

**Media
Impact
International**



**WHITE PAPER:
Shaping Mutually-Beneficial Partnerships in
India Between Churches and Media Ministries**

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PREFACE

Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 used the early "media" platform of speaking in the public forum to a large crowd to introduce the Gospel. The number of baptized believers added that day to the small band of Jesus followers was 3,000. Media and church growth have been intertwined from the earliest of days. The spark of the Protestant Reformation was the printing press. Radio and Television led the way to reach people in hard to reach areas.

And now in this digital age, India is radically fortunate to have the assets in place where Church-Media Partnerships can result in significantly increased, Kingdom growth. Existing already are ministries using media effectively, welcoming churches throughout the country, a strong technological infrastructure, and a populace desperate for hope. What if all those puzzle pieces fit together? Other parts of the world are thriving in these scenarios and experiencing significant spiritual fruit.

In 2019, a ministry operating in the Greater Middle East ran some evangelistic Facebook campaigns. These campaigns resulted in conversations with 12,794 unique people, leading to 96 professions of faith and resulting in 47 responders meeting face-to-face with Christian counselors affiliated with local churches.

These ventures are starting to happen in India, but there is still an enormous, untapped need for so many more to get involved. **The time is now for Indian leaders to join hands to lead the "world changers" from church and media to more strongly impact the country for Christ through the creation of strategic partnerships.**

God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" 1 Corinthians 12

Historically around the world...

- **Local churches** have proven highly equipped to build up the body of Christ as described in Ephesians 4:11-13.
- **Media** soars as a strong adjunct to the church by proclaiming the Gospel and building up church members, much like is described in Colossians 1:28-29.

The body of Christ needs all the parts functioning in unity and mutual respect. That includes the relationship between churches and media ministries. When the two work together, we see a compounding, exponential effect that can allow for explosive growth as found in Acts 2.

The focus of this White Paper has been to understand the range and possibilities for partnerships between churches and media ministries in India. We have endeavored to surface the best methodologies to allow these partnerships to flourish.

OVERVIEW

Research Purpose / Benefits

The purpose of the White Paper was to study the most effective ways for media ministries and churches in India to work together to more strongly impact the country for Christ. Experience in various international settings demonstrate that local churches are most equipped to build up the body of Christ as described in Ephesians 4:11-13, whereas media is a strong adjunct to the church by proclaiming the Gospel and building up the church members, much like is described in Colossians 1:28-29.

Research Process

To accomplish this purpose, Media Impact International (MII) explored various research projects, held strategic consultations with key leaders in India, compiled and assessed data from digital campaigns and pilot partnership projects, and interviewed media and church leaders – transcribing, analyzing and coding the results according to the research purpose.

Research Focus

MEDIA IN CHURCH GROWTH AND CHURCH IN MEDIA GROWTH

Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 used the communication method of the public forum to introduce the Gospel to a large crowd of seekers, each hearing the message in their own language. On that day, the number of baptized believers added to the small band of Jesus followers was 3,000. In Acts 19, Paul's ministry had the habit of using the media of public speaking to identify seekers – God fearing Greeks – who attended the local synagogue. Media and church growth have been intertwined from the earliest of days. George Hunter noted that the Wesleyan movement in the 1700s was laid on the bedrock of media outreach. The spark of the Protestant Reformation was the printing press. Radio and Television led the way for new means to reach people in hard to reach areas. The current decade has seen an explosion of digital media leading the way for church and media to expand the Gospel message into areas where church growth has been stymied. Media products and church growth have always been partners.

KEY RESEARCH TERMS / DEFINITIONS

What is the Church?

MII sought to understand the function of “church” as it was applied to various media and church leaders in India. Some leaders described the church as an institution with hierarchy and purpose – that purpose being to shepherd the flock.

Other Indian leaders talked about church in community terms. Some of those interviewed described them as “Independent Churches,” or Next Gen churches, that had worshipping communities that had congregants with less in common in religious backgrounds and see themselves in sociological terms as Indian nationals.

A third church definition that came from the interviews with Indian leaders is what some termed the “Pioneering Church.” These are generally comprised of congregants from different religious backgrounds, first-generation Christians, whose sociological and cultural foundations would be Hindu background believers (HBB) or Muslim background believers (MBB).

Scholars have used Acts 1:8 as a model to describe these three expressions of church: Jerusalem and Judea to represent the first group, Samaria for the independent church group, and then pioneering church being the “remotest part of the earth” church.

What is Media’s Role?

A similar pattern was found with media organizations. Some felt called to support the established church through “encouragement,” much like what is noted in Hebrews 10:24-25, while others provided “teaching” on foundational doctrines for young believers, and yet a third group used media to reach deep into the pioneering mission world with salvation messages (“evangelism”).

One observation was at times media or church organizations felt disappointed in their counterpart’s approach. For example, Jerusalem type of churches criticized pioneering media’s evangelistic approaches. In the diagram below, this phenomena could look like this. Note that these categories are not easily delineated as there are numerous hybrids.

Structure	Encouragement Christian Media	Christian Teaching Media	Evangelism Media
Organized Church	Good Match	Maybe Match	Mismatch
Independent Church	Fair Match	Good Match	Fair Match
Pioneering Church	Mismatch	Maybe Match	Good Match

Figure 1: Possible Church / Media Model from Acts 1:8

KEY RESEARCH TERMS / DEFINITIONS *continued*

What is Partnership?

The project's interviews were interested in learning how churches and media organizations viewed their counterparts in a partnership relationship. One interviewee from media stated: "to be really frank, it's extremely difficult to partner with the local church. They don't really want our help." One church person stated: "the reason why the (project) failed was because we don't have a healthy partnership...that is an agreed upon shared vision." The projects that have gone bad are when each party contributes, but don't have a shared vision."

Shared vision is the bedrock of partnership. A working definition of partnership is "two or more people (organizations) sharing resources toward a common vision." The common vision requires discussion, exploration and negotiation to determine if each party has the capacity to (a) shape and share a vision and (b) capacity to execute the vision.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Identifying With Whom to Work

Extending on the partnership concept, MII wanted to know how media and church presently determine who would be partners. The interviews revealed that the greatest criteria was convenience. It was churches or media organizations that had a natural cross pathway they could engage in partnership discussions. Instead of starting with the Amos 3:3 principle – "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" – most churches or media look to natural relationships which are convenient. This may be beneficial on one level, but being intentional to seek out possible partnerships, and then discussing shared vision and capacity could extend one's realm of possibilities. In addition, there were three key insights from the interviews:

1. Partners need to compare notes of how effective the hand-off is between media and church based follow-up. Partnering with churches that understand the process of people growing in the faith (discipleship) and are willing to take the time and effort to see this happen, as opposed to just bringing people to church is key.
2. Trust the church partnership with mutual respect. Media has many tools and opportunities that the church can use and it needs to make these available.
3. Discuss how a project is progressing while it is in process. That allows for mid-project evaluation where improvements can be made, such as better media messages and the training of church follow-up teams.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS *continued*

Who to Involve (Or Not) in a Partnership?

Both church and media organizations sought out partners who expressed solid, similar foundations of faith, some even noting the Apostles Creed or the Lausanne Covenant. But extending beyond the fundamentals, they looked for partners who could mutually benefit from the relationship. However, there could be a mismatch if the wrong contact person was engaged within the church. Leaders discussed how they identified “inside leaders” in the church who were interested in partnering. The inside leader presented a proposal to the pastor and the leadership team and the inside leader found church support. In these cases, the Amos 3:3 principle had application. But other interviewees discussed scenarios where, when applied to the Figure 1 model, found that partnership was not possible. There was no fault on anyone’s part, it was that media and church organizations had different visions.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Ways That Media Organizations Can Work Better With Churches

MII was also interested in how to address issues that generate unity, partnership and Kingdom impact. Several interviewees noted a solution that was surprisingly simple: media organizations should just ask how they can help the church meet its goals. The task and possibilities are enormous. The India Missions Association website indicates 250 membership organizations with some 60,000 missionaries spread out over India. There are 28 million Christians and an unknown number of churches. Finding partners is an overwhelming task. Hence, it is imperative that media and church organizations be intentional in partnership development. There are three key questions when considering a partnership:

1. Who is your audience?
2. What do you want them to do?
3. How to reach them?

Immediate Application

As Amos 3:3 notes, we have to know who we are in the Figure 1 continuum and which partners can offer the best contribution toward a common vision. Media leaders need to listen to the needs of the church leaders and consider how they can be partners in the truest sense of a collective vision and collective participation. It is suggested that suspending criticism and embracing co-laborers’ different spheres of ministry would improve postures of unity.

SUMMARY

Overall, from the results of the research project, indigenous Indian Christian leaders need to provide leadership and join hands in partnership to more strongly impact the country for Christ. Case studies and examples from other parts of the 10/40 Window have shown similar approaches can significantly increase overall Kingdom impact. For example:

A media organization that targets Indonesia with online, evangelism campaigns recently reported that they have seen 51 MBBs join house churches, 94 are in Discovery Bible Studies and 247 are involved in one-to-one Bible Studies. Their typical journey goes from online, to face-to-face, and then to either house churches or the one-on-one Bible Studies.

To see this type of impact throughout India, key leaders need to step up and drive the following recommended steps:

1. Shape a training consultation where leaders can discuss strategic planning that includes how to affirm a variety of media ministries, churches and gifts by understanding collaboration and partnerships; how they work and when they should not be initiated.
2. Help church and media organizations determine how to identify visions and needs and then to set goals, plans, and partnerships that are mutually beneficial.
3. Address obstacles in the Indian context that hinder partnership as described in Hebrews 12:1-3.
4. Train leaders on how to find qualified partners that are less dependent on natural connections. In other words, intentionally finding partnerships and then set up agreements of understanding.
5. Create an atmosphere of collaboration that fosters idea productivity. A place where partnerships can result in “dream with more faith for bigger things.”
6. Establish visions in the domain of the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of man.

NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES

The publisher of this White Paper, Media Impact International, is available to provide more information and/or to answer questions at: info@mii.global

Guiding Principles for Collaboration

The body of Christ needs all the parts functioning in unity and mutual respect. Again, media and church outreach have a rich history. They have always benefited from each other's contribution. Partnerships between the church and media organizations are of high importance. The following steps can be looked at as a recipe to build lasting and effective bonds:

1. Know who you are
2. Know what the needs are for the next stage
3. Find help to get to the next stage
4. Plan to execute
5. Stay up to date
6. Consistently partner
7. Create effective content
8. Develop natural partnerships
9. Utilize resources

NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES *continued*

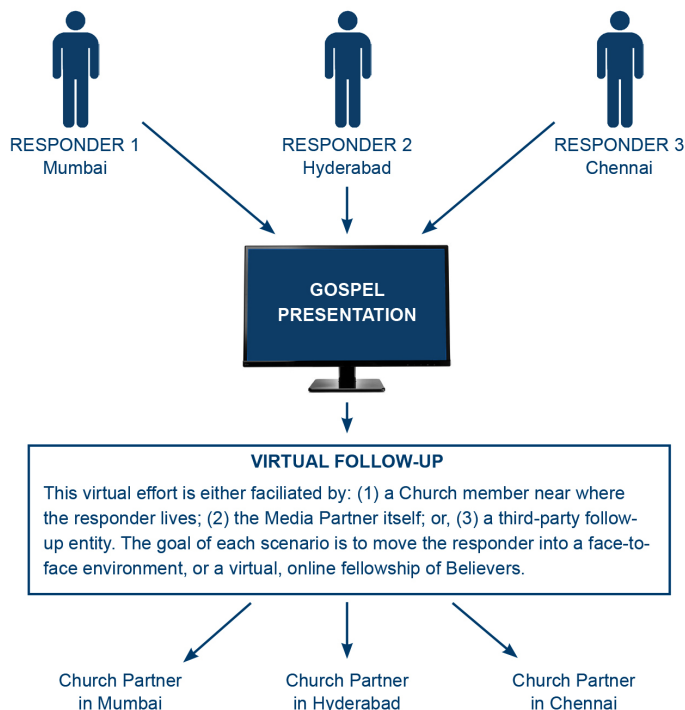
Partnership Design Criteria

The following “design criteria” was affirmed by strategic consultation participants for when a potential church and media partnership should be pursued, while asking the key overall question: “what is the problem that we are trying to solve?”

1. **Fit.** Does the partnership support the missions of all organizations involved and are the core values aligned?
2. **Leadership.** Is the leadership of the organization 100% committed to making the partnership work? (If not, it is not likely to succeed.)
3. **Scalability.** Just like the typical question in Silicon Valley design thinking, “will this work when it is ramped up?”
4. **Multiply Impact.** Will the partnership exponentially improve the impact of all organizations involved?
5. **Alternatives.** Partnerships are hard. Can the goal be accomplished any other way individually?

Potential Partnership Model

Following is a potential partnership model related to evangelism or discipleship, and showing how media organizations and churches can work together to increase Kingdom impact across India. This project model could be used in a region or in a specific language group in India.



NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES *continued*

These partnership projects have two key aspects:

- A media partner runs an evangelistic or discipleship “social media” campaign that generates numerous responders who are likely either candidates to explore Christianity, or those wanting to grow in Christ.
- A responder then enters a virtual conversation with a Christian counselor who is either a team member of the media partner, or a representative of a third-party, follow-up initiative, or a church member located close to where the responder lives. This counselor then walks with the responder virtually with the goals of addressing personal issues, addressing spiritual needs, and subsequently engaging her/him in a face-to-face relationship or a virtual fellowship. An additional step is enfolded into a local church.

NEEDED QUALITIES FOR KEY ROLES:**Media Partner [plants seeds – early cultivation]**

- Demonstrated competency in media – digital media / radio / television / etc., that is willing / able to create and facilitate evangelistic or discipleship campaigns designed to generate large numbers of responders.
- Committed to partnership with the church; not looking to just run a campaign and generate responses, but making sure that there is an intentional follow-up process so that someone is coming alongside each responder.

Virtual Follow-up Team [initial contact with the seeker]

- Plays the key role of building a virtual relationship with a seeker or disciple and then providing a smooth “hand off” to a face-to-face counselor, a local church or an online fellowship.
- Must have mature team members with doctrinal strength, relational understanding, security sensitivity and flexibility/availability. May need to walk with them for an extended period of time before attempting to hand off to a face-to-face meeting.

Church Partner [walks alongside the seeker / enfolds into the church]

- Represents an existing church network (not just a single church), so that the responder can be passed along to a church that is close to wherever they may be.
- Committed to partnership with media ministries, seeing them as a critical partner for effective evangelism and the growth of the church; values their cutting-edge expertise that doesn't usually exist within a local church.

NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES continued***Media Resources / Reports*****VISUAL STORY NETWORK**

- Visual Story Network has put together an extensive list of resources for Film, Production, Media Content and many other items. That list can be found at the following link:
www.visualstory.org/wiki
- Visual Story Network courses on media in ministry:
<https://www.visualstory.org/media>

MEDIA IMPACT INTERNATIONAL

- MII-University has online, training courses at: <https://mii.global>
- Read the following MII research projects. Although originally written with the Middle East in mind, the principles are fully applicable to India. All three reports are available at:
<https://www.mii.global/reports>
 - **Impacting MENA Through New Media Strategies**
 - **Media Response & Follow-up in the Middle East**
 - **Cyber Security Report**

Media Associations

Get to know the following organizations and plan on attending the annual conference of the ICMA and select the sessions beneficial to your work, network and ask a lot of questions.

- **ICMA**
- **Eurasia Media and Distribution Consultation (EMDC)**
For further information, contact: info@emdcon.org
- **National Religious Broadcasters**
<http://nrb.org>