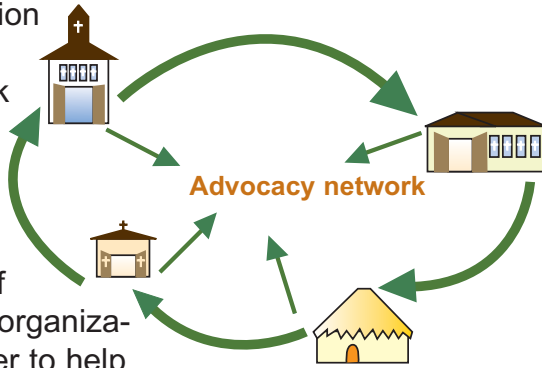


## Module 4

### Networking and partnering

As believers of different organizations and cultures work together on the mission field, Christians at home also must work together to bring about strategic advocacy networks.

An **advocacy network** is a team of people, churches or organizations working together to help reach a particular unreached people group with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Using the Internet, advocacy networks can stretch around the world. Used effectively, these networks offer a strong support system capable of providing a variety of resources.



Before we look at the advocacy network, let's look at the type of person who is pivotal to the network's success. Missionaries often have limited contact with people outside their country or people group. They must rely on advocates to help develop network connections for the people group and for themselves.

Key qualities for individuals creating an advocacy network:

#### A. Be proactive

The first quality of a good networker is to be proactive in seeking out and making network connections. When meeting a person, they should ask specific questions, hoping it will lead to a connection with their people group.

**Example:** At a missions networking meeting, an advocacy team member asked a young pastor where he was from

and where he went to school. It was discovered that he was on staff at a church with the advocacy member's brother-in-law. The pastor and the team member soon began connecting concerning missions work. Good missions networking requires an advocate who continuously seeks new connections.

Advocates who don't seek new connections can kill a network. They also miss developing potential relationships if they aren't proactive in following up with a connection. In advocacy, standing still in networking is the same as moving backward.

With already established relationships, it is important to keep the connection moving with frequent phone calls, e-mails or other forms of communication. When a new connection presents itself, quick follow up is essential. Write an e-mail after the meeting to thank the person for coming or to express that it was nice to meet them. Maintaining relationships is vital. In today's society we might be tempted to handle advocacy like a business—but people are still relational. We must realize that making a connection is good, but following up is important to take these connections to the next level.



#### B. Good connector

The second quality of good networking is being an effective connector. When they find a good "link" to someone else, a connector desires to introduce (or connect) these two people.

**Example:** One pastor was an excellent connector—he was good at introducing people where he saw that a connection needed to be made. A good friend of the pastor's was trying to recruit people to go to Russia on a new project. A couple in the pastor's church was seeking how to fulfill God's call

to serve in Russia. The pastor immediately made a connection, introducing his friend to the couple.

### C. Focus

The third key element is staying focused on your people group. Sometimes, the tendency arises to network and connect with anybody on everything! Staying focused on your unreached people group will help the network develop its talents for God's kingdom.

A great tool to discover people with the "connector" gift was developed by the Gallup organization. It's called the "Strength Finder" profile, and can be found in the book *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton). The book directs users to take an online test to help find people with "connector" and other relational strengths. Finding strong connectors will help move advocacy networks forward.

### D. Pulling together an advocacy team

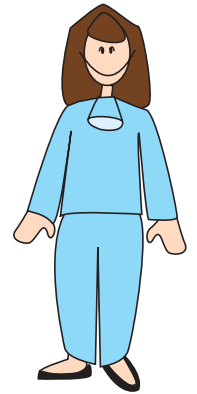
After connections begin to formulate and relationships are nurtured, the next step is to develop an **advocacy team**. An advocacy team is a team within a single church, a team of several churches, individuals, associations, organizations or anyone seeking to reach the same unreached people group with the gospel. The advocacy team consists of people both on the mission field and stateside.

The home advocacy team is crucial to networking among those seeking to reach an unreached people group.

Benefits of an advocacy team include:

- They offer a focal point for information about the unreached people group. People seeking more information can be directed to this home advocacy network to learn what needs to be done to reach the group with the gospel.

**Example:** A mission team needed a dental technician to work among an unreached people group for a trip only two months away. A field missionary learned of the need from a church in California. The missionary communicated the need to the home advocacy team. Within a few days, a church nearly 3,000 miles away was able to find a dental technician who was qualified and willing to go.



- They can coordinate or develop vision trips to the unreached people group.
- They can divide a given task, with different groups taking responsibility for a specific part. This can be productive and maximize resources. One person/group can develop a video while another distributes prayer requests. Another may have connections to provide materials to the mission field, while another is key in meeting missionary needs. Just as there are a variety of needs to be met, there are a variety of gifts to satisfy those needs.

*"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ...The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:4-6, 12, NIV).*

- They can host a home advocacy conference that serves to unite everyone wanting to work with the unreached people group. One advocacy team hosts a conference for their people group each year. The team invites churches, mission pastors, lay people, former missionaries who worked among their people group and leaders from other organizations. Benefits from

a conference include increased knowledge and passion for unreached peoples, awareness and support of specific field strategies and a broader base of prayer support.



Now that you know the value of an advocacy team, how do you find people to start an advocacy network?

### How to find others

Seeking other advocates for an advocacy team takes time. For those already connected to a denominational mission board or agency, ask them who else works with your unreached people group. Other ways to find advocates include:

- **Attend mission conferences.** Many times conferences are a great way to develop connections. You may find those who work with your people group or others who know people working with your group. Don't overlook connecting with people advocating for other unreached people groups who are close to your own group. They may be close in proximity or affinity (i.e., language, customs).
- **Ask missionaries** on the field if they know anyone back home who could be an advocate. When people come for vision trips or to work with others on the field, missionaries can help advocates connect. Missionaries should always be on the lookout for others to connect with their own advocates.
- **Search the Internet** for other advocates. Web sites such as Joshua (<http://www.joshuaproject.net>), the

Caleb Project (<http://www.calebproject.org>), People Teams (<http://www.peopleteams.org>) and others are a few places to begin. Use caution for security and like-mindedness. Make sure to check any Internet contacts carefully with several references. You can never be too careful in protecting the security of mission workers and national believers.



### Different unreached people groups

It also can be beneficial to work with advocates of nearby unreached people groups. Your advocacy team may be able to join forces with another church in your community that has an entirely different evangelical tradition. The two groups may team up on mission trips or hold combined monthly prayer sessions for missions. They may even be able to help one another make field connections.

