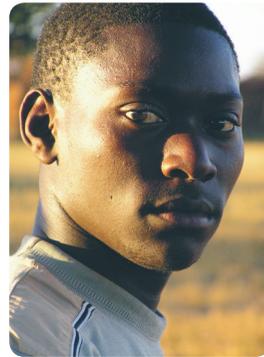


POLICY FOR INTERACT'S INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY



INTERACT

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POLICY FOR INTERACT'S INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY

SUMMARY

This document offers guidelines for the international work of EFK/Interact, aiming to help implementing its vision "*Growing churches bring the whole gospel to the whole person throughout the whole world.*" It clarifies the fundamental principles which are to govern the work (policies), and describes general and all-embracing strategic choices of paths which have an impact on all our work. In cooperation with churches and other partners Interact seeks to plant churches, train leaders and serve in the community.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

Three focused areas of ministry are presented within the first part of this document: *Evangelism and Church Planting, Leader- and Church Development and Social Service and Community Development.* These focus directions make up the core of Interact's international work. Our purpose is to clarify our understanding of these three areas and point out if certain limitations or emphasis is needed, in order to provide an intelligible idea of *what* Interact wants to prioritize in their international work. Pioneer mission walks hand in hand with a purposeful ambition to plant new churches. Interact wants to work with their partners to see an increasing number of "growing churches" sprouting up "throughout the whole world". Such a partnership, particularly among hitherto unreached people groups is formalized in Partnership Agreements. The goal is self-governed churches, faithful to the gospel and relevant to their own culture, able to inspire to continued cross-cultural mission.

Training of leaders is part of the development of "growing churches" and of organizations which well fulfill their given task. To make a leader function well in his/ her role, a good organization is

needed – and vice versa. A true leader is characterized by serving, not dominating, of openness to learn and benefiting from others' experiences. Interact regards theological training for leaders and church development personnel as essential, and endeavors to motivate our partnering churches to also "bring the whole gospel" further afield. If a church functions well it strengthens the community and thus the church contributes to the community development.

Through caring for "the whole person" individuals and groups are helped to a life worth living, their basic needs being met. Interact focuses on the poor and marginalized groups and gives special priority to endeavors which clearly improve their situation and increase the respect for their worth and dignity, i.e. their human rights. Without abandoning the care for individuals in dire need, Interact wants to see a shift towards endeavors aiming at discovering the reason for the poverty, thus bringing about structural and far-reaching changes. The AIDS pandemic is an example of how these various areas overlap with each other. From its holistic view of man and the great commission, Interact wants to be part of a concerted effort against this catastrophe, its causes and consequences.

WHY DO WE WANT TO DO THIS?

This passage focuses on the question why we have chosen to prioritize working with these focus areas and the entirety that they make up together. Of central value is the question about the motives that impels us and how we formulate those motives. The question is answered by reading through the biblical texts, through a historical elucidation of our mission tradition and through a surrounding world analysis. Together, these three parts make up the incentives and the cause for the focus areas presented above.

Ever since the foundation of Interact in 1997, the guiding stars for the international work have been pioneer focus, holistic view, cooperation and reciprocity. With mission we mean the mission that God has given the Church, namely to spread the gospel about God's love, God's salvation and God's Kingdom – that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ - to all people. This mission has its prerequisite and foundation in the inner life and community of the Church, but expresses itself in external testimony through word and action, with other words - through evangelism/church planting and social service. Every Christian is a part of this, but the Church also selects and sends some, who through their skills and personal calling are equipped to carry out certain missions.

Mission work must constantly be evaluated to make sure that it keeps in pace with shifts in the surrounding world and its strategy must be adjusted to the current reality. In a surrounding world analysis this document deals with the political changes in the world, the economic reality, globalization, the growing nationalism and ethnical profiling, poverty, AIDS epidemic, human rights, current trends in world religions and within the evangelical church and mission and the development of the churches in Sweden.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?

This part intends to answer *how* Interact works within their three focus areas, as well as describes the general and all-embracing strategic choices of paths, which are to permeate all activities.

Mission is about people and Interact continues to emphasize the strategic value of having Swedish personnel working in mission. There are multiple reasons for sending out Swedish missionaries. They constitute a valuable resource as a link between Interact and partners and they play an important role in engaging the Swedish churches to maintain their international mission. Besides this there are reasons to continue sending missionaries as an expression of Interact's will to be accountable for their resources in relation to the needs of the global church.

Since Interact is and wants to be a mission-focused movement which sends missionaries, the churches

in mutual cooperation with Interact ought to seek ways to deepen the involvement in mission, so that today's decrease of missionaries can be turned into an increase.

It's also important for Interact to seek cooperation and mutual relations with national leaders. An important component in Interact's strategy is therefore to support education and training of leaders who are strategically located and well qualified for the job and to do this in close cooperation with partners.

Mission is about relations and with *cooperation in mission* we mean the longing for unity and the kind of cooperation which we hope will characterize all we do, as well as more targeted efforts to initiate and develop new structures for cooperation in mission - not least with the "new mission-agents" who we see among our partnering churches and other partners. In some of these relationships the cooperation is quite intensive despite the fact that there is no financial contribution. What is of importance is therefore the relational aspect.

Mission is the responsibility of the whole church. The church provides an environment where personal calling and gifts suitable for mission work can be discovered, confirmed and developed. It is therefore of strategic importance that Interact continues to emphasize the power of initiative within each church and at the same time seeks to strengthen the cooperation in mission between the churches, in order to be accountable for our resources in the best way possible and to do this in good and open dialogue.

The mission work in Sweden is also of great importance. Interact wants to take an active part in developing strategic alliances with the churches we cooperate with and other partners in our different regions, preferentially in the South, in order to reach out to people in Sweden and the rest of Europe. Through a sending (of missionaries) in both directions, we create more reciprocity in our partner relations. It is also of strategic importance that there is an equal relationship between us and partners since equality is an expression of our theology and identity. Furthermore, we can't afford to lose the contribution they give us and the resource they make up.



Foto: ERFs fotobank

Mission is about growing. Therefore, Interact wants to work strategically to see people grow together in relationships. The awareness of the strategic importance of growing together affects Interact as an organization in a way that strengthens the nature of being a learning organization. We need to learn from our brothers and sisters in the South in order to better respond to the challenges we face in our Swedish local environment. It is therefore necessary to develop structures and models which enable us to listen to their voices and let them have an impact in our local churches.

The pioneer spirit in mission work is always necessary in order to see new churches and new activities start, but also in order for us to maintain our identity and character as pioneers. But it's also needed as a response to the new challenges we face in a very changeable world, where the trends described in the surrounding world analysis bring about new challenges for the mission. It is of strategic importance that Interact continues in a pioneer spirit that encourages readiness and capacity for decampment and new thinking when needed.

To serve is also to grow and Interact therefore wants to be a serving organization. Mission is

always serving in its nature if it claims to be a part of God's mission in this world.

Through our three focus areas, Interact tries to obtain a holistic approach in mission work. We believe it is of strategic value to safeguard this approach if we want to grow as an organization. That means we need to obstruct tendencies of schisms that easily arise between evangelism and social service and work purposefully to make sure that the whole mission commission is expressed in Interact's international mission.

Interact will work with determination and commitment and in close cooperation with partners in order to plant churches, train leaders and serve in the community so that the vision *Growing churches bring the whole gospel to the whole person throughout the whole world* can be realized.

INTRODUCTION

In order to realize this vision, Interact and its churches carry out an extensive amount of activities. In this work the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as careful and clear planning is needed. This planning is, among other things, done through defined operational plans and thereto belonging budget. The superior documents which guide this planning is found in the documents “**Evangeliska Frikyrkans tro och självförståelse**” and this document “**Policy for Interact's international ministry**”.

The purpose of this policy document is:

- To clarify the fundamental beliefs and principles which are to direct our international work.
- To state all-embracing strategic paths, which are to impact our international work as a whole.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE DOCUMENT

This policy document expresses Interact's will to plant churches, train leaders and serve in the community. This is done in close cooperation with cooperation-churches¹ and other partners, with whom Interact is joined in a large global network for mission.

Since our focus is reciprocity in all relationships, this must have an impact on the way we think and work. This document is meant to clarify Interact's voice in the continuous dialogue we have with churches and other partners. We believe that both clarity and dialogue are essential in order for this cooperation to develop and mutually enrich us.

Interact consists of independent and mutually dependent churches who stand together in fellowship and mission² and where decisions taken in this community expresses the common will of the churches. The mutual dependence is built on a dynamic interplay between the freedom of the churches and clarity in focus regarding the common work. The democratic decision-making process as well as the dialogue between Interact's head office and pastors/ church leaders regarding the international mission is of greatest importance. The local mission councils also play a key role. The document is an important

reference material in consultation and collaboration between the international work that takes place in the different regions, the programs of Interact (Church and Education program) and Interact Youth organization. Reciprocal impulses and substantial collaboration strengthens the international dimension of Interact's work, which is of importance for all the work that Interact is engaged in.

WHAT IS IT WE WANT TO DO?

This part describes the three focus areas which make up the core of Interact's international work. The purpose is to clarify how we understand the different parts, delimit and emphasize them so that we can present a clear picture of *what* Interact wants to prioritize in our international work. Together, the three focus areas comprise the whole that we pursue in our mission. They should therefore be understood as different parts in the same mission, each with their own clear and distinctive task. The rank order is logical but does not imply any internal prioritizing.

PLANT CHURCHES – EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING

Interact comes from a Baptist tradition with an emphasis on conversion, and the principle of a church of believers. This naturally leads to involvement in evangelism and church planting.

As we understand it, and in the words of the Lausanne Covenant, “*evangelism*” is “to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead....and the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe”.³ Evangelism can therefore be described as a responsibility of the whole church, but also of the individual believer. The Holy Spirit equips individuals for the ministry of evangelism. Many Christians nowadays stress evangelism and the necessity of conversion less than before, but we maintain that it is a necessary part of our mission mandate to invite people of other faiths to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.⁴



Foto: Ruslin Klara

It is a natural result of evangelism that those who come to faith become members of a congregation, if there is one. Pioneering evangelism therefore walks hand in hand with a determined desire to plant new churches. With *church planting* we understand all the different ministries (evangelization, support, advice, teaching, etc.) aiming to plant new local churches, and, which in a church's pioneering phase helps the formation of a leadership and suitable organization of the church.

To plant new churches is an expression of God's work of salvation in the world. It is an expression of the relationship between God and men which was manifested through Jesus Christ and is visible in the people he gathers. The church is both a sign of the coming of God's Kingdom and a tool through which the kingdom can touch people's lives and make an impact on society as a whole.⁵

Church growth and church planting walk hand in hand. This statement is supported by a variety of church movements around the world. Denominations showing an increase in their number of churches also have an increase in the number of members. The opposite is true if the number of churches decreases.

In Interact's international work today evangelism and church planting are done in various ways: through its own personnel in partnership with nationals, through supporting national partners, or through financial support to a partnering church or other partner. Some partners already have a documented strategy for their church planting work, others don't. It's worth mentioning that in places where we exclusively or mainly work with aid and social service this sometimes leads to churches being planted.

The fact that Interact gives church planting priority has resulted in a number of new churches, but we realize our need to learn and develop further from the experiences of many international partners.

It is our firm conviction that church planting is necessary for the gospel to be spread to more people over the world. Both our individual churches and our common work have this understanding. In our international work, therefore, we want to maintain this emphasis as one way of fulfilling our mission mandate so that as many as possible will hear about Jesus Christ. In accordance with the historical tradition of the evangelical mission we want to see “self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating” churches founded. However, independence is has no intrinsic value, but is a prerequisite for real mutuality. Another prerequisite is that all churches and denominations/churches subscribe to a theology and preaching which is faithful to the gospel, culturally relevant, and which encourages cross-cultural mission.

From the point of the mission commission church planting and church development are essential within the whole mission task. Experience, not least from Africa, makes it clear that churches, simply by being faithful to their own identity and calling as churches, constitute an important part of the “civil society.”⁶ To plant and develop churches is therefore a contribution to the necessary work of strengthening “civil society” in the South.⁷ Especially under chaotic circumstances the church is sometimes the only functioning structure and moral strength in the society. In states with totalitarian regimes the churches are often the places where freedom and dialogue still is given space. Even if such regimes therefore try to restrict the churches’ freedom and influence, the church often acts as a leaven, advocating freedom, justice, and human rights in the society at large.

In certain environments it is possible that the foreign missionaries’ opportunities to witness are restricted to personal relationships. In others, evangelization can be the main activity. But the missionaries can always be an important resource

in the process of church planting. They should preferably work in teams of mixed nationalities. The goal is to start a local leadership as soon as possible. The whole process is permeated with the aspiration for cultural relevance.

TRAIN LEADERS – LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Interact and its parent churches have a strong tradition of forming, training and equipping leaders for various roles. It is part of the development of growing churches and of organizations which commendably fulfill their tasks. Leadership and Church Development are therefore a natural continuation of and a complement to evangelism and church planting.

With *Leadership Development* we understand those activities and processes leading individuals and groups to greater knowledge, to personal maturity and ability to lead others into new tasks and responsibilities. In this way they may find the ministry and the role where they, with God’s help and blessing, can use the abilities and gifts God has given them. Leadership development includes discipleship training, theological and other training, supervision by a mentor, and continual competence development.

Although the Church as the Body of Christ is actually an organism, it still needs an organization. With *Church Development* is there understood the deepening and development of the life of the Church, its structures and functions expressed in its fellowship and services, testimony and serving. It leads to growth, both in numbers and maturity. There are also a number of organizations and institutions helping the Church. They are also included in this description. With *Organizational Development* we understand a deepening of identity and self-understanding, as well as an ability to reach set goals and occasionally make necessary adjustments. Granted, for both churches and denominations this is an aspect of what we call Church Development.

It’s natural and important to describe the work of Leadership and Church Development together. Church/Organization and leadership are closely

linked. In order for a leader to function well in his/her role a good organization is needed and vice versa. A good organization adapts to its context and gives space and opportunities for people to use their gifts, knowledge and other resources so that the church's or the organization's objectives will be reached.

In the Bible there are numerous examples of the central role a leader has, but also of the importance of the organization. The Old Testament describes extensively the interplay between leader and people. Moses is a typical example of a leader who, through education and experience, had a long time of preparation for a special task. He is also an example of a leader who forms an organization to be able to do his job.⁷ The New Testament very clearly shows that Jesus regarded it as one of His important tasks to form a leadership for the church that would come into being. Already in the early Christian church an organization developed both for the social work and for the more outwardly directed mission work.⁹

Since its start in 1997 Interact has worked with determination and intensity with leadership, church and organization a development in Sweden. Interact wants to be continuously learning. This means that both in Sweden and in other countries where we are involved there is a conscious awareness of the importance to work on these issues and in doing so to learn from previous experiences and mistakes.

In Sweden we therefore have special programmes for preparing evangelists, youth leaders, pastors and missionaries for their roles (the Educational Programme), and for strengthening the Churches (the Church programme).

The importance of training leaders and developing efficient organizations became apparent in the denominations which resulted from our early mission work in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Questions relating to development of leadership and organization are again coming to the forefront in the partnering churches. These have been independent for a long time, but they need to become more nationalized at all levels: personnel-wise, organizationally, economically, theologically and culturally. This is true not only in the church work, but also in

the educational and medical institutions, and other social establishments.

The Lausanne Covenant presents several challenges to our policy regarding this area of ministry, "God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization." The result of our mission work has to be "churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture". "We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture." The multifaceted work must have "national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership, in terms not of domination but of service". A healthy spiritual leadership coincides with a responsible democratic leadership enjoying confidence from those they are set to lead.¹⁰

It is our deep conviction that efforts to train leaders, develop church life, and increase the capacity and function of the organizations are valuable wherever Interact is involved. If this happens the civil society is strengthened, also the churches' contribution to the community development. Since we cooperate with independent churches and denominations such development work mainly has to support projects initiated by them.

Another important principle in these processes is to support the national churches in their efforts to continually root their church development, theological education and other leadership training in the cultural environment (contextualization). If the church, as it practices the Christian faith in word and deed, is faithful to the gospel and culturally relevant, then the local churches have ample opportunities to grow, in quantity as well as quality.

The global character of mission work today gives way for mutual impulses and an exchange of resources, as Christians on different continents share their special gifts and experiences. Training and leadership development should be marked by contributions from our different cultures and traditions through mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. Church Development should include encouraging our partnering churches to continue in cross-cultural mission.

SERVE THE COMMUNITY – SOCIAL SERVICE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As followers of Christ, missionaries in Interact and its parent denominations have always linked its preaching and teaching ministry with caring for the whole person. They have been channels for the love of God and tools in the kingdom of God. The church concerned with mission cannot turn away from the obvious need of a world where the great majority of people live in poverty, with disease, lack of freedom and in want of education. A commitment to social service, as already pointed out, is part of the mission of the church.¹¹

The word we use in Swedish for “social service” is “diakoni”, from a Greek word “diakonia” that means “service”. Serving others is the attitude of a life imitating Jesus.¹² Care of fellow human beings is the essence of serving. In an earlier document, “*I livets tjänst: diakonins perspektiv*” (formerly Nybygget – Christian Cooperation) we use the concept according to the ecumenical definition of social service adopted 1998. This document states, “Social service (diakonia) is brotherly care, rooted in the love of Christ, expressed in the life of the Church and through showing mercy, respect and solidarity seeking to minister to men/women in their predicament and vulnerability”. International social service is social work in Christian context, having grown from the love and care that was part of mission work. At an early stage it was expressed through various forms of education, and through medical and health care. At a later stage it included other forms of aid to develop both individuals and groups of people, enabling them to live a life with dignity, with their basic needs met.

Community Development broadens this perspective further. As mentioned, the church has a prophetic calling to work for values of the kingdom of God demonstrated in human interaction and relationships here and now. “We therefore, should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society” including the societal structures.¹³ Within our own non-conformist tradition there is an emphasis on bible-based

freedom of faith and worship and the right of all members to have equal terms in the life of the church (priesthood of all believers). From the golden rule¹⁴ we can see these precepts motivating freedom of religion, justice and democratic governance in the society at large. When we talk about community development within this particular objective of Interact’s ministry, we refer to work outside the church and its immediate environment, seeking to influence the community. The aim is to work for a society

- Where people’s fundamental material and social needs are met,
- Where their personal worth and dignity is respected, and where there is gender equality,
- Where there is freedom of religion,
- Where men and women can live in peace and in a spirit of reconciliation, with democratic structure governing their community,
- Where there is prospect of work and self-support.
- Where there is good stewardship of natural and environmental resources.

All of these aspects of social service and community development are intertwined. Agencies and individuals working in this field often have different focus, yet they complement each other. Interact wants to start with the *poor* in society, especially prioritizing work that leads to a marked improvement in living standard, resulting in increased respect of human value and dignity, i.e. upholding human rights. It should be realized that people can be poor and vulnerable in more ways than one. Common to all is that they are being robbed of necessary prospects and resources to meet their basic human needs and so being denied a life of dignity. The term “poor” refers not only to a lack of material and economic resources but also to matters of social, cultural and political nature.

In this way, Interact contributes to building the society “from underneath” by changing the situation for individuals, who are linked together in



communities. These communities in their turn have a changing effect on their living environment. The goal therefore is changed individuals who take part in changing the society.

Interact, together with their partners, are today involved in an extensive ministry in combating poverty. Supported and funded by Swedish Mission Council (SMR)/Sida and other external donors and by Interact's own fund-raising projects Bröd till bröder - Ge för Livet and Barnhjälpen, our resources are focused on education, medical- and healthcare, HIV/AIDS-related work, development of rural communities, micro-loans to small businesses, etc. Through Bröd till Bröder – Ge för livet we are able to channel aid at times of disasters.

Working for freedom of religion and right to education, combating poverty, slavery, hunger and disease, working against unjust and cruel treatment of local communities, and offering assistance to

vulnerable and needy children; this all illustrates Interact's involvement in the work for human rights, even if this term hasn't necessarily been used. Areas of involvement, such as democratic and political rights, aid to political prisoners, fight against torture and arbitrary sentences in sovereign states have often been avoided. Traditionally within our mission, human rights have been carried out on an individual level, mainly through provision of education and medical care. We have tended to avoid areas where we could run the risk of coming into conflict with government and local authorities, and so possibly jeopardize missionaries remaining in the country, or risking that the mission could be regarded as being politicized. During the 21th Century this has changed and Interact has taken several initiatives with clear connection to support human rights for the unprivileged in the society and we want to continue this work.

The basis for this area of ministry is the conviction that all men and women are created in the



image of God, with equal worth and dignity “regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age”.¹⁴ Everybody has intrinsic human value. This is established in God’s salvific will. The reconciliation through Jesus Christ includes every man and woman.

Another important principle is found in the fact that God has always shown special care for the poor and vulnerable. For the sake of justice and love, as Christians, we are called to identify with the poor. God’s plan for humanity included a just society continually leveling out fairly the resources. The prophets of the Old Testament often spoke of judgment for those who oppressed the weak and abused the poor.¹⁶ Jesus shows in word and deed the importance of combating poverty. It has to do with caring for the outcasts in society, healing the sick, freeing the oppressed and working for change in the society.¹⁷ The Christian Church continued the mission of Jesus and helped the poor. The disciples often challenged and exhorted the early church to identify

with and care for the poor among them.¹⁸

We are, using the words of the Lausanne Covenant “shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it”. An immediate response ought to be that “those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelization”.¹⁹

The above applies to more than a change of lifestyle and direct aid to the poor. Our overall vision is to see a clearly improved situation for the poor in the geographical areas where we are actively involved. Interact’s aim is, from its holistic point of view, as far as possible, to always implement plans of reducing poverty. With “combating poverty” we refer to the work that is done both to administer aid in acute situations and to get to the root of the causes of poverty, hopefully resulting in structural, long-term change. The fundamental causes of poverty are found in social structures

and abuse of power that limits people's freedom and prospects in their community. Measures need to be taken in the political, social and economical domain, both in rich and poor countries, so that the rights of the poor are respected by those who have political and financial power.

Behind the structures of a community there are both individuals and groups of people with financial and political power. They have a way of reasoning²⁰ and an egotism which make them not want to see change. This must be brought into the light and openly challenged in a discussion about personal and collective ethics. To work for radical change of local groups and communities, with a clear vision of God's kingdom and his salvation, contains a deeper spiritual dimension. Powers of evil are challenged. Certain fundamental values need to be totally changed. Prayer and intercession are therefore important parts of the work of the church and the mission, in order to see society transformed.

Combating poverty and its causes and consequences is closely related to the work for human rights. The term "*human rights*" refers to the rights and privileges outlined in UN's general statement of human rights, approved December 10, 1948. It is the first international document that acknowledges that all men and women have equal value and which, besides the fundamental individual rights and privileges, outlines a set of civil and political as well as economical, social and cultural rights. In practice, these areas of rights presuppose a democratic state governed by law. Our view is that the principle of everyone's right to live a life in freedom with dignity, is well founded on the biblical view of the value of human beings.

Firstly, from a human right's point of view, we want to focus on freedom of religion and the rights of minority people. Secondly, we want to work for the rights and privileges of children and women. We believe that this will, in the end, contribute to structural changes needed to combat poverty and misery. To promote the right to knowledge through literacy and primary education is in this context very important.

War and violent conflicts aggravate the situation of the poor, and also threatens human rights and development. Our emphasis on combating poverty and upholding human rights may make it necessary to get involved, with measures encouraging peace and reconciliation, in cooperation with our partnering churches, should their countries become subject to war and violence. In this context the message of reconciliation through Christ becomes a driving force.

The AIDS pandemic is one example of how these different areas interrelate. This catastrophic situation is worsened by poverty, and, in the wake of AIDS, poverty and misery increase. The economical, social and cultural rights of people deteriorate and it especially hits the children hard. People of the generations who are reasonably well educated, active and in employment are often worst hit and decimated. This also affects people in the churches. The development of church leaders and organizations need to be strengthened to avoid collapse. From its holistic view of man and in its response to the mission commission, Interact wants to make a concerted effort to face up to this disastrous situation, and to fight its causes and consequences.

CONCLUSION

Interact wants to concentrate our international work within the three focus areas – Plant Churches, Train Leaders and Serve in the Community – all according to the limitations and emphasis stated above and we believe that it is the joint effect of these three that the wholeness of the mission is expressed. In a way, wholeness is not reached until our contributions are put together with all the mission efforts made by the worldwide Church, but the three focus areas can still express the wholeness within Interact.

WHY DO WE WANT TO DO THIS?

This section answers the question *why* we have chosen to prioritize these three focus areas and the wholeness that they make up together. Of central value is the question about the motives that spur us and how we formulate these motives. The question is answered by reading the Scriptures; elucidate our tradition from a historical perspective and making a surrounding world analysis. These three parts together make up the motives and reasons for choosing the focus areas described in the past section.

OUR THEOLOGY

“The Church lives by mission as fire from burning.” This is a quote from the theologian Emil Brunner. It tells us that mission is part of the Church’s and each local congregation’s identity and task. An ancient creed says, “We believe in one only, holy, universal and apostolic Church.” The last of these four characteristics of a true church doesn’t only mean that it originates from the Apostles of Christ (messengers) and carries their faith further afield. It also means that it is “sent” – part of a Divine Sending-out. “As the Father has sent me into the world, so send I you into the world.”²¹ This “sending” (“*missio*” in Latin) is therefore a fundamental Biblical ingredient in the identity and commission of the Church.

God’s love and desire to save has ever since *Creation* and the *Fall* applied to every human being and every people. The Bible shows how God makes this visible in history through one people. When God chose the *people of Israel* and made a covenant with them He designed them to be a “kingdom of priests”, that is, representatives of the peoples before God and God’s representative before the peoples, since “the whole earth is mine”.²²

However, Israel found it hard to live out God’s will in its own life and harder still to do their duty towards strangers coming into Jerusalem to get to know the God they have heard of.

It was through such strangers returning to their home countries that “all the peoples of the earth shall get to know your name and fear you, as your people Israel does”, as Solomon prayed at the inauguration of the temple.²³ However, the prophets preached that a time would come when the Lord’s servant would fulfill the call of the people to be “a light for other people” so that the salvation of God would “reach to the ends of the earth”.²⁴

When the Lord’s servant Jesus Christ, *the Messiah*, came, he concentrated his mission to the people of Israel. Before the message of God’s salvation and God’s kingdom was sent forth to the peoples of the earth, it first had to be proclaimed to those who had received the promise. The universal offer of salvation also presupposed that the foundation was laid through the reconciliatory death of Jesus and his resurrection.²⁵ However, we see in the gospels that Jesus, through his actions, taught his disciples that God’s love isn’t only for Israel. When Jesus showed an open attitude towards non-Jews the Jewish leaders interpreted it (rightfully so) as messianic claims.²⁶

The era of crossing borders came only after *Jesus’ death and resurrection*. That’s when his actions and claims had been endorsed by God Himself.²⁷ If Jesus had not risen we would have been left in our sins, because there is no alternative gospel, nobody else through whom we can be saved.²⁸ The spirit of the world is relativism, yet, Jesus is the only and unique Savior. This is a strong motivation for a mission, which adheres to “God’s radical diagnosis and his equally radical remedy”.²⁹

After the resurrection Jesus takes the place at the right side of God the Father. It is against this background we should understand the words “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” He, who is the Lord of the entire universe, has been given by his Father “to be head over everything for the church”. Through the Church’s mission more and more people are called to confess His dominion.³⁰

This would all begin when the Spirit had given

the disciples power to witness about Jesus “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.³¹ *On the day of Pentecost* the restriction to the Jews only was symbolically cancelled through the proclamation in “other tongues”. In due course the perspective was opened to the mixed people in Samaria and to non-Jewish peoples. A faith based in Judaism was on its way to become a worldwide faith. This movement continues through history and geography, with varying strength as in different eras, yet, with an unrelenting force towards the goal described in Rev. 7, “...a great multitude...from every nation...standing before the throne...”³²

The calling of the Church is a natural outflow of its identity. It is God's people gathered around Jesus Christ, thus sharing His mandate in the world. God is calling a people out from the world and gives it a new life which is not “of the world”. He then sends His people back into the world as His servants and witnesses. *The mission of the Church is what it is called to do* “in the world”, outside its own circle. Its prerequisite is the inner life of the Church, but it consists of its evangelism and social service. Every single member has a part in this, at the same time the Church selects and sends some, who through their gifts and personal calling become the Church's cross-cultural messengers (missionaries). The mandate is realized both in the immediate geographical area as well as in totally different cultures where churches emerge, “deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture”.³³

The highest *purpose* of this mission is to glorify God, and to make the Lord known and adored among the peoples as the One he is.³⁴ This happens as men and women are set free from the power of evil and unite in a fellowship which is a testimony to the kingdom and points ahead to him who is coming.³⁵

The social service is sometimes seen only as a springboard for evangelism. This thought has no support in the Bible. The *model* for all dynamic missions is found in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. There we find a fundamental unity between word and deeds, preaching and acts of

love, teaching and healing. Our ministry as followers of Jesus must therefore be an expression of care and concern for the whole man.³⁶

The saving work of God has as its purpose to set people free from their consequences of their turning away from God and to establish the plan for man's total life which the Bible calls *God's kingdom*. In this life the love for fellow men is inter-woven.³⁷ Our encounter with God's love gives us a longing to share His love through Christ with others, and in serving them with compassion and in justice. Evangelization and social involvement are twins and love is their mother! They are inseparable. At the same time they both have their own intrinsic value as an expression of God's love through us.

A Church active in mission can therefore not disregard the real need in a world where the great majority live in poverty, ill health, ignorance and lack of freedom. Once it is evident what reasons there are behind these, Christian love cannot let it suffice to only meet the urgent needs. We are called to imitate Christ and in the power of His atonement “destroy the devils work”, both when it comes to individual lives as well as the “pretensions” and structures which cause rifts and broken relations between people.³⁸

If God's kingdom in its future fullness is going to be characterized by, for example, human dignity and fellowship, justice and peace, then it is our calling to testify to this already now. We need to make it visible as far as possible in the midst of our limitations and in an evil world. This is the principle expressed by Paul in the letter to the Romans, where he exhorts the Christians living in that era, to live honorable lives, “as in the daytime”. This means that here and now we should seek to live as if God's kingdom in its fullness was here already.³⁹

Jesus stressed the importance of unity for the sake of the testimony to the outside world.⁴⁰ Cooperation and partnership were important aspects also in the ministry of Paul. The church in Philippi is the best example of partnership in the apostle's mission work. He never stopped stressing to the

churches that they should continually make advances in their mission work.

In the light of these Biblical perspectives we summarize our understanding of the word "mission".

- With *mission* we refer to the calling and the task God has given the Christian Church and the local community to manifest and proclaim the Good News about the Kingdom of God that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, throughout the whole world and to become a testimony that can be seen and heard among all the nations.
- This mission has its prerequisite and foundation in the *inner life and fellowship of the church*. The attractiveness of the church therefore has a missional dimension.
- The mission of the Church is made up by its testimony through word and deed about God's love, God's salvation and God's kingdom, with other words by *evangelism/church planting and ministry/social service*.
- The mission is shared by all Christians, but the local church selects individuals who are commissioned and sent out for certain tasks, for which they are personally equipped and called.

OUR HISTORY

Interact's "founding fathers", Helgelseförbundet (HF), Fribaptistförbundet (FB) and Örebro-missionen (ÖM), all having started at the end of the 19th century, were movements with a clear focus on foreign mission and evangelism. As time passed, the "church-related movement", where the local congregations came to take more and more responsibility for intercession and financial support for "their own" missionaries became stronger.

From the middle of the 20th century the decolonization and the mission theological development made way for independent partnering churches abroad. The "parent denominations" were greatly affected by the Congress for World Evangelization in Lausanne 1974 and the Lausanne Covenant

was in due course accepted by them as a blueprint for their international work. The theme from Lausanne, "The whole gospel to the whole person throughout the whole world", captures in a few words how all the parent denominations viewed the relation between church-directed and social mission work. That holistic view coupled with the possibility of receiving funds from Sida (Swedish International Development Agency) for social aid work increased the international social output within the parent denominations.

The new denomination Nybygget – Kristen samverkan, was formed 1997, and 2002 it took the name Evangeliska Frikyrkan (EFK). At its first Annual Meeting, the ideological basis for Interact's international work was expressed as follows:

"Interact consists of churches which cooperate in order to extend the kingdom of God. Mission is the responsibility of the whole church. The churches need to regularly teach about mission from a Biblical perspective. The churches need to be an environment where gifts for mission service are discovered and can be developed.

Interact stresses the importance of a direct relation between the home church and the mission worker in intercession, support and personal care.

Interact coordinates mission endeavors, builds up competence, develops international contacts and employs missionaries etc.

The aim of Interact's international work can be described as follows: Interact wants to be a movement which helps the churches to fulfill the mission task to reach all people by motivating, equipping and supporting Christians of all ages. The goal is to preach Christ to all peoples. Therefore Interact wants to be a pioneer missionary movement prioritizing un-reached people groups in the twofold commission: Evangelism and social care.

Interact is to have fixed and concrete objectives."

During the process leading to the formation of Interact, and during the first active years some basic principles were formulated. These are to mark the planning and execution of the international work:





Foto: Pernilla Ardeby

- Pioneering
- Holistic view
- Cooperation/partnering
- Mutuality

“*Pioneering*” stands for that the work is aimed at planting new churches or starting new activities but also preparedness to go to new areas or new people groups. It could also mean preparedness to leave places, areas and activities where the needs and the responsibility of the national church no longer warrant outside help.

The “*holistic view*” assumes that God is “the creator of all men”, that it is “God’s concern that justice and reconciliation should rule in every human society” and therefore “evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty”.⁴¹ The holistic view embraces care for all of creation, both the human beings and the environment, as well as proclamation of the gospel and practical contributions in culturally relevant ways.

The “*desire for cooperation*” has to be manifest, since “our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation”⁴², but also because we need to utilize resources in a responsible way. Cooperation should be sought

wherever it is practically and doctrinally possible, especially in connection with new mission ventures. Taken as a whole, this will most often lead to a more efficient administration of personnel and financial resources.

Mission is no longer a one-way enterprise – from the West to the other parts of the world. Mission to and from six continents opens the way for a *global and mutual exchange of resources*. This is a challenge. We need openness to see and acknowledge each other’s gifts, resources and experience. It also means that we see our own limitations and needs, so that we are challenged and learn from our cooperating partners as our relationship is deepened.

In connection with the development of Interact a number of different documents have been produced and they are now summed up in the document *EFK: Tro- och självförståelsedokument*.⁴³ This history has influenced us strongly and contributed to the fact that Interact still is a mission- and church movement today. This is well expressed in Interact’s vision: “*Growing churches bring the whole gospel to the whole person throughout the whole world*”.

OUR SURROUNDING WORLD ANALYSIS

We live and work in a complex world. The fast development of the global community affects us on all levels. A mission organization therefore needs to continually evaluate its work, keeping in step with the changes and adjusting its strategy to the actual situation. It is therefore of essential value that a local and specific surrounding world analysis is made continually. It has to be an analysis which takes into consideration the actual context that characterizes each given situation in the areas where we work. This is a continuous work that takes place in the different regions. The following analysis is a more all-embracing analysis, describing the most dominant trends which have characterized our world for a long time and which will probably continue to dominate the development for many years to come.

The political changes in the world are prominent. The end of the cold war between East and West and the decomposition of totalitarian regimes provide a new geographical map with obvious consequences for the countries in the South. Some of these regimes have only changed their ideological insignia, but more and more countries, for example in Africa, have established a democratic form of government. Instead of the previous mutual antagonism the common enemy of East and West today is terrorism, although the ideas of what terrorism is differ. Old sources of conflict, for example in the Middle East, take on new dimensions from the fact that the USA is the only real super power in today's world. America's politics therefore makes it a target for extreme Islamic groups.

The political alliances follow more and more economical interests and rest less and less on ideological foundations. The European Union theoretically works as a counter balance to NAFTA, the North-American economical alliance. In reality it rather has the role of strengthening the political weight of the West in the world. China is today a powerful agent in the global economy, especially on the African continent, and there are tendencies of neo-colonization, where the dominant position of USA is challenged. It is difficult to predict how this polarization will develop in the future. Today, the so

called *bric-countries*⁴⁴ make up a stronger and stronger political force because of its vigorous economical development.

Closely linked to the political sector is *the economical sector*. The strategic alliances that are formed aggravate more and more the situation for the poor countries. Patents for medicines and crops, protective duties and other laws against import from the South give advantages to the West's industry and production. At the same time the poor nations are isolated in their struggle to enter the world market. Even if there are positive examples of a growing middle-class, where more and more people experience better living conditions, it is still a fact that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. This is made worse by the so called "debt crisis". The same pattern is emerging in most of the countries in the South, where the gaps become bigger between a privileged minority and a majority living in misery. Troublesome bureaucracy and lack of democratic stability often counteract a positive development. Furthermore, corruption and misuse of power often lead to crime and revolutionary initiatives. Today there is an increasing political will to deregulate the world economy on behalf of the poor countries. It is rather uncertain however to what extension this will promote the development of these countries in reality, since their domestic markets are exposed to competition by the multinational large-scale enterprises.

The world economy is a strong force behind the so called "*globalization*". Industrialization and urbanization have led to more than 50% of the world's population now living in cities, where the social problems mushroom. At the same time a budding world culture is taking shape. The communication society bridges geographical and time-consuming barriers. The IT society grows day by day and more and more people have access to telephone, e-mail and the Internet. The fast means of transport and communication channels create new possibilities for information and personal contact. Flexibility, quick decisions and immediate response are trademarks of the generation which is brought up in today's "global village", particularly in our growing metropolises. At the same time a great part of the world's population still lives in the shadow of the

IT world, and only get the negative effects of the globalization. Multinational companies rob the poor peasants and small business owners of their source of income. The globalized youth culture creates huge gaps between generations. The new liberal forces stimulate open competition, aggravate the marginalization and increase the number of disadvantaged people.

Today over a billion people live in extreme poverty, that is less than a dollar a day. More than 800 million people go to bed hungry each night. Women and children are the ones who are most affected by poverty, the women constitute 70% of the extremely poor. To eradicate poverty is one of the biggest challenges of our time. The global production has trebled in fifty years, but the poverty has not been reduced with the same pace. Every day, 30 000 children die from causes related to poverty, causes which could have been attended to. It can be things like lack of food or clean water. It can also be lack of penicillin or lack of simple mosquito nets to keep malaria mosquitoes away. Half a million women die every year from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth.

The increasing gap between rich and poor is not only a material one – it's also a division between those who have the possibility of attaining knowledge and those who might never have read a book or seen a computer. It's also a matter of power and whether one has freedom and opportunity to express oneself.

The leaders of the world have agreed on the Millennium Development Goals, based on the Millennium Declaration. This means among other things a wish to eradicate extreme poverty and by the year of 2015 have halved the number of people living under such circumstances. But with the present pace most of the goals will not be achieved by a number of countries. Some countries have already reached certain goals; other countries develop very slow or even regress. At the same time there are enough resources and knowledge in order to achieve the goals. What is missing is the political will.⁴⁵

Poverty and misery increase dramatically in the traces of HIV/AIDS. At the same time the development of AIDS is aggravated because of poverty. The epi-

demic has built up since the eighties and has developed into the most far-reaching disaster in history and has in many countries lead to national devastation. This is especially true for the African countries south of Sahara. In this area we find two-thirds of the 65 million HIV-infected people in the world and in certain countries more than 30-40% of the adults are carriers of the HIV-virus. Generations of educated people or people fit for work are wiped out. 15 million children are orphans and every year more than 500 000 new children, under the age of 15, are infected with HIV. In Asia and in many parts of Eastern Europe, the AIDS-epidemic spreads faster and faster and becomes a serious threat to the development of the countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also observed the severe threat that diseases such as malaria and also alcohol and drug abuse pose to development.⁴⁶

The environmental and climate issues have for a long time been more and more important for the global development and have since the middle of this decade been given a lot of attention by media. This has forced political discussions to take place and decisions to be made. Today there is a general agreement that climate- and environmental issues must be taken seriously in order to turn the negative development that will lead to the greenhouse effect. It's also a fact that negative climatic influence often is a result of the over-consumption of the rich countries but it's the poor and vulnerable that are worst affected.

Many of the phenomenons mentioned above affect the situation of both individuals and groups in a negative way. In addition to this human rights are violated in a number of countries. It's not only the political freedom and political rights that are violated. People are denied a dignified life in many different ways. Women and children are especially vulnerable (child labor, trafficking, oppression of women). In many parts of Northern Africa, the Middle East and in Asia, many people are affected by the lack of respect for religious freedom, either from the State itself or from the majority population in the area. Increasing nationalism and the forming of ethnical belonging can be seen both as a result of that it is no longer oppressed in the interest of a certain ideology, e. g. as it was in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe and as a reaction



Foto: Andreas Dageras

against the globalization. The trend is enhanced in the areas where the negative aspects of globalization are particularly distinct. In the 20th century, nationalism was mainly strife for independence from colonial power, but has now become a part of the battle against globalization. If the forming of the national or ethnic identity is connected with political, financial or religious interests, it can contribute to antagonism between countries and people and aggravate peaceful solutions. The large number of refugees around the world is a result from this, as is the xenophobia, which we often see in the West.

As far as World Religions are concerned, there are contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the modern society has furthered secularization and a view of religion as a subjective value belonging to the private sphere of life. On the other hand, there are many signs of the renaissance of religions, and the political dimensions of religion are given more and more attention. Extensive migrations and stream of refugees have in many countries created a multi-religious society. This has caused tensions and conflicts between different religious groups but has also lead to dialogue and cooperation where there are common interests. Such an encounter of religions with its complicated set of

problems is unavoidable, not only in the countries dominated by non-Christian religions, but also in the previous "Christian" countries. Moreover, not only Christianity is missionary in its nature. Islam is spreading rapidly in Europe, Africa and Asia, not only through immigration but also through direct mission work. Buddhism and Hinduism are also spreading well beyond their core areas.

The Evangelical Church has grown extensively in the South. Around 1960 75% of the evangelical Christians were in the West (Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand), and 25% in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Around year 2000 the situation was the opposite, circa 70% of Evangelical Christians could now be found in the previously receiving mission countries. Pentecostal and other Charismatic churches tend to have the fastest growth rate. Theologically different trends and ideologies infringe upon each other, even within churches and movements which are mainly evangelical. Different interpretation of the Bible can sometimes result in different standpoints regarding certain charismatic phenomena, prosperity theology, women's right to ordination, sexual/moral issues etc.⁴⁷ In contrast to the development in the South, there is a noticeable secularization in Europe where the Church is retrograding and

more and more losing its influence. This is true for Sweden as well. This negative trend in Europe can also be seen in the decreasing basis for mission and the fact that Europe more and more appears as a continent in need of mission.

These aspects of the development of today's world are bound to affect *Christian Mission work*. This will be addressed in this document. Some tendencies within evangelical mission circles will also be noticed. There is, side by side, the holistic view advocated by the Lausanne Covenant, and a goal-oriented, pragmatic mission. The tension between reflection and action has both contributed to a creative development within the world of evangelical missions and to difficulties in understanding and cooperation. The "10/40 window" and "unreached peoples" are terms trying to summarize the huge challenges in our time.⁴⁸ These terms point to the evangelization aspect of the task of the Christian Church. At the same time it is stressed that the majority of the world's poor people are found within the 10/40 area. This geographical and ethnic focus has influenced the planning of many mission organizations. Thus there has been a marked change of emphasis from the traditional mission fields to the Muslim world and Asia.

The increasing number of missionaries from the South is a result of the rapid church growth in Asia, Africa and Latin America and of the increasing awareness of the Church's responsibility for world evangelization. More than half of the evangelical missionaries of the world today come from the earlier receiving mission countries. Countries such as South Korea, India, Singapore, Nigeria, Ghana, Brazil and Costa Rica surpass most of the traditionally sending countries in the West when it comes to number of missionaries who in their work have crossed ethnic and cultural borders within and outside their own nation.

Apart from all these factors affecting international mission work and the situation in our partnering churches, Interact's prospects for advancing in mission are also affected by *the development of its churches in Sweden*. We can call attention to the fact that in times of national recession this affects the economical situation of the churches in a negative

way, but in times of national economic growth, there is no equivalent increase in the economy within the churches. This is a rather alarming situation when it comes to planning Interact's future international mission. This, in combination with other current trends, means that the support from churches for different projects and activities can not be taken for granted, even if it's been collectively agreed on. Many of the churches in rural areas, which traditionally have been very loyal in their mission support, are often bound to shut down their ministry or to cooperate with other local churches in order to survive. This leads to new ecumenical churches with different denominational loyalties within the same church, which makes it difficult to continue to support Interact's mission in the same way as before. In the cities we see new churches being planted, but it often takes a long time before they have found structures and commitment for the joint work of Interact – both in Sweden and in international mission.

In contrast to the development described above there is also a *strong concern for international matters among young people in the church*. This is manifested in an increasing interest in issues regarding justice, globalization, and a great willingness to take part in short term contributions and internationalization. This involvement as well as a clear understanding of the importance of influencing opinions and attitudes becomes instrumental when it comes to bringing missional questions to the agenda.

CONCLUSION

This section intended to answer the question why we should prioritize these three areas of ministry – plant churches, train leaders and serve in the society. The motives mentioned are all to be found in our theology, our history and our understanding of the surrounding world and these three together call us in the direction we've chosen for our international ministry.

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO THIS?

This section tries to answer the question *how* Interact works within the three areas of ministry and the general and over-all strategic choices of paths, which influence the organization as a whole, will be described. Strategic questions of more specific or time-bound nature will be described in other steering documents and operational plans. This document focuses on the long-term, strategic perspectives, which permeate the whole organization.

MISSION IS ABOUT PEOPLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING SWEDISH PERSONNEL

It is of strategic importance that Interact equips and sends missionaries. The Great Commission is realized through people because God uses people to communicate the Gospel. The missionaries therefore become an important resource for Interact both as an interface between Interact and partners and as a link to maintain the interest and support from churches in Sweden for our joint mission task. But the reasons for sending missionaries must not only be understood from Interact's perspectives. There are also good reasons for sending missionaries as an expression of Interact's wish to administer our resources in relation to the needs of the global church. Interact has a responsibility to provide our resources because the church is one body in Christ and all the members are to depend on and support each other. Realizing all this, Interact needs to continue to equip and send missionaries, also in the future.

The term missionary refers to someone who has been commissioned and sent to do certain work or be involved in certain ministry, for which they are personally equipped and called. The missionary becomes a strategic resource when he/she works within the three focus areas. Within all three areas it is of importance that the missionary trains, teaches and develops potential leaders and contributes to the growth of sustainable churches and local organizations. This means missionaries are needed for different roles and functions and in

various numbers depending on the situation at hand. A pioneer situation and a long-standing partnership are very different from each other but in both cases there can be good reasons for placing Swedish personnel. Interact's missionaries should cooperate with national leaders and colleagues and be willing to submit to the structures within the partner church or partner organization. The willingness to share people's lives and experiences gives credibility to the contribution of the missionary. A multicultural team, with people from different nations and different cultural background that work together, also bears testimony of unity and the universality of the church.

Since Interact wants to be a mission-minded movement which sends missionaries, the churches in cooperation with Interact must seek to find ways to deepen the interest for mission, so that the decrease of missionaries can be turned into an increase. It is therefore of strategic importance to create opportunities for young people where they can have their own experiences of mission and of the churches in the South. It is also strategically important to find good structures both for short term missions where people with specific competence can contribute to the mission work and to create networks between the church in the South and people working internationally in relation to Interact.

Therefore, Interact wants to continue to emphasize the importance of having Swedish personnel in mission.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL LEADERS

Within our partnering churches and partner organizations there are many well qualified and experienced persons, who give valuable contributions to all three areas of ministry. Through these people, who are deeply rooted in their social and cultural environment, the missionaries, Interact, and Swedish mission in general are able to get a share of experiences and knowledge that we are lacking. At the same time we are able to provide our resources. The cooperation between missionaries and national leaders are crucial when it comes to developing the work. The experience

tells us that we *reach further together*.

It's mainly two kinds of national leaders that Interact relates to. One is *national key persons*. They are leaders in churches or organizations with a *strategic* function in the cooperation with Interact and other agents. They are also quite often leaders with national and international influence. Interact seeks to support this kind of leaders at an early stage in order to help their development. The other group consists of *national pioneer workers*, who plant churches and start church movements. Within the frames of the focus area *Plant churches – Evangelism and Church planting* it is of strategic importance to support this type of leaders, especially the ones who plant churches in a way that it produces church movements.

With this said, we can see that it's of great value that Interact seeks cooperation and mutual relations with national leaders. An important part of Interact's strategy is to support education and training for leaders who are strategically placed and well qualified for the work and to do this in close cooperation with partnering churches. This kind of training is preferably done in within the region itself, if that is possible.

MISSION IS ABOUT RELATIONS

COOPERATION IN MISSION

Jesus teaches the importance of unity for the sake of the outward testimony. The biblical foundation in general regarding cooperation in mission⁴⁹ also speaks about unity. From this we can deduce that unity and working together is in itself of value and should be encouraged, even if it only results in fellowship and a sense of belonging together. The dynamic and positive effect that comes from unity, cooperation and partnership is an important platform for mission, for stewardship, and, of necessity, for the completion of world evangelization.⁵⁰ It is therefore strategically important for Interact to participate and contribute to the cooperation in mission.

With *cooperation in mission* we mean both the striving for unity and cooperation, which is something that ought to characterize all our activities, but also more specific activities aimed to initiate and develop new

forms for cooperation in mission, especially with the new participants among partners and partnering churches.

“The dominant role of Western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up, from the younger churches, a great new resource in world evangelization and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ.”⁵¹ According to available statistics, already more than half of the number of active missionaries in the world comes from the South. Being aware of the extent of the Great Commission, we in Interact would want to be part of motivating our partners to work together. This means active participation within the worldwide missions' movement through an ever increasing cooperation. Some of our partner churches are already involved in the sending of missionaries both within and outside of their own cultural and national borders.

DEVELOPING OUR COOPERATION

This emphasis on cooperation in mission has for Interact's part resulted in a broad cross-denominational cooperation with a significant number of partners. These relations are, as far as possible, formalized in cooperation agreements according to the conditions given in each relationship. It is important to clarify the conditions and take into account all the aspects that come with categorizing a relation of cooperation. It has to do with the different kinds of partners that we have (church/congregation, ecumenical organization, mission organization and NGO) and the intensity of the relationship (Interact has developed a scale for measuring this). In some of the relationships there is high intensity although no financial support is given from Interact. The crucial thing therefore is the relational aspect of the partnership. This is important to remember, especially when Interact confer with partners regarding the placement of Swedish missionaries. Here, Interact stresses the value of letting partners have good control and participation in issues concerning the purpose and tasks of the missionary.

The development of cooperation relations are, as can be seen above, of strategic importance and the future formation of these needs are to be evaluated continually. Sometimes it can be mo-

tivated to phase out existing partnerships. From a general point of view, Interact wants to be an active partner in exchanging experiences both within and outside the movement.

COOPERATION IN SWEDEN

The cooperation aspect of the mission commandment is just as important in Sweden as it is abroad. The local church provides an environment where personal calling and gifts for mission work can be discovered, confirmed and developed. The churches within Interact need to be supported in a way that help them discover and equip these people. In that way a foundation can be laid for a continuous close relationship between the sending churches and the missionaries, both regarding intercession, financial support and personal care. Interact's head office facilitates the coordination of the mission activities, building of competence, development of international relations and educating and employing missionaries. It is therefore of strategic importance that Interact continues to emphasize the power of initiative that comes from local churches and at the same time strengthens the cooperation of churches in mission and in a good and open dialogue seeks to administer our resources in the best way possible.

The cooperation in mission which takes place within Interact is not only restricted to coordination, preparation and sending of missionaries. It also provides a missiological and theological reflection about the Great Commission as an expression of the calling of the church. It is strategically important that Interact's international work is founded on a theology that corresponds to current missiological issues and that is firmly established in Interact's churches through dialogue and mutual theological reflection. The Mission Institute is an important player in this process.

The second strategic aspect of cooperation in Sweden has to do with *mission taking place in Sweden*. An example of mission in Sweden is when churches in Sweden seek to reach new target groups or want to plant new churches. In this work we need input from others and their help and cooperation in this task. This already takes place, both with partners from North and South. The initiatives coming from South can from a historical perspective be described

as "mission in return". This kind of cooperation creates an increasing mutuality in world mission as a whole. Interact wants to take an active part in order to develop strategic alliances with partnering churches or other partners in our regions, preferably the South, for mission efforts in Sweden and Europe. Through a sending in both directions there is a higher degree of mutuality in our relationships. The people who are sent from our partners for this task should have the same kind of preparation for cross-cultural work as our missionaries have. To sum up – Interact wants to continue with strategic cooperation for our mission in Sweden.

EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS

When we say that mission is about relations it's important to emphasize that this means a commitment to act on equal basis with partnering churches and other partners. Equality is also an absolute value in relations between missionaries and nationals and between women and men. This means that we treat each other as equals irrespective of status, gender, roles and function. This equality reposes on the theological conviction that we are equal before God even if we are entrusted with different tasks in different situations.

This also means that marginalized groups are invited to participate and that the participation takes place on equal premises. It is important that we confirm the equal value of all humans and the power of the gospel to restore relations and build a new community. We find our model in the gospels and in other New Testament texts. There are many groups in the society which are marginalized and excluded from both fellowship and a chance to influence their own situation. Groups that are particularly vulnerable are poor people, women and children, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. We mean to say that these groups ought to be given the space to participate and contribute on the same terms as everyone else, and to do so according to their own prerequisites and capacities. This is something that should be self-evident but it needs to have an impact on all the international work that we do.

It is of strategic importance that we work in equal relations since it expresses our theology and identity. Besides, we can't afford to lose the contribution



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and the resources that come from the groups just mentioned. We will therefore work together in equal relations with all our partners toward common goals.

MISSION IS ABOUT GROWING...

BY TRAINING LEADERS

Because mission is about people and relations it is rarely or never a static phenomenon. It is rather characterized by transformation and progression or regression. Interact therefore seeks to work strategically in a way that people grow together in relations. We believe this is achieved through training and discipleship. It takes place through the activities clearly found in the focus area *Training leaders – Leadership and Church Development* but it also has to do with an overall approach in everything we do.

There should always be a perspective of training in all we do since we believe people are the most important players when it comes to transforming circumstances. People are of great value and worth to be trained because of their own inherent value, but besides this, all real change is depending on persons who have been trained for their missions. We believe that this is most effectively done through discipleship training in every sense of the word. We want to train the kind of people who, in their turn,

become the real agents of transformation – wherever they are placed. If we take a situation of corruption for example, we believe that corruption is most effectively controlled when people with good values hold important posts in the organizations. In each area where we want to see change and development people who are trained for their task are needed.

Therefore leader training is a strategically important part of our work. With this reasoning our missionaries become “leaders who train leaders”. This is a guiding principle when recruiting and placing new missionaries.

BY BEING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

The knowledge that it's strategically important to grow together impacts Interact as an organization in a way that strengthens our nature as a learning organization. We want to grow together as an organization as well and improve our capacity and our methods in our international work. We find that it is of great importance to listen, learn and evaluate in order for us to learn and develop together with our partners.

This also means that Interact in Sweden needs to be enriched by contributions and input from the South.

We need to learn from our brothers and sisters in the South so that we better can correspond to the challenges we face in our Swedish environment. We therefore need to develop structures and models that allow us to listen to these voices from the South and allow them to have an impact on our churches here. This means we must be open to the initiatives coming from South, which seen from a historical perspective is a kind of “mission in return”.

The growing and learning mentioned above is multi-dimensional and includes everything we do and are. Most deepest it is about growing in maturity and in imitation of Jesus Christ such as we get to know him in the Bible. Interact's international work is therefore in its deepest sense an expression of or calling to follow Jesus Christ and get to know him even more in the encounter with other people and the mutual learning that comes with that.

BY BEING A PIONEER MOVEMENT

The pioneer focus, which has characterized Interact's mother organizations and which has been a fundamental value since the start of Interact, is also an important strategic perspective for our international work. The fact that we live in a world with constant change, demands a readiness to break up and think anew when so is needed.

The pioneer approach is also needed for us as a movement in order to maintain our identity and profile as a pioneer mission. This is of strategic importance – not as a purpose on its own – but in order to preserve the motivation, joy and creativity in the mission commandment. Knowing that our movement historically encouraged the pioneer spirit make us realize that we should continue to cherish this approach and allow that to be one of our contributions to the global mission ecumenicalism.

BY BEING A SERVING ORGANIZATION

To serve is to grow and Interact therefore wants to be a serving organization. Everything we do is ultimately an expression of our willingness to serve the God we believe in and the people we meet. Jesus Christ is our role model and we want to serve in the same way as he did when “he made himself nothing by taking the likeness of a servant”. We are sent by

Jesus to serve in the same way as he was sent by the Father to do. Therefore, mission should always be serving in its nature if it claims to be a part of God's mission in the world. This primary perspective must have an impact in all we do – our three focus areas should be characterized by a serving attitude. In all cooperation and in all our relations we need to put this serving perspective first.

To have a serving perspective also means that we work long-term towards sustainable development. Serving and not efficiency must be our guiding-star and this is strategically important if we want to achieve sustainable results. We will continue to serve faithfully together with our partners until we and they are ready to move on after a completed mission.

BY SAFEGUARDING THE HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN MISSION

Interact aims to have a holistic perspective in our mission work through our three focus areas. We believe it is strategically important to safeguard this holistic approach in order to grow as a movement. We need to counteract the tendencies to separate evangelism and social ministry and deliberately work towards seeing the whole mission commandment manifested in Interact's international work. Our biblical foundation expresses how evangelism and social ministry belong together and can mutually support each other yet be legitimate on their own. But it is through the totality that we express the Kingdom of God and grow as an organization. Interact therefore needs to protect this holistic view and allow it to characterize our work.

Holism in our mission is clearly expressed already in Interact's basic intentions (our four guiding principles) and it's essential that it also characterizes us in the future.

CONCLUSION

This section has highlighted three over-arching strategic choices of paths which are to permeate Interact's international work; the emphasis on people, relations and to grow together. These over-arching choices of paths provide the background for the more specific and more contextualized strategies that are outlined in steering documents.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹The definition cooperation-churches refer to churches and communions in other parts of the world, with whom Interact has an established relation of cooperation, irrespective of whether they emerged as a result of
- ²EFKs Tro- och självförståelsedokument (Belief and Self-understanding of Interact), s 14
- ³See Lausanne Covenant, Article 4
- ⁴Matt. 16:16-19; Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 1:3-22; 1 Thess. 1:2-10; 1 Pet 2:4-10
- ⁵The expression "the civil society" means non-governmental groups, churches, organizations, and institutions which people join on a voluntary basis.
- ⁶The expression "the South" is more and more often used as a generic term for the countries which entirely or partially stand outside of the strong global economy that mainly consists of the old industrial countries and a few other, mainly Asian and Latin American, countries. The countries with strong economy are usually referred to as "the North". The generic terms "the South" and "the North" should therefore not necessarily be seen as geographical terms but rather terms that state the country's relationship to the global economy.
- ⁷Exodus 3; Exodus 18; Deut. 31:1-8
- ⁸Luke 6:12-16; Matt. 16:16-19; 28:16-20; John 20:20-23; Acts 1:8; 6:1-7; Eph. 4:11-13
- ⁹The Lausanne Covenant, article 8,10,11
- ¹⁰See the section "Our Theology"
- ¹¹Matt 20:28
- ¹²Lausanne Covenant, article 5 and the section "Our Theology"
- ¹³Matt. 7:12
- ¹⁴Lausanne Covenant, Article 5. Genesis 1:26-27; 1 John 2:2
- ¹⁵Lev. 19; Lev. 25; Isa 58; Amos 5,8
- ¹⁶Matt 15:29-39; 25:31-46; Luke 4:18-21; 13:32; 18:18-25
- ¹⁷Acts 4:32-37; 6:1-7; 2 Cor 8+9; Gal 2:9-10; Jam 2; 1 John 3:16-17
- ¹⁸The Lausanne Covenant, Article 9
- ¹⁹2 Cor 10:4-5 and the section "Our Theology"
- ²⁰John 17:18, 20:21
- ²¹Exodus 19:5-6
- ²²2 Chron. 6:32-33
- ²³Isa 49:6
- ²⁴Matt. 10:5-7, Joh 12:20-24
- ²⁵Matt. 15:21-16:4.
- ²⁶Acts 17:30-31.
- ²⁷Acts. 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:14-20
- ²⁸Manila manifest, Article 1
- ²⁹Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:20-23
- ³⁰Acts 1:8
- ³¹Rev. 7:9-10
- ³²The Lausanne Covenant, Article 10
- ³³Rom 1:5
- ³⁴Col 1:13; Matt 24:14
- ³⁵Matt 9:35-36
- ³⁶Matt 22:37-39; 1 John 3:17, 4:20-21
- ³⁷1 John 3:8; Acts 26:18
- ³⁸Rom 13:12-13
- ³⁹John 17:23
- ⁴⁰Rom 15:24; Phil 1:3-5, 27; 1 Thess 1:2-10
- ⁴¹Lausanne Covenant, Article 5
- ⁴²Lausanne Covenant, Article 7
- ⁴³This document is available at Interact's webpage, in Swedish.
- ⁴⁴Bric is an English abbreviation for Brazil, Russia, India and China
- ⁴⁵Source: Diakonia – Eradicate poverty now and www.millenniemaalen.se
- ⁴⁶The fact and numbers are taken from UN AIDS EPIDEMIC REPORT 2007
- ⁴⁷See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of the Global Christianity*, 2002
- ⁴⁸The pedagogical term "10/40 window" indicates the area between the 10th and 40th latitude north, i.e. from North Africa in the west to East Asia, where a great concentration of unreached people live. The latter term "unreached peoples", concerns people and people groups which are not evangelized, or where the indigenous church is not yet able to take full responsibility for the continued evangelization of people.
- ⁴⁹See the section "Our Theology".
- ⁵⁰The Lausanne Covenant, Article 7, and the Manila manifest, Article 9, where this is developed further.
- ⁵¹The Lausanne Covenant, Article 8.

“Growing churches bring
the whole gospel to the whole person
throughout the whole world.”



INTERACT