's kingdom around the world.