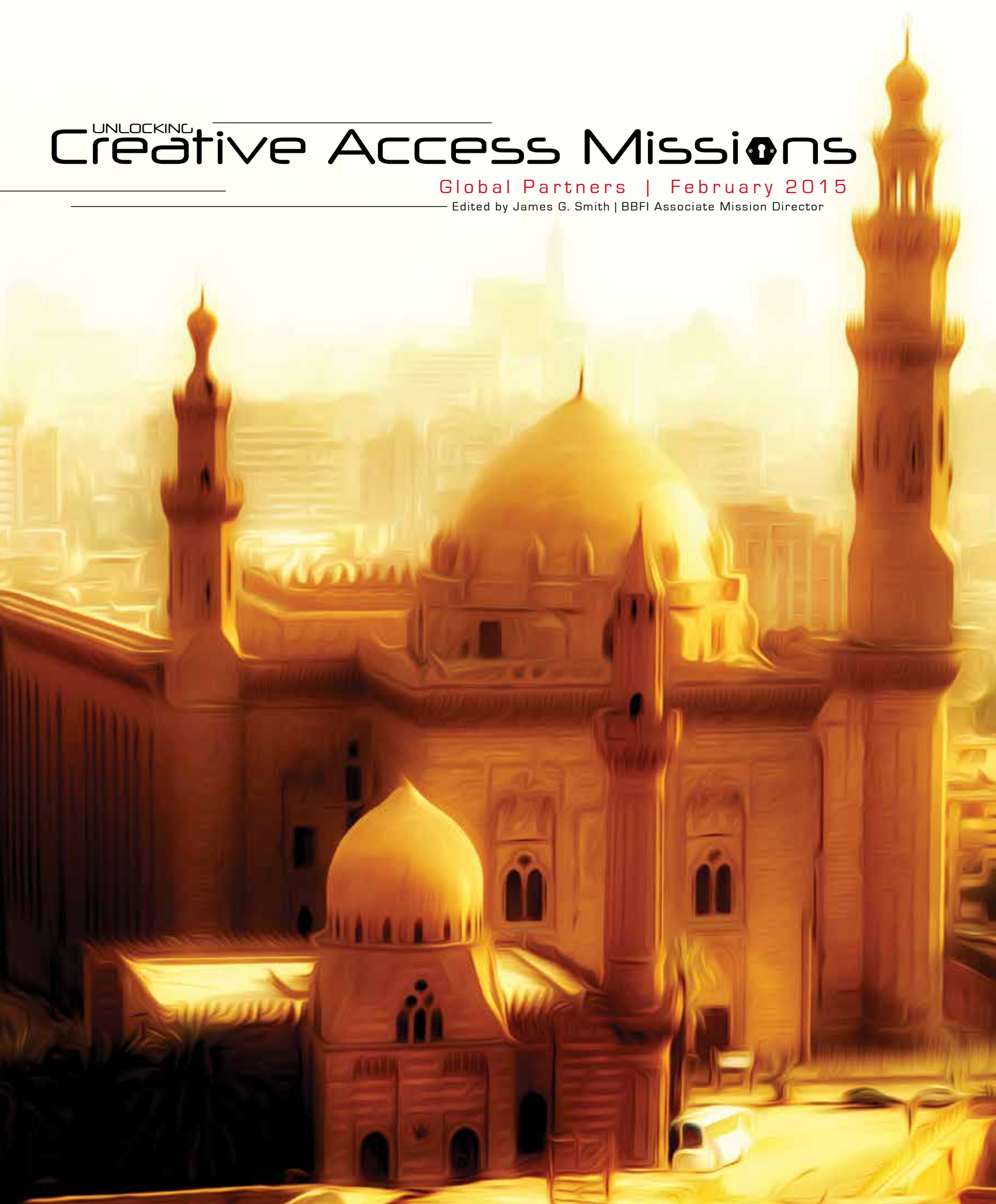


UNLOCKING Creative Access Missions

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Edited by James G. Smith | BBFI Associate Mission Director






This year we celebrate 65 years of missionary endeavors of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International. From the beginning, BBFI churches have been sending workers into the world, often into hostile and difficult places. In this edition of *Global Partners*, we want to explore some of the intricacies of what we call Creative Access Missions — those places where traditional missionary access is not possible.

Our world is becoming increasingly hostile toward the Good News of Jesus Christ and its messengers. In a world of constant turmoil, we want to help BBFI missionaries establish a long-term presence so they can build the relationships necessary to evangelize, make disciples, and establish churches.

The 10/40 window across North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia encompasses a majority of the unreached people in our world today. The BBFI has been actively helping missionaries go to these countries since the Fellowship's beginnings. However, the China of Fred Donnelson's day has long since become an industrial and military giant under Communist leadership — persecuting Christians who endeavor to freely worship within its borders. Similar restrictions and persecutions occur in neighboring countries like North Korea and Mongolia.

Muslim countries throughout the 10/40 window have seen a revolution of extremism and instability since the 1970s. Islamic countries known for having cordial to cold relations with the West, have rapidly become more aggressive and even hostile toward Western influence. That makes them resistant to the infiltration of missionaries and a renewal of the Christian faith and practice. The growth of Islam into Europe and the West presents a changing and challenging environment for the expansion of the Gospel. However, with these challenges, we continue to accept the responsibility of delivering the message of Jesus Christ.

In the September 2014 National BBFI meeting, the mission committee approved policies designed to help our missionaries working in these difficult parts of the world. We identify the countries as Creative Access Nations (CAN). We serve a God who is creative and has given us the ability to be creative and to evaluate, reason, and problem solve. Therefore, each missionary endeavors to enter his or her field through creative means to obtain visas. Some go and teach, others establish legitimate business platforms, and others enter working through localized non-governmental organizations (NGOs). One thing is certain, their purpose for going is still the same — to reach the lost with the Good News of Jesus Christ and see Baptist churches established in those communities. The mission of God the Father, and the directive of His only to go into the entire world with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit remains, the same regardless of how hostile or unwelcoming the world becomes.

Within this *Global Partners*, you will hear from some of the BBFI's missionaries working in Creative Access Nations. We are honored to have men and women of this caliber serving the Lord and the churches of the BBFI. We have purposefully endeavored to keep their specific countries and personal identities hidden. We desire to help, not hinder, the ministries they are doing in their countries. Please accept this information in the form of a prayer request. Pray for these missionaries and the people with whom they are sharing the Good News! 



The same trip that may have taken 19th-century missionaries months, only took 20th-century missionaries weeks, and today can often be made in a matter of days. But, in the 21st-century, accessibility doesn't always translate into access for missionaries, church planters, or religious workers. Before we look at some of the specific challenges and opportunities of mission work in "closed" or limited-access countries, as followers of Christ, we must answer the following questions:

- **Do restrictions and limitations negate the local church's mission?**
- **In light of God's sovereignty, are these countries completely closed?** (*Ephesians 1:11; Romans 11:33; Isaiah 8-9*)
- **Can God be banished when heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool?** (*Isaiah 66:1*)
- **Are all the "closed doors" permanently locked?**
- **Is Christian missions limited by official government sanctions?**
- **Are we to obey men rather than God?**

The answer to these questions lies in the firm convictions of the first apostolic missionaries who said: "... Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard ... We ought to obey God rather than man." (*Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29*).

Similarly, Daniel purposely broke the special law of the Babylonians in order to obey God, even though it meant being thrown to the lions (*Daniel 6*).

When human governments seek to block God's agenda to fulfill the Great Commission, the Christian's prior or greater responsibility is toward God.

FACTORS CREATING NON-ACCESSIBILITY

Countries that deny visas to traditional missionaries are not necessarily always anti-Christian. There are several major factors that contribute to the classification of a Creative Access Nation (CAN).

1) The religious factor

This is the most common reason for the listing of a CAN. No missionaries are allowed in ... no missionary activity is legal.

- This was the case in the former USSR.
- In China, communism abolished both God and religion.
- In recent years, the hostility of Muslims toward Christian missionaries has reached new proportions. Islam's declared war against Christianity keeps most of the Muslim countries of the world non-accessible with traditional missionary passports. Proselytizing of any kind is a criminal offense in countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, etc. Christian minorities in Muslim countries see the emerging political ideology of Islamization in the latter part of the 20th century as a form of oppression and as a threat to the very survival of the church.
- In recent decades, Hinduism in India has acquired a new lease on life and is moving from the defensive to the offensive. Militant Hindus would like all missionaries expelled from India.
- The religious factor may also affect the subsequent factors in varying degrees.

2) The nationalism factor

Nationalism was a great force in less-developed countries during most of the 20th century. Many countries gained independence from Western colonial powers and achieved nationhood after World War II. Now, all foreigners are guests. Foreigners enter, remain, function, and depart only with the permission of that sovereign government. In such nations foreigners have no rights, only privileges.

3) The economic factor.

Many of the less-developed countries have complex economic problems. Many have run-away growth in human population. That leaves them with too many people and too few jobs. The high rate of unemployment pressures governments to not allow expatriates to take jobs away from their own citizens. In some countries, the government is determined to get rid of all expatriates. Some countries have a limited quota for the total number of foreigners in the country regardless of their professions. Other countries are more selective and favor individuals with expertise in certain fields and professions. Such individuals are given work permits beyond the transit or tourist visa allotment.

4) The political factor

Every so often certain countries will face mutual conflicts with each other. If there is a stalemate and no peaceful settlement, it can result in strained or non-diplomatic relations between them for significant periods of time. Foreign citizens of these affected countries often are forced to leave the country. Missionaries, like the rest of the foreigners, are caught in the crossfire of these political conflicts. Therefore, such countries enter the CAN list till the political problems are resolved between those two countries.

5) The war factor

The crisis of war, either internal civil war in a nation or external transnational war, can force a country to be on the CAN list. The instability produced could dictate the evacuation of all existing missionaries and the non-issuance of entry visas to others.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

The above factors of non-accessibility should help us as we determine the deployment of missionary personnel and the nature and methods in ministry to be undertaken within a nation or cultural group. With those things



in mind, let's consider some aspects of the work that can be done.

1) Emphasize the primacy of local churches

The local New Testament church is more than a match for the powers that oppose it since the Head of the local church has been exalted to the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him (1 Peter 3:22; Ephesians 1:18-23; 3:20, 21).

Every local church needs to think biblically and act responsibly as to its role in global missions, like the church in Antioch (Acts 11, 13, 14, 15 and 18). The local church enlists, selects, supports, authorizes, ordains, commissions, and sends the missionary. The missionary needs to be seen as the primary responsibility of the local church while at home or overseas.

The local church needs to be the

primary moral supporter and caregiver of missionaries. The local church serves as the catalyst for global missions because people, money, and prayers flow from the local church.

2) Promote partnerships among local churches and missionary personnel

The Great Commission was given to the local church. The first New Testament church that received the Great Commission had 120 members. So, a church of 120 members was expected to evangelize and disciple the whole world. How? They won converts and established other local churches. Then, together, these local churches spread the Gospel over the whole known world.

3) Focus on the diaspora of Creative Access Nations and their networks.

When an unreached people leave their geographical location, they become

more open to new ideas and to change. This "diaspora" leaves the people more open to give the Gospel a hearing. For example, there are four million Iranians who have left the oppressive regime of Islamic Fundamentalism. In the last seven months, we know of 500 Iranians who have been baptized.

4) Become creative in the fulfillment of the Great Commission

The Non-Resident Missionary

This is when a missionary may live in a country other than the restricted country that is his target. For example, Iran is "closed" to missionaries. Yet, Iranians can be reached in Germany, France, Holland, Canada, and the United States. Presently, Afghan refugees living in Iran are being evangelized and disciplined by "strategic coordinators" who live outside of Iran. These coordinators have been able to guide and grow their work in creative ways.

The Tentmaker Missionary

A Christian businessman or woman can live in a country that may deny residency to a missionary. As they live and work among the people, they become effective witnesses for Christ. With appropriate training, they can also establish churches among those who become believers.

The National Missionary

There are more third-world missionaries today than from the Western World. These third-world missionaries have everything but resources. They sometimes know the language, culture, religious background, and history of the people to whom they minister. The only thing they may lack is the resources to carry out their mission. If Western Christianity, that seems to have an abundance of resources, can partner with third-world missionaries and provide responsible assistance, then perhaps the Commission can be fulfilled more efficiently and effectively. 🔑



We serve in a nation where religious visas are not an option. Sometimes, following God's call involves getting creative to find a way to stay. One option is to take a job somewhere and let your employer handle the visas for as long as you can keep your job. Another option would be to start an NGO. These organizations run the gamut, but typically work to alleviate harsh living conditions for people in need, either socially or economically. A third option is to open a legitimate and credible small business.

When it came time for us to decide which route to take, NGOs in our country were facing a lot of scrutiny and many were being closed down. We prayed, sought counsel from others who had faced the same dilemma, and finally decided God was leading us to start a small business. From the beginning, we knew if we wanted to do this right, two things needed to be true of our endeavor:

The business needs to be successful and operate with a high standard

Starting a business is hard work — it takes time and effort to become profitable, especially in a developing economy like that of our host nation. Our dedication to following laws and staying above board with daily business practices gives us credibility with the local government and is a testimony, not only to local believers, but also to other business workers. Believe it or not, there are

missionaries who do nothing to fulfill the obligations of their visas. This ends up only hurting their cause and the efforts of others associated with them. Our visas are not simply a “front” to keep us in the country; they are our responsibility and an opportunity to be a light for Christ through our work ethic. Working to actually develop our business and do what we say we're doing keeps us in good standing with the local government, gives us security and longevity on the field, and paves the way for future workers in our field.

The business must benefit and enhance the ministry

Everything we do is rooted in a desire to serve God, not make a profit. We do not take a salary from this venture and our vision has always been for our business to ultimately benefit the church. Every dollar invested goes back to the business, the employees, and the local church. By hiring leaders from our churches part time, we give them an opportunity to provide for their families and still have time to serve. We also try to help our employees see their jobs as an opportunity for outreach. Our business gives them an avenue to connect with people, and everyone, from customer to supplier, is a soul who needs to hear the Gospel. Every amenity associated with our business is available for use by the church. Currently, our youth group meets every Saturday evening for discipleship right

in our coffee shop.

Running a business along with ministry instantly doubles the workload for the missionary, which can be overwhelming. We've learned, though, that many times the two responsibilities coincide. Every day there are countless teachable moments as we work side by side with nationals. We must see our business as an opportunity for hands-on discipleship rather than a distraction from it. If we find the right people and train them well, in time the burden of the business will be lessened and we can focus our energies elsewhere.

CHALLENGES

Approaching missions in this way is still relatively new to us in the BBFI, but is unavoidable as all over the world it is becoming increasingly difficult for missionaries to obtain visas. Most of us have very little business training. We need businessmen from the churches in our Fellowship to coach and invest in us Creative Access Nation missionaries. Would you pray about offering your wealth of wisdom to encourage, mentor, and coach some of us? A little goes a long way in benefitting the missionary's business situation and enriching the ministries, not to mention cutting the attrition rate of missionaries serving on fields such as ours. Please contact our Mission Office if you would be interested. 🔑





Business Platform in a Creative Environment *by T.U.*

The 67 nations in the 10/40 window are still the most unevangelized countries on earth, due in part to the difficulty for laborers to obtain visas to work these fields. When the Lord of the harvest gave the command to “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel,” He meant just that! “Closed-door” countries require faith, patience, and wisdom.

We have seen that both education and business can be used to open doors that would otherwise be closed. It is up to each laborer to know the gifts and talents the Lord has given to him. Each one must receive clear guidance in his walk with Christ to determine which key should be utilized to open a field. It would be ludicrous to use either one of these keys if it was possible to obtain a visa where one could focus solely on doing the work of an evangelist.

The Lord led us to access the nation of our calling through a small business project. This project, that has often taken us “out of the box,” has provided us with a visa that has now resulted in reaching our desired goals of winning souls and planting churches. The business platform to obtain a visa has been beneficial for the following three reasons:

1) The business platform visa has withstood the onslaught of militant religious entities trying to force my family and me out of the country. When certain religious organizations found out that a visa had been obtained through the business sector, they immediately went to court to state that my purpose in being in the country was not the business project. Immigration and the State Attorney General’s office were convinced by their accusations and filed a court case to close down the business entity and have my family and me removed from the country. Two Supreme Court justices gave oversight to the case due to the nature in which it was filed.

The case was quickly resolved when our alert attorney showed the justices the free-trade business agreements between our two countries. The justices quickly laid down the gavel and stated, “This man has the right to exercise his religious freedoms under our constitution so long as he fulfils the objectives of the government-approved registered project. What he does in his private time religiously is protected.” For comparison sake, should I have opted for the education platform, this ruling would not have applied under the free-trade agreement that the justices swiftly adhered to.

2) The business platform visa opened major doors to the business, education, and law enforcement sectors of the country. I would never have dreamed that respect for the type of project implemented would have carried so much weight in these communities. An afternoon business Bible study that has operated now for several years came as a result of working with managers in a company to enhance their leadership potential. Several people were saved and now meet once a week at lunch for Bible study and prayer. Police chiefs, political security division heads, military officers, and the mayor of the capital city along with his 45-person entourage all enlisted the project’s services.


During a time of strife in the country, one of these police chiefs allowed me to utilize a community center for an evangelistic meeting and gave the meeting guarded protection. A mission was born from the people saved in this meeting. That mission is now a church plant reaching the community for Christ. Principals from various government and religious schools have received our two- to three-hour training for teachers. “Gospel seeds” were dropped in those events that were attended predominantly by heathen

religions. I have made acquaintances and built relationships which can be used in the future for clear Gospel presentations.

3) The business platform visa gives the right status to do financial transactions, lease buildings, own a vehicle, and travel freely within the countries of the region — all because I have an authentic business visa with a registered business.

The project office houses my library and affords me the time to study for messages and prepare material for the Bible Institutes. Over 80 percent of what my office does is for the work of the ministry. The computers, copy machines, printers, and laborers in the office operate daily for the furtherance of the Gospel in some aspect.

Preparation to fulfill the needed objectives for a business visa came from being raised by a wise father who taught his six sons several occupations and business skills. An effective internship and then a pastorate prior to serving in a foreign country provided the spiritual development and spiritual warfare training essential in preparation for the business platform approach.

The Lord of the harvest would never call His laborers to do something He did not prepare them for or grant them the talents to fulfill. A thorough and completed Bible college training along with a comprehensive internship is vital in reaching into the 10/40 restricted access nations. Creativity that comes from serving the Lord in major leadership roles during internship is required. There are two important elements in any attempt to creatively enter and operate the business platform for Christ’s sake. One is a godly, praying family. Two, pastors leading in a thorough understanding of the issues when opening restricted doors. 



A Translation Business *by I.T.*

At the very beginning stages of ministry in a Creative Access Nation (CAN), a missionary will usually need to be learning the language. Even at the language learning stage, a business platform is very useful. I am still in the language learning stage and am often asked why I am studying the language. They can see that I have brought my wife and children from the U.S.A. to a developing country, and they expect an answer that justifies this radical move. The locals are always satisfied when I explain to them how their country continues to have increased global business opportunities, and that I want to establish a translation business to take advantage of these opportunities.

Of course, a person can only study a language full time for so long before he runs out of classes to take, or before red flags begin to fly. For long-term ministry in a CAN, a business platform provides a stable way to gain a visa into the country. However, business is not our reason for moving our family to a third-world country. Our hearts and priority is to spread the Gospel, disciple new believers, establish local churches, and train national pastors to lead and plant their own churches. Both business and ministry are very time and energy consuming. So the challenge is to find the right business to complement the ministry.

God has created and developed a wide variety of CAN missionaries, so their skills,

passions, and businesses can be just as varied. We have a passion for starting a translation business for several reasons.

1) We understand that the better we learn the language, the more effective we can be in communicating the Gospel and training national leaders. Since a translation business is my platform, the locals understand I will naturally need to attend translation school after finishing the typical language classes. This extra training will be a huge help in reaching the professional level of communication we desire.


2) Our country has limited written Christian resources in the native tongue. As we disciple believers and train national leaders we will need to develop our own lessons or translate them from the great wealth of resources we have in English. By God's grace, the work we already plan to be doing for ministry will become our business platform for obtaining a visa.

3) Translation school provides a great opportunity to establish necessary relationships. While in basic language school, all of my classmates are understandably not nationals. However, in translation school, my classmates will be nationals interested in the same kind of

business I am — translating from English to their native language.

We anticipate many of these classmates will be very interested in spending time with an American family. This gives us prime opportunities to develop relationships in which we can share the Gospel repeatedly over a long period of time. Also, our new friends will have the opportunity to see how the Gospel is lived out in our lives over a period of time. This kind of time is extremely valuable ministering in a culture with a worldview that completely excludes God.

4) I need a national business partner for a proper translation business. We hope to see some of my classmates come to Christ who would be interested in partnering with an American. Should God provide us with a very business-minded Christian national translation partner, this partner can take the majority of the load of the business to allow me to spend my time doing what God really wants me to do.

We understand it is a lot of work to get into and stay in a CAN. However, my family and I want to be a part of what God is doing. I am a minister, not a businessman. However, we pray for the faith to trust God to provide the way even when we cannot see all the steps ahead of us. 



One of our families is living and working among a group of displaced people (DP). These people are sometimes referred to as refugees. We asked our people to explain the uniqueness of this type of creative access ministry.

Refugees live on the streets or in temporary shelters; occupying abandoned buildings or makeshift hovels. They often come from Islamic states or limited access nations and are naturally resistant to traditional approaches of evangelism. They commonly have a negative opinion of the West and the United States in particular. They live desperate lives and are in a fight for survival. These characteristics call for creative strategies and specialized personnel to minister to their physical and spiritual needs. Outreach to DPs is exacting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It demands mobility, creativity, and courage. It requires workers who are men and women of faith and extraordinary prayer. It is not a ministry for the faint of heart.

Unlike traditional fields of service that sometimes lend themselves to youth mission trips and short-term exposure excursions, DP ministries require mature, seasoned, and cross-cultural savvy men and women who understand the significance of self denial. Nik Ripken says this mission field “often requires — or, at least, results in — callouses on the hands and the heart as the faithful struggle with lostness, persecution, starvation, and flying bullets.” Men and women of faith and courage who are willing to fill this requirement may provide a valuable contribution to refugee ministry, short or long term.

The needs of the displaced are myriad. They often lack basic health services and would benefit from health professionals who volunteer to offer care in the form of free clinics. Even when government agencies offer health services, unregistered or isolated refugees often fall through the cracks. One recent volunteer came with his daughter as his assistant and brought a suitcase full of medicines, vitamins, and supplies. Just two days of clinics allowed dozens of men, women, and children to receive basic care. As a result of

this display of Christian love and concern, a number of ladies began attending Bible studies for the first time.

In our country of ministry there are now over one million refugee children. Less than half are attending any type of school. Most roam the streets, search for food, or work menial jobs for handouts. Virtually any attempt to minister to these children is looked upon with favor. For this reason, children’s programs, vacation Bible schools, camps, and retreats are excellent opportunities to sow seeds of the Gospel into the lives of the displaced. We will be hosting a team of eight to ten men and women next summer to conduct vacation Bible schools specifically for refugee children.

Adult education is another need among the displaced. Refugees are hard pressed to find work, and competition for the few jobs available is fierce. Men and women who lack the basic skills of reading and writing are greatly disadvantaged. Personnel are needed to teach literacy, increasing their opportunities for making a livelihood for their family.

Those refugees who are educated profit from learning English. English language classes are sought after in refugee communities as English proficiency increases the opportunities for employment. Teaching simple English can be done without expertise in the local language. Volunteers can contribute to refugee ministry by teaching basic and advanced English.

As host countries are bombarded by the influx of refugees, logistics become a challenge. Aid agencies and government organizations often fail to provide the necessities to house and care for displaced families. We have partnered with local churches and organizations to provide blankets, kerosene heaters, food staples, and clothing. Offering relief and care in Jesus’



name can be a powerful witness to people in need and often opens the door to sharing the Gospel message.

Regardless of the ministry focus or length of time ministering to displaced peoples, proper preparation is essential. It is our opinion that pre-field preparation should include the following:

1) Spiritual development and prayer support. Ministry to refugees demands an attitude of self-denial and sacrifice as well as a daily dependency on God. Potential workers should be mature in their faith, proven in service, and supported by a network of friends and family lifting them up in prayer.

2) Security training. Often, fields of service to DPs are restricted or sensitive places. Before arrival on the field, workers should undergo training and be aware of security risks. They must learn to be discrete in conversation and communication. They should develop an awareness of their surroundings and be sensitive to the directions of those hosting them in the country.

3) Cultural awareness and education. Potential workers should study the culture of the displaced they are coming to minister to, as well as the culture and context of the country hosting the refugee community. There must be a willingness to set aside personal freedoms in dress, mannerisms, and conversation in order to relate to DPs without offense. Learning basic greetings in the language is also advised. 🔑



From Platform to Establishing Churches *by T.L.*

As missionaries with the BBFI in North Africa, we were initially uncertain of how we would enter the country and later be able to stay for the extended time needed to see churches established. Going to a country where over 90 percent of the people were of the Islamic faith, we understood there would be challenges concerning long-term visas and developing a presence that would see lives changed. In that struggle, there were three main objectives we wanted to accomplish. First, we wanted to keep our main objective of making disciples and establishing churches at the forefront. Second, we wanted to be honest and above reproach in our dealings and connections with the people. Third, we wanted to develop a legitimate presence without our platform being a façade.

Establishing a Platform

We entered the country on student visas while learning the language. I went to the American University while also looking for opportunities to establish a more permanent platform. During that time, we were introduced to a struggling Baptist church in the inner city. Established almost 40 years prior, the national pastor had passed away and the church had asked the most educated member of the church, a medical doctor, to become the pastor. On my initial entrance into the church of about 40 people, I was confronted with a pastor distressed and asking to be “relieved of his duties.” It was apparent his time as the pastor had been difficult for him and for the church. Within a year he had resigned and we began reorganizing the work while looking for a new national pastor to prepare for that ministry.

Through a member of the church who desired to establish an export division of his mercantile shops, we began to see a platform emerge that would allow us to stay

in the country. He needed a foreign partner to establish contacts overseas and offer credentials to gain the legal standing of a national corporation with foreign interests. In the course of a year, we established the company’s legal and financial standing with the government and I was able to obtain our business/investment visa. Some churches are hesitant to support missionaries who have other businesses in the country. However, the structure of this company allowed me to offer about 15 to 20 hours a week in the business and 40 to 50 hours in ministry work through the afternoons, evenings, and weekends.

Our evangelistic opportunities also expanded into cities and villages throughout the country when visiting production plants and shops. We would often incorporate outreach events with our church members on these trips, and I would not be seen as an outsider because we had established a presence in the communities through the business. As a part of my agreement with my national business partner, proceeds that were to be directed to me as a salary from the business were given directly to the local churches to help finance these outreach programs.

It is important for missionaries in Creative Access Nations to have skills alongside their ability to preach the Gospel and establish churches. However, missionaries must balance their time between the work and ministry, and follow local and international laws in regard to how they handle proceeds they receive through their work. Being honest, legitimate, and authentic in establishing a platform is important. It will provide opportunities to meet people and establish relationships in the community.



Establishing a Presence

The establishment of our own business platform allowed us to build extensive relationships on various levels throughout society. Handling the legalities of the business helped us meet people in government, legal fields, and business. Yet we were also able to connect with various people throughout the country in the factories and local shops who handled our products. The way we conducted business and treated the people we worked with helped set us apart; yet, it also helped us integrate into the community.

Establishing trust and integrity are important in every aspect of ministry, no matter where we are called to go. However, where people are continually skeptical of you, you have to be building trust all the time. Once trust was built into our relationships, we were welcomed into villages and homes allowing us to work through the day and having village meetings for preaching and teaching late into the evenings. Through these meetings we saw many come to faith in Jesus and get baptized. As our numbers increased, we increased our presence and helped teach believers and establish new pastors and leaders in the developing congregations.

Establishing Churches

As we established outlying churches, it was also important to develop the church in the city as a training facility for the churches and pastors. In time, the church grew to over 250 and the lay leaders became our teachers and trainers. Pastors and leaders from outside the city would travel in for weeklong modules throughout the year. The leadership coordinated efforts to reach other communities in the country, allowing me to



travel freely when invited.

Before leaving the country, we saw three churches established and organized with national pastors. In addition, two villages had their own meetings while their leaders received training and help from the three sister churches. An added benefit was the expansion of the business platform to employ many of the church members in each community. By the time we left, we were confident God's work was going strong and churches would continue to be established without our physical presence.

Looking Ahead

One of the great tasks in front of us as a Fellowship is to understand that creative access into countries is becoming the norm instead of the exception throughout the world. Since coming to work in the Mission Office, there have been changes developing in Russia and Europe regarding immigration. Greater restrictions on visas are developing throughout the world, including areas where we have had missionaries who have been readily accepted for decades. Looking forward we need to carefully evaluate our understanding of how missionaries are able to enter countries and become established as they carry forward the Great Commission. We must pray for and prepare to equip missionaries for the possibility of carrying out ministry alongside a platform to help remain long term. In truth, it is not an easy task and carries many added responsibilities. However, it is important that we see the positive opportunities that come with carrying out such a ministry in being faithful to "go into all of the world." 



The Great Commission – Creatively!

by Jon Konnerup | BBFI Mission Director



A renewed commitment to reaching the lost is growing. A renewed effort to effectively plant churches is mushrooming among a younger generation. New technology assists in spreading the Good News. This is a time of unlimited mission possibilities. However, there is danger in planning as if nothing has been done in the past, to go as if no one has gone before. Unnecessary mistakes can and will be avoided by knowledge and wisdom.

The BBFI must become the vehicle for our younger generations to do what God has called them to do — being sent out by our churches to evangelize, disciple, and establish churches in the regions beyond. For this to happen, the BBFI must provide new opportunities while maintaining our main focus on church planting.

The past has given the BBFI a legacy of tried-and-true methods to reach the world through church planting. This focus should not be changed as we still see the scriptural method of fulfilling the Great Commission is church planting. I am concerned for the thousands of people groups without a community of believers with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people. Our challenge is to provide every group of people on earth with an opportunity to hear the Gospel in a language they can understand. The goal is to establish a church movement within every unreached people group so that the message of salvation in Jesus Christ is accessible to everyone in the world.

We are using creative access platforms to help send those who desire to reach restricted access nations. Creative access platforms can be legitimate means for missionaries to accomplish their main objectives of reaching the people to whom God has called them. These platforms enable the missionaries to live among the people while sharing the Gospel through building relationships. "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

This, of course, is not something new or specific to the 21st century. The Apostle Paul gave us the model of tent making in the New Testament. He was a preacher, philosopher, lecturer, evangelist, fundraiser, prisoner, and tentmaker. None of this took away from his ultimate goal of discipleship and evangelistic church planting, but he used different platforms in different locations to accomplish this goal. For us to be successful, it will require ingenuity, innovation, determination, creative thinking, and dependence on the Spirit of God on the part of our leadership, our pastors, and our missionaries.

