

Asian Listening Movement

May 2016

Where are you on the CPM continuum?

7. Multiplying CPMs: Initial CPM is starting to catalyze other CPMs.

We are consistently reaching 4th generation in many places. In a few locations we have reached the 12th generation. This is not just one movement, but multiple movements stretched across at least four different geographical regions. These movements are primarily among people from the majority religion, though the work has now cascaded over to become a movement among people from one of the minority non-Christian religions. As of April 2016, we estimate there are more than 3,000 churches and at least 1,500 Discovery Groups, and more than 10,000 baptized believers. Only a handful of churches use special buildings or rented space; nearly all are house churches, meeting in a home or a courtyard or under a tree.

Name of Focus Group (UPG, city, region, language group, etc.): (use a code name if necessary for security)

Majority-religion people in an Asian country. (All personal names are pseudonyms.)

Background info on the group

Nearly all people speaking this language are unreached. Various groups are separated by divisions which would traditionally be a barrier for the spread of the gospel. Although there are significant social divisions, people live in community. So unlike more isolated places in certain parts of the world, it's nearly impossible to simply choose one group as a ministry focus. In any given village, you can walk 50 meters down the road and be among people of the same village but a different people group.

The CPM Team

Describe your team.

Our team is made up of a husband and wife catalyst couple, one other expatriate, and two national coworkers. Sam* is the key national leader. John* (Sam's younger brother) operates as Sam's partner and is also a key leader in the work.

How long has your team been together?

We first met Sam in January 2012 and soon after did our first training/vision casting. We started systematic training with Sam and his network of disciples in July 2012. This was the first big step which catalyzed what is currently happening.

- Strengths and weaknesses of your team?

- *Mutuality.* We truly see each other as co-laborers with mutuality. There's no sense of "us" over "them."
- *Humility.* We try to be very humble whenever we present any paradigm shift, any new way to look at Scripture, or any new way to think about something. We look at the Word together

then ask, "What should we do about that? How should we apply that?" We try to maintain that humble approach when interacting with Sam.

- *Vision.* Sam really grasps the vision of reaching all of our region. When he heard a few of the core paradigm shifts, he accepted it 100%. Sam quickly grasped the difference between a believer and a disciple; he also quickly grasped the idea of disciples making disciples. Other paradigm shifts have taken longer, but Sam has remained teachable. For instance, eighteen months after we started, we were still working on rapid baptism after decision.
- *Leaving the good for the great.* Sam chose to cut out everything that was not effective. He very quickly made that choice. This is very abnormal for our country, very counter-cultural for leaders to cut off those extra things. We were praying for a partner and he was ready for something new. At the age of 35, he was already nearly burned out on ministry. He spent all his time dealing with problems in the traditional church and he had no time or energy for the harvest, which was his passion. So he was eager to try something new. He let go of a variety of ministries, including a number of churches, in order to focus on DMM. He maintained connection with just one church which he considered his "main flock." Similarly, near the beginning of trying to apply these strategies, God had also cleared our schedules as expatriates, such that we had little to let go of. This enable us also to devote full time to these efforts without the baggage of traditional work slowing them down.
- *Local leaders are the main visionaries.* Sam is the engine and the main visionary. He has a huge vision. We sometimes try to hold things back a bit but God has usually said to us, "Don't quench the vision I have given Sam. Pick your battles carefully." So we really try to minimize our control and to not micro-manage things. Sam is the driver; we bring the tools. We continue to look at paradigm shifts along the way and bring those to Sam and John as we discover they are needed. Sometimes our part is just to suggest, "Let's adjust it this way just a little bit."
- *Teachability.* Though Sam is the engine, he's very teachable and open. I think we all are teachable. It's not that he has the vision and we're trying to clean up after him. It's truly co-laboring. We will sit down with the Word and look at it and listen to what God has to say. Before this team, we had never seen that attitude in all our years of ministry. We have a mutual relationship. Too often a "Type A" national partner wants the Western money but doesn't want to be teachable or have a paradigm shift. Or too often the Western worker is a Type A person wanting to dominate or control the work. We have very little of either in this relationship.
- *Spirit-led.* Most times when we get together with Sam and John to talk about strategy and future planning, God has moved on all our hearts to do something before we even get to the meeting. I'm often worried that Sam won't be ready to have the conversation, but when we get there Sam usually already has it on his list. We have a strong sense of the Holy Spirit guiding us. We don't see Sam every day because we don't live in the same city. We usually see him twice a month, but God continues to lead our collective team in the same direction, week after week, despite the distance. In a related fashion, we focus on listening prayer and clear guidance from the Holy Spirit. Although we subscribe to core principles from the Word, this is not a formula and we do not treat it that way. Big decisions are submitted to

the Lord for clarity. This applies particularly to the use of outside funds, but also other decisions as well. If we don't get clarity, we don't move ahead on any issue. We simply wait for God's timing.

Weaknesses

- *Traditionalism.* The Lord is still weeding some tradition out of all of us, Westerners and nationals.
- *Less systematic.* As I hear some others describe CPMs, I sense that some CPM catalysts are quite systematic. Our approach is less systematic than some others (though much more systematic than anything the national believers have tried before). Is that a weakness? I don't know. We're still seeing progress, but it's a concern we have.
- *Less focused and purposeful.* When a certain catalyst we know in a different field describes a people group, he knows about the people and goes purposefully. We don't feel that purposeful. As a team, we struggle between "let's focus on this people group" vs. "the doors are open in so many directions." When people do the work and form a house church, should we say, "No, you're not the right people group?" When we hear about some other teams, I wonder: does our approach need more direction? Should we be more strategic, with clearer direction?
- *Enormity of the task.* The vast majority of people in our country are unreached. Also, some people groups here are more accessible and receptive than others. Those are the majority of the ones coming in. We continue to cast vision to national believers to strategically pursue some of the harder-to-reach fruit, but that won't happen until they get the vision, so we pray and wait.
- We don't know for sure how well the CPM principles are transferring down through the generations. The movement has grown so quickly that we cannot determine the health of the lower generation disciples and churches; they are simply too removed from the catalysts and top-line trainers. We suppose the wide growth indicates something good is happening, but we would like to have a better understanding of what's actually happening on the ground. We can guess weaknesses in the movement, but we don't know for sure if they exist. So maybe the weakness is precisely the inability of top-line movement leaders to stay connected to the deeper generations and to know what's really happening. The movement is deep and wide, which is exciting, but out of our control! It covers hundreds of square kilometers, with different languages.
- Another challenge we face is ongoing physical sickness in the team. Living and working in our area is physically (and therefore emotionally) challenging for expatriates.

Give team members' primary responsibility.

See "Cycles" below.

Primary barriers to evangelizing this group

(cultural, governmental, religious, geographic, historical, etc.)

- *No concept of conversion.* The overriding belief of the majority is that you will remain in whatever religion you were born into.
- *Social class.* Low-class people are coming into the church excitedly but it keeps others from coming into the church. The impression is: "Christianity is for low-class people."
- *Viewing Christianity as Western.* Jesus is considered "Western" and Christianity in this area has a Western form. Many Christian worship services use English, and the music is Western hymns. Denominational churches have roots in the West and Christians tend to have a lot of religious-cultural baggage.
- *Anti-conversion laws.* The political and social atmosphere are anti-Christian, with strong social stigma. In some places the situation has gotten so oppressive that even the courts have stepped in. If a person converts, they have to go before a government official and declare it. They sign a certificate that says "I voluntarily converted," which puts them on the list for radical groups to come persecute them.
- *Persecution.* Persecution in our area is not as systematic as some other places; it tends to be localized. Usually it's more mob action than organized and governmental. Often a local anti-Christian leader knows of a church in a certain location, so he gathers 20 of his friends and goes to harass them.
- *Traditional church, traditional ministries and greed.* Most existing churches are rooted in tradition and "religion." When we ask our leaders, "What is the greatest challenge you face?" they always answer: "Traditional Christians who question our authority to do these things, and try to steal the sheep/churches from us." In some cases, they have been successful in incorporating our movement churches into their folds and then claiming the fruit as their own.

Narrative of work among the group

In Jan 2012, we connected with Sam and John, and passed on to them the CPM principles in which we had been trained. They started to run full speed ahead with the ideas, and Sam connected us with an informal network of his friends (both pastors and lay leaders who seemed to have an interest in the harvest) in various places around our region. Sam's friends would gather *their* friends for a CPM training. Typically, there would be groups of 15-20 people.

About 20% of the original groups we started with still serve as key leaders in the movement. Most of the 0 generation leaders were believers/disciples before that time, but not necessarily obeying the Great Commission. The great majority of believers in the movement are from a background in the majority religion and have come into the kingdom through the movement. In the last year or so (2015), though, we have seen some people from a minority non-Christian religion come into the movement. We are starting to construct a plan for training them to influence their peoples.

We have different geographic hubs that each became movements. Ministry strategy is shaped by location rather than people group. Because of the abundance of UPGs all around, the work touches 5, 7 or 10 UPGs in any given location. Upper-class people usually are not as receptive, except when a miracle happens. Then they become willing to receive from a low-class person, even if that person is from outside the community.

Cycles – describe any key cycles of training / training events / leadership meetings, evaluation, strategy planning, etc.

- In July 2012 we started systematic training (including vision casting) with 15 leaders who were friends of Sam. They came from six different districts/counties, and we trained them once a month in one-day trainings. About 15 leaders attended, but in each meeting there would be two or three absent, and two or three new people. About 12 trainees consistently showed up.
- They started applying the training, so once a month we built on the progress. We truly followed the Ephesus training pattern for that first group: 5 and 10 day training modules. We were pretty systematic about going through those modules. We did a lot of review, spending 30-50% of each training session in review. When we asked, “What did we do last time?” we would get blank faces. So we would say, “OK, let's go back to....(whatever it was).” Although they were putting the material into practice, they had a hard time repeating back the content.
- After about six months, we saw great progress and we thought, “This is phenomenal! Let's go to other places.” By that time (December 2012) churches were being established about 70 villages; some of the groups were churches while many were still Discovery studies on the way to becoming churches. The groups were a mixture of some believers and some not-yet believers. Each group had about eight attendees. These were truly households; the attendees were biological relatives. Occasionally some neighbors would also attend a group.
- We kept doing the monthly trainings, but also going to new places. Sam has friends scattered across our region. A friend would call Sam and ask him to come to his town and train his friends. We would go and spend two or three days doing training. In this way, we developed three more trainings hubs in our region. The fruit, however, came much slower in these areas. Since Sam was not the direct contact for leaders in those other areas, all our trainees were one step removed from the vision leader (Sam). In these new places, we typically only found two or three leaders who were applying the training. They would all return for follow-up trainings, but few were doing anything with them. After three or four trainings in each place, we learned who was actually doing the work and began focusing on only them, letting go of the others. During this time, we also tried to stay faithful in following up our original group, most of whom were applying the training and seeing fruit. 2013 was a very busy year for training and laying foundations.

- Halfway through 2013, we started telling Sam, “You have to be a trainer. Every time we travel we get sick. You can go at three times our speed.” One time I was sick and he had to do it alone. He was afraid, but rejoiced afterward at what God had done. He didn’t do it the way we had done it. He still did a lot of preaching, and less discovery-based Bible study. Still, people loved his message: “God’s in you; you can do this!” He encouraged those who came. At that training (when we didn’t go) Sam realized he could stand before other national believers. The message became clear: “No Westerners are paying a salary. I’m doing these things, and I’m not Western. It works.” No Westerner was in the room, so the national believers couldn’t say, “Of course you can do this because he’s behind you.” Sam could say, “I am doing this; other local believers are doing this. This is not a Western missionary agenda. This is OUR work!” After that Sam started telling us (expats), “Brother, it’s better when you don’t come.” He hesitated to tell us that, but he became excited. He would come back with stories of how amazing it was to be in a room full of local believers with no foreigners, and it was so much more effective.
- We continued systematically training in three new key cities. It was difficult to get there as often as the brothers wanted (and as often as we felt needed). We just did what we could without burning out. The expats participated in maybe 50% of the trainings starting in late 2013 and into 2014.
- So we had that original group plus now these three more. We began to pull the top implementers from those groups, with us (co-teaching with expats and Sam) directly training those roughly once every two months. Sam continued traveling to the hub cities, training the leaders in each of those areas.
- Into 2015, we started seeing 12th generation and beyond fruit. It was difficult to discern what was happening so deeply in the movement. Up to this point, our main trainings usually involved groups of 15 to 20 people in one setting. We realized that to reach many and to touch deeply, we needed to work with smaller groups. Instead of using large leader gatherings for each training, Sam began going into the villages, meeting the 7th, 8th, and 9th generation groups and those leaders. We began to understand their issues: to see that they really were growing in Jesus and their faith was real, but they also had troubles. This allowed us to understand what was happening at a deeper level so we could tailor new trainings and tools to fit the needs of the movement. We again modified the Discovery study process to make it simpler, so the process could keep working no matter how many generations. This modification and the shift to training smaller groups were important and timely changes.
- Female expats have done a number of trainings; men are not the only ones doing training. Ladies are involved, and men are accepting of this. We do have purposeful separate ladies’ trainings. It’s more difficult to know the value of these. We’re trying to be intentional about raising up female leaders. However, within the streams of the movement facilitated by male leaders, there are also female leaders. So we have both happening. We are trying to purposefully mentor and train some women-only leaders’ groups, but many of these women are disciples of a male leader in the movement, so they receive discipleship in multiple channels. Female leaders make up a key component of the work, possibly up to 30-40% of

the core leaders of the movement. We wanted to do coed training, but in that setting the women simply stayed quiet – would not talk or participate. They started asking for their own trainings. We attempt to do this, but are finding that they are being disciplined well by the on-the-ground discipleship process, leader to leader. We do have women, even young women, leading house churches. We have many women planting churches and women baptizing other women.

Roles of the outside catalysts (expatriates)

- Bringing the biblical paradigm shifts (in a simple and replicable way)
- Strong prayer support as a team as well as mobilizing strategic prayer support from abroad
- Asking questions
- Requiring them to try; expecting that they will implement somehow.
- Training national believers to train others. We're still working on this, but we see growth.
- Providing guidance in times when the next step is unclear.
- Willingness to let the national partner lead even when we think it's wrong and even if two weeks from now we may have to shift whatever they thought. We carefully choose the issues we consider worth disagreeing over, and we pray along the way.
- Occasionally, our personal DMM mentor has come to our country to meet with Sam and John so they can get a new perspective and coaching from someone who has seen and done much more than we have.
- Continually decrease their need of and dependence upon us. Our goal is that whatever we are doing, they will also learn to do. Jesus is the real hero, but in the human sense, they need to be the heroes of any movement, not us expats. Our goal is to empower the national leaders (usually meaning get out of the way as quickly as possible).
- Tools for discipling leaders (paradigm-changing Bible trainings and leadership growth trainings), and tools for discipling churches (Discovery Study)
- We fund all training expenses when we train and/or when Sam trains. When lower-generation leaders do trainings, they pay for that themselves. We also fund basic work expenses for Sam and John, and four years into the movement we began giving the two of them salaries. They give 100% of their time to movement and have no other sources of income. The churches are learning to be very generous, but those funds are being used at the local level to help people in need, serve the community, open literacy centers, etc.

Roles of near-culture leader (Sam and John)

- Everything else
- Within his own group Sam is an inside leader, but in many places he's a near-culture leader as he mentors and discipless the inside leaders in any given area.
- He has the friendships and the network; he's a network person.
- He opens the door of relationships, introduces us and introduces the material.
- He gives his stamp of approval.
- People come to an initial vision casting because of him.
- After a training, he will have everyone's phone number in his phone.
- He stays in contact with people. He calls them the next day after a training and asks, "What did you think of what we did yesterday?"
- He's the person they call when they have questions.
- He's their pastor; we could never be.
- Even though we're there and we speak the national language, they won't be open to us like they will be to him. They're too polite for that. He can come back to us and say, "Some people understood what you said, but some others didn't," so we can go back and state the point again.
- He can say, "This is not simple enough." He gathers feedback and gives it to us so we can build better tools.
- His job is to make other "Pauls." He can be Barnabas making many "Pauls."
- He tells the lay leaders to "Go make "Timothys".
- Data, data, data. He consistently gets the data on the progress and is strongly engaged in the evaluation process.
- Sam and John gather inside leaders for small group gatherings, helping them to process how things are going and sharpen their approach. Sam and John are now helping inside leaders to mutually mentor each other.
- By 2015, Sam and John are THE leaders of the movement. Expat roles are very much in the background.

Roles of key inside leaders

They are the ones doing the work, walking the dusty roads, going into the households, praying for miracles, and praying for deliverance. They are the ones going to these simple farmers with a DBS and a Bible and sitting in a household, eating their food, even when it's over 100 degrees (F), with no electricity and no water. They are the ones doing it and seeing the fruit. They are the laborers, and the ones coming back with the stories. They are so excited! Their stories fuel the rest of us to keep us all going.

Key partners

Sam and John, described above.

Vision: is there uniformity of vision across multiple partnerships – does it exist, and if so, how did it emerge?

The vision is to “Equip nationals to see the unreached reached.” We have not stated it in terms of specific groups, because there are so many groups. We aim to reach the unreached and not work where work is already happening. Sam has included in the vision the specific element of creating training hubs across our region.

Key factors in progress

1. Listening prayer. We have changed and adjusted many times as we prayed and listened to the Lord. Prayer is our job. It isn't that we have a job and we have to add to it. Praying is the job. Praying is what I can do. I don't feel like praying every day. My prayers today may not feel very inspired. But it's my job to pray. I don't go to an office at 8:00 am but I get up and I pray. Seeing prayer in that way has helped be more faithful in prayer. Listening is an important part of prayer. There have been so many changes along the way and so many questions: What's next? Shall we work with this person? We've hit a “roadblock”; what Scriptures shall we use for the next training? Is this a good use of our funding? Is it time to release this brother who's not applying, or shall we give him one more chance? Should we continue training in this city or is this a dead end? We have so many questions, and we've learned to sit and wait for God's answer. Usually he gives the expat team and Sam and John the same answers, but we don't know it until our next biweekly meeting.

2. Miracles. The movement growth is happening primarily through miracles and through relational networks. The movement began through the early leaders taking steps of faith in seeking out PoPs. As part of their seeking out PoPs, they saw miracles *all the time* – lots of healing, lots of demonic deliverance. This of course opens the doors for a DBS, and also the word of the miracle spreads through natural relationships which then opens the door to other households. For instance, a brother finds an opportunity to pray for a demonized person. That person is delivered and the word spreads to their family, -perhaps family through marriage in another village. Those family members want that brother to come pray for them. So the original brother, plus the one originally delivered, go to the next village to pray for the family member, and another miracle happens. Another DBS starts, and it spreads some more. This has resulted in the explosive growth we are seeing. Very simple people, uneducated and barely into the Kingdom, pray for others and God does miracles, opening new doors.

3. Evaluation. We as expat catalysts are always evaluating— maybe too much. “How are we doing?” “Is what we're doing going to get us where we want to go?” I always ask: “If we do this, is it something they can do if we're not here? Can they replicate it?” So for example, after we had an initial outburst of 70 PoPs, and a lot of people getting saved, Sam thought, “Let's do baptism.” He wanted to have a giant baptismal service and invite all the house churches. A lot of people were excited to do a celebration and for many reasons that seemed like a good idea. But I couldn't say “yes” because that would then become the model for baptism, a model they could not replicate: too public, too expensive, and too many top-level leaders. I said, “Let's keep praying.” In the end, we didn't do it. Baptisms stayed simple, stayed in their area, and the pattern can easily reproduce. The question that always fuels our evaluation is, “Can they do it without us? Can they do it if we're gone tomorrow?”

4. We have been cautious, maybe overly cautious, about the use of funds. The local Christian culture is: get money from the West to help you do whatever you can. We have hesitated to invest money in anything. Some of the workers are faithful and have lots of people, but can't pay for the phone bills to stay in touch with their disciples. So we sometimes help with that. Once we see they are faithful, we can maybe help. The thing with the phones is that if someone here lives 30 km away, it might be a three-hour trip. They can't easily go visit. So the phone becomes necessary, yet we've still been very cautious about the use of money.

5. Sam himself is serious about prayer. He also agrees with the caution with funds. He refused to pay his own brother for a long time. He told him, “You need to figure out how to pay for your own phone and gasoline.” No one would be able to say nepotism is at work there. It's not us trying to convince Sam about finances; he holds it as a personal value.

6. We have to adapt our material. We receive tons of material from sources within our organization, but we've adapted almost everything, and we've been selective about what to use. We have a lot of friends in a sister agency who are willing to share materials, but as with all materials, if when we try it, doesn't quite fit, we adjust it. Then pretty soon we have our own material. It's not a formula at all.

7. Centered in Scripture. Every training has a strong scriptural basis. That's the center, the focus of the work. They need to know they can do this because they have the Word and the Holy Spirit, not because we give them some good teaching. They must learn to depend upon the Word. We use many lists of Scriptures, making observations, asking questions, and digging deeper. There is minimal preaching and almost no “teaching” of theology.

8. Continual vision casting, so they know this work is theirs, not ours. Giving everyone the expectation and hopefully tools, so that everything we bring to them can and should be passed down their discipleship chain.

Key barriers to progress

1. Fear in the leadership. A continuous emotional struggle has been: “Are we doing enough? Are we doing too much?” This is where listening prayer has been key: getting rid of the fear and listening to the Lord direct us as a team.

2. Traditional Christians. This continues to be the biggest hurdle. Many workers in our area do ministry simply for a salary and answer to a supervisor. They interrupt baptisms and church meetings and cause trouble, asking about theology they don't even understand. They also question the authority of the movement's leadership, since this work is not institutionally based. This has brought confusion to the churches, and we've lost roughly 10% of the new churches to traditional ministries and missions groups as they give stipends to the local leaders. Praise the Lord these people came to faith, but in traditional ministries they are not empowered to make other disciples and make other churches. They will become barren.

Disappointments/Challenges

1. Wives who believe in the Great Commission and want to go out and meet their neighbors, but their supposedly Christian husbands forbid them to leave the home. The husbands do not give the wives permission to obey the Great Commission. So some wives say, "You can beat me but I'm going to obey Jesus. We call ourselves Christians and this is what we should do." Giving the women permission to obey is a big challenge.

2. Feedback loop for evaluation and adjustments is slow and difficult. National believers will not talk back or correct people they perceive above them. It's taken time to find out what does and does not work, how to make things simpler, etc.

3. People who seem to have great potential but then it turns out they're motivated only by money. We are often surprised about who is effective. Some people seem to have great potential for effectiveness but then turn out ineffective. Also some people we liked have stopped being involved. Sam has shielded us from a lot of that, which I wish he didn't do so much.

4. Wife beating is common in some places. It's just one of many issues we need to tackle in the new churches and pray more about.

5. So many areas in this culture need transformation. Where to start when 100% of time and energy goes into simply feeding the movement? When and how best to tackle issues of integrity, social problems, and deeper emotional and spiritual issues?

Remaining Gaps

- large areas with no witness
- not many from the middle class
- translation gap (soon to be filled)
- lack of ethnic music
- Although we see growth in local funds coming into the movement, those funds need to trickle up to the top level as salaries to the main leaders. I hope this can happen someday.

Statistical Information

- December 2012 - 75 groups reported
- December 2013 - about 250 groups reported
- July 2014 - about 880 groups reported
- April 2015 - about 1500 groups reported
- Jan 2016 - 5000 groups (3000 churches, 2000 Discovery Groups)

Future Plans

- Keep moving ahead.
- A *lot* of listening prayer for guidance.
- Visas getting harder here, thus we're not sure how long we'll be here. So we hold it all lightly and aim to be faithful to God's leading and any ways he wants to adjust things.
- Always considering how to empower nationals as a key part of our exit strategy.
- We're open to catalyzing in a new place with new people, though there's already so much to do in the existing work.
- Praying about increasing outreach to minority non-Christian religious groups. How much that happens will depend on how the Lord leads and whether nationals catch a vision for it. (They are almost all from a majority religious background, so it's a big step for them.)

Edition History

Oct. 2014, originally written

Apr. 2015, updated with additional details

May 2016, updated for current status and clarity

May 2017, edited for security