

# Models of missional engagement in Asia: The experience of CMS in Asia



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## A brief history of CMS

CMS was formed in 1799 out of the evangelical, pietistic & abolitionist movements, with notable reformers like Wilberforce, Newton, Shaftesbury. The mandate was abolitionist (anti-slavery); creating civil society ('reformation of manners') - as well as evangelistic ('conversion of the heathen' in 'Africa and the East'). A former General Secretary of CMS, Max Warren, (1957) identified 3 main stages of CMS history, each of 50 years:

1. **Fly-casting** – '**pioneering**' of individuals trying out new places, often the missionaries following in the wake of military and merchants
2. **Scaffolding** – '**planting**' as missionaries developed mission stations in mission fields.
3. **Institutional** – '**professional**' phase, when the 3 big mission institutions were the backbone of mission work – Churches, Hospitals and Schools

This was followed by

4. **Independence** – '**partnering**' when the churches became independent and started running their own institutions and a new relationship of partnership was established.

So the question remains what is the next stage all about

5. **Networks** – '**participating**' I would suggest that it is about Network Mission, a more global co—created reality, where the key word is participation [1].

## The starfish and the spider

In thinking about this future, we have been influenced by an organisational development book - '*The Starfish and the Spider*' [2]. The central image is that just a single amputated leg of a starfish, unlike a spider, it can re-grow to a complete starfish. And this power of decentralisation is illustrated by the Apaches who resisted the Spanish army because they were highly decentralised, whilst the Incas and Aztecs, both highly centralised, hierarchical societies, were annihilated by Conquistadors.

These illustrations are extended to organisations of our time – Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Wikipedia, Craig's List, al Qaeda and Skype. They talk about the 5 legs of a "Starfish-type" organization:

1. Circles – Starfish organizations are made up of an infinite number of circles of participants.
2. A Catalyst – All organizations need a "Craig" or other instigator, even if they don't opt for the spotlight.
3. Ideology – note that they use this word and not "mandate" or "mission statement."
4. Pre-existing Network – Sometimes the network forms before the idea for the company.
5. A Champion – every great idea needs someone to relentlessly promote it.

The characteristics of the 2 types of organisations are very different

<b>'SPIDER' organisations</b>	<b>'STARFISH' organisations</b>
person in charge & headquarters	no one person in charge, no HQ
clear division of roles	no clear division of roles
rigid organisation	Flexible organisation
Knowledge/power concentrated	Knowledge/power is distributed
No. of participants/employees known	No. employees/participants not known!
working groups centrally-funded	Working groups self-funded
Communications through intermediary	Direct comms. between groups

### The changing face of mission

I am very grateful to Mark Laing for his article [3] which explores the shift in Global Christianity. 4] He talks of the new Global South – the 'Third Church' and '*non-Christian West: non-Western Christianity*'. 'Tri-continentalism' recognises Africa, Asia, Latin America as the new centres of the faith. It is as if the global balloon is being squeezed in the North, yet is expanding elsewhere. Laing suggests 3 fundamental responses for Western Missionary Agencies WMAs:

- (i) *Benign neglect*: 'Emu-thinking' business as usual, sending from 'the west to the rest', as if nothing has changed.
- (ii) *Internationalisation*: taking on International staff, changing location, becoming more global, but still fundamentally a WMA, with no real shift in institutional power.
- (iii) *Task-orientated partnership under southern leadership*: with WMAs taking on the '*role of consultant*', and western missionaries as '*temporary, secondary and advisory*'.

Strategically a fundamental shift is required to support new, 'indigenous' mission movements in a globalised multidirectional 'everywhere to everywhere' world emphasising the mission of every believer in 'mission-shaped church' [5]

In Asia CMS, we see the vastness Asia as overlapping circles of Influence (like the Olympic logo), representing sub-regions within Asia, with various centres or hubs on this network. We are in the middle of an appreciative inquiry [6] process of exploring with partners what a more Networked mission might look like.

And picking up on the 5 legs of the starfish (slightly adapted), we are exploring

1. Catalytic Leadership style - facilitative, enabling
2. Circles of participants: self organising 'Communities of Practice' around mission themes
3. Core Ideology: e.g. 'missio Dei' Kingdom of God, integral mission
4. Connections:- using Pre-existing Networks and partnerships
5. Champions – Initially the current staff, key partners & CMS people in mission.

We maintain a strategic focus in Asia

1. Support emerging and established Asian Mission movements
2. Leadership and discipleship development
3. Development of new paradigm of Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL) [7] businesses
4. Holistic, transformational, integral mission focused on poor and marginalised
5. Faith sharing and interfaith engagement in multi-faith contexts

In terms of key partners let me mention three

- **Asian Outreach**, based out of Hong Kong under the leadership of Francis Tsui. We work together through Action Love Limited in Singapore on various projects, particularly the development of business as mission.
- **Anglican Church in Korea**. Our CMS Seoul office is having a catalytic effect in Korea with the small Anglican Church, and we are seeing Korean Anglicans going out to N Cyprus, India, Philippines, China, Mongolia.
- **Presbyterian Church of Mizoram** A strategic partnership was formed with the Mizo church to co-send some of their missionaries to other partners in India (e.g. CNI) and beyond, as what we call 'Co-Mission partners'.

As one of our partners said in the interviews as part of our enquiry process

**+ Pradeep Kumar Samantaroy, Bishop of Amritsar, CNI**

*If Indian churches get together, then there is no need to look elsewhere.... Our people are encountering Missionaries from South India. We see their dedication and are challenged ..... Now the CMS Networking is creating a new task force. We are excited, because we thought the Missionaries left after independence. Now people see the link being renewed through visits by CMS and the Mizoram placements. ... CMS has adapted to the changing situation, doing mission with the locals. This will require structural changes too, but how far will this networking go?... Now God has opened a door. **It is a new Avatar (incarnation) an Indian CMS, an Asian entity with a new face.***

## DWYSTFD

These are exciting days of change. God is up to something new in mission. Our job as mission agencies is to keep up with the Spirit. Mission is about DWYSTFD - not a place in Wales ! - but 'doing what you see the Father doing'

Let me finish with the CMS Community prayer

*Lord, as you have entered into our life and death. And in all the world you call us into your death and risen life, forgive us our sins; and draw us we pray, by the power of your Spirit, into an exchange of gifts and needs, joys and sorrows, strengths and weakness with your people everywhere; that with them we may have the grace to break through every barrier, to make disciples of all nations and to share the good news of your love with everyone for your glory's sake. Amen*

## Footnotes

- [1] Participation is a key concept in Clay Shirky 'Here Comes Everybody: the power of organising without organisations' (Alan Lane/Penguin, 2008)
- [2] Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom 'The Starfish and the Spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organisations'
- [3] Mark Laing: The changing face of Missions
- [4] See also [www.uscatholicmission.org/files/upd2006w.pdf](http://www.uscatholicmission.org/files/upd2006w.pdf) ; [www.fondazionecrucci.it/e-learning/data/allegati/links/1193/Virtual2\\_complete.pdf](http://www.fondazionecrucci.it/e-learning/data/allegati/links/1193/Virtual2_complete.pdf) ; [www.gbhem.org/ResourceLibrary/GSAddress2006.pdf](http://www.gbhem.org/ResourceLibrary/GSAddress2006.pdf) ; <http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/studpublications.html>
- [5] Archbishops Council (2004) 'Mission Shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context' Church House Publishing
- [6] See for example Susan Hammond 'The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry' Kodak/CSS 1996 Also Charles Elliott (1999) *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Enquiry* IISD
- [7] QBL economic, social, spiritual and environmental

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