



Breakthrough Partners Convictions

When we think about rebuilding broken communities, we must think systemically. Good communities are like a human body where the many parts are interconnected for interdependent service and where there are healthy functioning systems that serve the whole. The systems of Church and Church-based services that offer grace and truth, as well as the systems of government, education, business/economics and family are all essential for the well-being of the citizens of a community. Each community may have different cultural styles, expressions and expertise, but all five systems must be operational for health and goodness to flourish.

God in His providence places the right people and leaders at the right time and at the right place to serve His purposes for advancing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. The leaders are God's gifts and assets for a given community to mobilize, inspire and lead the people to obey everything that God has commanded. Thus, local initiatives must be built upon the spheres of influence of the local leaders called and gifted by God and upon the assets of the community.

It is crucial to identify the local leaders and initiatives inspired by God for the benefit of the local communities. When entering into a community from the outside, there needs to be an assessment of the degree to which these local leaders and initiatives could benefit from outside input. Sometimes the best course of action is to let the local initiative continue to move to its own capacity and rhythm. Nevertheless, there are times that through partnership, the local leaders and initiatives will be helped through timely connections to other people, ideas, tools and resources to advance the movement of God.

Our experience and research tells us the following:

1. Simply sending money has not benefited the movement of God to rebuild broken communities. From a World Bank study related to African development, it was shown that on average \$20 Billion per year was invested in the African continent from all benevolent sources in the period 1980 to 2003. The result was that all the quality of life indicators went down over the 24 years of the study.
2. Simply sending outside teams to launch and lead initiatives for the benefit of the local communities does not produce sustainable and profound change. Emerging research shows that when initiatives are launched and led by outsiders they do not last. Most of these "foreign" launched initiatives and services will crumble or cease to exist within 10 years after the outsiders depart. To go to do for others simply does not produce lasting godly change. In fact the resultant state will likely be worse than before.
3. Simply focusing on conversion and church growth has not produced a change where the glory and splendor of God is displayed in the society. If the number of conversions and the growth of the church were the key to transformation, the continent of Africa would truly be the most good and pleasant land of the planet earth. But alas as the African Christian leader, Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo declared, "For decades...evangelism and missionary activities were directed at getting people saved (that is, spiritually).

Consequently, we have... over 50% Christian population on the average, but [it has] little or no impact on society. In fact, it sounds like an irony that within our own rank and file, such practices as witchcraft, traditional religions, orgies, tribalism and the like are regarded as normal...”

4. It is crucial to address the mindset and attitudes of the local culture for deep and lasting change. All cultures are built on beliefs and assumptions. When these beliefs and assumptions are lies or distortions relative to God’s truth, the community will manifest the corresponding dysfunctional or distorted behavior and structures. For example, if the people of a local culture for the most part believe in fickle gods and spirits, they will not embrace the concept of order and planning. If a culture has an underlying belief that women are inferior to men, there is a likely correlation to the abuse of women, treating them as merely bearers of children and tools for income generating labor. The result is extreme poverty. Consequently, it is necessary to monitor how the local Christian leaders are unmasking these lies and distortions and seeking to teach people to obey the timeless truth of God.
5. The goodness of God comes to communities when the leaders and different members of the Body of Christ are connected in unity. God has commanded that His blessing come to those places where His people are one and transcend their denominational, ethnic, racial, tribal, gender and socio-economic differences. Interconnectedness is essential for transformation. To identify the “ligament” persons and networks of a community and bring them together is necessary to break through the brokenness and complexities of a community.
6. The effectiveness of local leaders to lead a change process for the whole of life is essential for rebuilding broken communities. This effectiveness can be enhanced by coaching that helps them to mature in righteousness and navigate the challenges and complexities of a local culture and the external cultures that influence them.

When local leaders simply embark with good intentions or resolutions, only about 4% actually succeed. It is like a New Years Resolution. The challenge and familiarity of the known and routine ultimately overpowers the resolution. However, if a leader is helped to conceptualize the vision and turn it into a concrete and realistic action plan, the success of the initiative rises to 22%. Nevertheless, there is another service that enhances the effectiveness of local leaders, “coaching.” It is reported that with executive coaching, local leaders increase their productivity, retain their top staff and volunteers and realize their plans for change by an average of 88% as compared to 22% with training alone. MetrixGlobal, based on a leadership development study, reported that executive coaching increases the return on investment some 529%. Neil Rackham in the “Training and Development Journal” wrote, “However excellent your classroom training, without good coaching you are probably wasting 87 cents out of every dollar you spend.”

Our evaluation of success must be measured by the success and personal transformation of the local leaders. Without the personal transformation of the local leaders, there will be no renewal of communities. Coaches must constantly work to develop the national leaders. They must treat the leaders wholistically, advocating living out of reconciled relationships with God, self, others and the created order. In a timely manner, the coach connects leaders

to other people, ideas, tools and resources. This connecting process will keep the local leaders accountable to their purposes without usurping their authority and responsibility. An effective coach should also be mindful that the local initiatives must be built on the maturity and faithfulness of the local leaders. Thus the foundation for community development is built on transformed leaders who in turn will multiply other leaders and mobilize and align local people and their assets so that change will last far beyond the presence of outside influence and resources.

Copyright © 2008 Breakthrough Partners