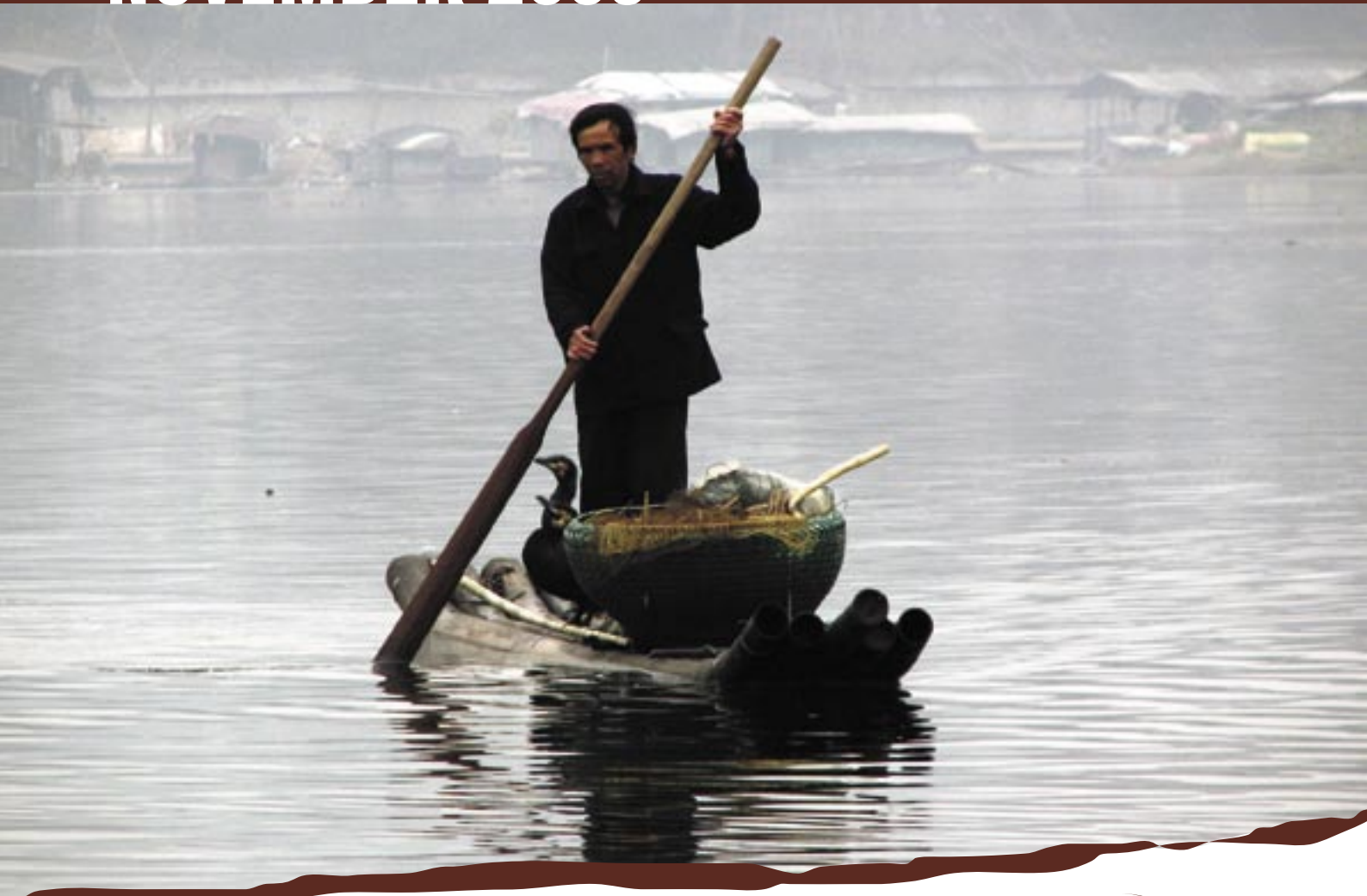


VISION

NOVEMBER 2009

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN
DISTINCTIVE WAYS
OF FOLLOWING JESUS



Times of Transition



GLOBAL | INTERACTION



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“Any transition serious enough to alter your definition of self will require not just small adjustments in your way of living and thinking, but a full-on metamorphosis.”

M. Beck

TIMES OF TRANSITION

It seems that life is full of transitions from one stage to another. We move through the various stages of childhood, stagger through the teenage years until there is a greater sense of stability as an adult. Yet even there, transitions continue, as we continue to travel through adult life. Perhaps we will need to deal with transitions into marriage, becoming parents and even grandparents. Transitions aren't easy because they take us to places we have not been before. Consequently, there are always adjustments to make and change can be difficult. **But for growth, change is necessary.** So it becomes important to consider the issue and the implications of transitions for us in order that we might grow through them during the journey of life.

As an organisation we are particularly focused on transition. Some of our great desires as an organisation involve transition. We long to contribute to the transformation of people within Baptist churches in Australia and overseas, increasing their effectiveness in His mission, both locally and globally. Also, we long to see unreached people groups transformed by the love of Christ and move from 'darkness into light' (Acts 26:18). **Since our mission is to empower communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus, we expect transitions to occur, in thinking, in beliefs, in values and in the subsequent lifestyles in those communities.** However, to see such transitions occur we send people who express the life of Jesus in a different context. It is no surprise that they also have to make significant transitions to serve these unreached people groups.

As a cross-cultural worker, you must move beyond any cultural differences so that the good news of Jesus is shared in a way that embodies the eternal truth and not merely a cultural interpretation of it. As language is learnt, appropriate cultural forms are found for sharing

the life of Jesus with those who don't know Him. Inevitably, this means transitioning to a new lifestyle for those entering a different culture. The nature of the transitions involved is multifaceted.

In this edition of *Vision* we hear from a variety of people about their experiences of transition. Catherine and Lulu reflect on their recent moves to different parts of the world. Three couples – Ky and Sharon, Dave and Edwina, and John and Glenda – are reactivating their service with Global Interaction and share some of their insights on “heading out” a second time. John Wilmot shares from his experience in Malawi about the localisation of ministry. And we hear from Karen Newnham, Global Interaction's Director of Human Resources, about some of the theory and training regarding transition.

Just as we will look at the topic of transition in this edition of *Vision*, there are also changes to the production and distribution of *Vision*. A new editorial committee has been formed. The magazine will feature more in-depth articles about mission as well as ongoing news about the work of Global Interaction. **As of next year however, *Vision* will only be produced twice a year. Following this edition, it will only be distributed to subscribers directly and, generally, will not be available from the local Baptist church. So if you would like to receive a copy and don't regularly receive one directly through the mail now, please fill in the form on the back page and send it to us.**

As *Vision* transitions, as our staff transition, as the people we work with transition, our prayer is that as you read this you will find insight to be able to transition well, wherever you are.

JEFF IRELAND
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O, IN TRANSIT

In August of this year, five of the teaching staff in Central Asia moved to a different province to commence a new teaching ministry among the H people. Technically they're doing the same work in the same country as they've been in the past. But it's a new city, new people, new culture and new experiences. Getting used to the newness is all part of the process of transition. Here, **Lulu** reflects on what it's been like for the team to transition into new things.

It's moving time, yet again!

As the Master called and equipped our little band to head 'westward ho', we have experienced the highs and lows of transition. Consider these four stages of moving, or 'O, in transit', (as the letters of transition can be rearranged).

1. Moving **away**, moving **from**, and moving **out**: In cold hard terms, that means uprooting, sorting and culling, packing, dealing with all the physical aspects and emotions needed to say goodbye, and then leaving. Having been part of our teaching team since 1999, there are years of accumulated life, resulting in friendships with team-members and local people who are as close as family members. In particular, I consider that our teaching team, in being 'community', has indeed been the 'body of Jesus Christ', so the sense of belonging is very strong. Each year, we have welcomed new members, which is always a joyful time. But sadly, the farewells bring the heart-wrenching acknowledgement that our time together has been but for a season.

In regards to relationships with students, apart from the input into their lives educationally, for many I have also had the joy of watching them graduate, secure jobs, get engaged and then married, take out a mortgage to buy their first abode, become parents and in some cases, begin their own businesses or study abroad. In their work capacity, some have travelled to more countries than I would even dream of visiting. The depth of commitment and love which has been

built, often from being privileged to spend time in their families and villages, and from sharing in deeply personal life issues, cannot be measured. It wouldn't be true to say that I am leaving them behind, as each one occupies a place in my heart. They are with me, as close as the utterance of a message winged to the Master, as close as a text message or phone call or email. And yes, there will be lots of reunions!

2. Moving **across** and **with**: Once all 38 boxes and five suitcases of belongings were packed and ready (and they were just mine!), it was time to set off, again heading into teaching work, but this time with the added focus of working with the H people. We were filled with excitement, eager anticipation, the sense of willingness to establish ourselves on the university campus, to bridge cultures (we have all 55 minority groups represented amongst our student population) and to be ready to serve Him in any capacity.

3. Moving **in** and **towards**: Imagine the scene of furniture, household items, clothing, some whitegoods etc needing to be lugged up five sets of stairs! Three amazing local women shouldered umpteen loads from the truck to the apartments, whilst one of the truck drivers sat and watched! Before unpacking, much cleaning was needed, along with many repairs (broken floor tiles/curtain tracks/toilet seats/flyscreens etc). A hastily arranged luncheon with the dean before she headed abroad for business; intra-department meetings to find out about staff and schedules; familiarisation with the faculties; trying to identify

which buses go where; locating items for setting up an office; deploying people to sniff out necessities such as butter, flour, shower curtains, phone cards etc; arranging to have the internet and telephone connected; all within 10 days... Our heads are whirling!

But a deepening awareness of our Father's presence carries us through, and in a short time, we are already using the phrase 'feels like we really belong'. On the first Sunday, our team met together for Communion, and to commit ourselves for whatever the Master would require of us. Unbelievably, our shared lunch actually consisted of home-made cottage pie and carrot cake... Yes, we actually did find a butcher who could mince a slab of beef! The women have formed a triplet for intercession, and the men are dubbed 'the Duo'. How desperately we need to wait on Father, and beseech Him for all our needs.

4. Moving **forwards**: It has only been three short weeks but already we have made some significant contacts with the H people in and around our area – some restaurant owners, a young student playing soccer with R, the girlfriend of one of the students assigned to help us whilst repairs have been carried out in our apartments, and for Darcy, who has started teaching, a number of his students. In many of my long walks and morning jogs, I have laid claim to the area, asking for the glorious Light to shine and bring life. One day, I walked the entire outer perimeter of the campus, covering every inch with His promises.

Today as the first-year students enrolled, I went to our department to spend some time welcoming them, as they will be 'my' students next week! How precious to take the hands of parents and young people from all over this vast land, introduce myself and assure them that they will be well cared for in this place (and to bring them before Father for His blessing).

LULU
Central Asia

PICTURES:

Statue representing minority groups in Central Asia (Lulu)

University students (Melissa Bencik)

Lanterns

Into the banqueting house

Project code: CAwh202

Meals, supper and a cup of tea are excellent means to invite people into homes and share experiences. Providing the acceptable types of foods, with ingredients purchased from acceptable vendors, and cooked with acceptable utensils, is essential for this people group to feel comfortable. Support this hospitality.

Project costs: \$1,000

Gifts to this project are tax-deductible

To support this and other projects, call 03 9819 4944, go to www.globalinteraction.org.au or fill in the form on the back page.

PROJECT PROFILE



PICTURE:

Mosque in Central Asia

PEOPLE GROUP PROFILE

THE H* PEOPLE OF CENTRAL ASIA

Global Interaction's primary focus is to serve nine unreached people groups who have little or no knowledge about Jesus. Some people in these groups will go from birth to death without ever hearing his name, and most will never learn of him in meaningful ways. In addition, many people in these groups are socially and physically disadvantaged.

One of these unreached people groups is the H people of Central Asia.*

About the people

The H people are one of the larger ethnic minority groups in Central Asia. They account for approximately 1% of the country's population, while the majority people group, the Han, make up approximately 92%.

The H people number more than 10 million, and are descendents of Arab, Persian and Central Asian Muslim immigrants who intermarried with the Han. They are Muslim people, with some choosing to strictly follow the traditions of Islam, and others only differing from their Han neighbours in that they abstain from eating pork. The interpretation of Islam also varies by region and community – but in most cases, the Mosque is the centre of their social life.

Like the Han, the H people speak Mandarin, although their religious language is quite different. The H people also speak the local dialects of their region.

There is a great need for people who are committed to long-term incarnational mission to live and work amongst the H people. Our newly expanded H team is looking forward to learning much about the people and culture and sharing life in their communities.

**Note: for security reasons, staff names have been changed and we simply refer to this people group as H.*

To support any of the cross-cultural workers in Central Asia financially or through prayer, call 03 9819 4944, go to www.globalinteraction.org.au or complete the form on the back page.

The cross-cultural team

G and C

G and C are very much part of daily life in their local community and focus on language and cultural learning. They open their home to offer hospitality, and in this context build deep relationships where people from their community now talk with them about many personal questions.

Cliff

Cliff uses his accountancy background to benefit local business people, which then gives him opportunity to develop friendships. This work, and interaction with his neighbours and friends, has opened the way for Cliff to have input into their lives. They not only ask business questions, but also share their life issues and faith questions with him.

Lulu, Darcy and Lola, R and B

In mid-2009 Lulu, Darcy and Lola, R and B relocated to a different province in Central Asia to commence a new teaching ministry among the H people. They have commenced teaching English in a university and have already begun building relationships with students, teaching colleagues and people in their neighbourhood.

Dan and Gaye

Dan and Gaye are candidates with Global Interaction, preparing to join the team teaching in Central Asia. They live in country Victoria and have previously served cross-culturally in Africa and Asia.



PICTURE:

Cambodian streets (Catherine)

DON'T FORGET THE VEGEMITE

Catherine recently packed up her things and moved to join the team in Cambodia. For her, transition has been much more than just moving location. But she's found that a jar of vegemite helps ease any discomforts.

On one level, it is easy to look at someone who has packed up their life in their home country and moved overseas, and to say "you have transitioned". There is a very obvious geographical moving from one point to another; in one short plane trip a transition has occurred and life is now lived in a new context.

Look more closely, however, and transition becomes far more intricate. **It is not simply about a geographical moving but about a moving of the head and the heart.** How do I do this? What is it like to go from all that is familiar, known and understood, to that which is new? The geographical transition from Australia to Cambodia has happened, but the transitioning of who I am, my ability to communicate and build significant relationships with others... these are ongoing dimensions of the transition journey.

There are days when it is easy to be on this journey. On a good day, language lessons go well. I hang out with neighbours and manage to string some sentences together in something that resembles a conversation. I visit a project and capture aspects of the hope that Cambodians have for themselves, their communities, their country. Transitioning is good – my head and heart are slowly coming to understand more of this place and its people. I'm filled with excitement and I'm humbled that I can participate in what God has for me here. On these days, I know I haven't reached the end point of transition (is there really an end point that one reaches???) but I feel I'm learning, growing, moving forward.

Then there are the days when transition is hard. The cold water bucket shower is not refreshing and language learning is frustrating. This second reality hits when I find myself having more in depth conversations about The Wiggles with my three year old niece than

I can manage with my language tutor; a pregnant mother of three, living in a poor village struggling with circumstances that I can't yet grasp. I see issues of poverty and injustice all around me but realise that what I see is only the surface. I wonder, will I ever understand? When will I begin to be able to respond relevantly? Who am I without an identity grounded in work? How can yet another white foreigner help?

Some days I go through a similar routine as I would in Australia, while at other times a series of frustrations and disappointments stack on top of each other and all I want to do is sit down and eat vegemite!

One thing that makes transition easier is when I remember I'm not the only one who is experiencing this shift. I'm surrounded by a community of people who are also transitioning. Global Interaction's training highlighted the importance of connecting with this community, of finding people, both within and outside the Global Interaction team, who can relate to this initial time of transition. There are also the many people who are praying for me as I transition; on the hard days, their prayer and their encouragement helps and inspires me to keep going.

Transitioning. It's something I have done. It's something that is still unfolding. Even on the hard days, when I come back to God, I realise that I'm simply participating in a bigger work. There's growth and learning through change and for this reason alone, I hope I continue exploring and transitioning for the rest of my life!

CATHERINE
Cambodia



STAGES OF TRANSITION

Karen Newnham, Global Interaction's Director of Human Resources, conducts regular training sessions for candidates preparing for cross-cultural work. One training program is dedicated entirely to coping in transition. Here she shares with us a model that helps with understanding the stages of transition.

Life for all of us is a series of transitions as we move from infancy through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Concurrent with these life changes are those imposed by self or others as we move from school to work, relocate and change responsibilities. The intercultural worker adds cross-cultural dimensions to these normal changes, which often increases the frequency and intensity of change. An understanding of the process of transition not only can help cross-cultural workers but can also help all of us to transition the stages of life well.

While each experience of transition is a personal journey, the following model (see bridge diagram above) describes some common phases experienced by people making any transition. The manner in which the general issues impact each individual varies in kind and intensity depending on their life experiences and the nature of the transition.

Stage 1 – Own culture

In making a transition we start in our own culture, where we are comfortable. We know how to behave, the correct social cues, our roles and the place we belong in all that surrounds us.

Stage 2 – Leaving

As we begin to transition, we find ourselves at a stage where things are done for the last time in the old way and this brings with it a mixture of feelings, both good and bad. People start to distance themselves from you and sometimes this may happen before you are even ready to let go. You find yourself surrounded by people making plans that don't include you. It is crucial at this time to recognise that in order to enter fully into the transition, you need to make sure

that you say goodbye well. When you try to live in two environments at once – holding on to what you have left, as well as what you are going to – you find yourself doing neither well. You become split between them. This distancing from people and disengaging from responsibilities needs to begin even before you transition.

Stage 3 – Transition/Chaos

The next stage entered as you cross this bridge is the Transition/Chaos stage. It is at this time that you begin to focus on the future. Decisions have been made and you move on. You enter into survival mode. You find that you do not know how to behave and live well. If your transition includes a new language you find yourself with less ability to speak and express yourself than even a 3 year old. The following poem by Dr Jennifer Noesjirwan expresses it well:

*There is something I don't know
That I am supposed to know
I don't know what it is that I don't know
And yet am supposed to know
And I feel I look stupid
If I seem both not to know it
And not know what it is I don't know
Therefore I pretend I know it.
This is nerve-racking
Since I don't know what I must pretend to know.
Therefore I pretend I know everything
I feel you know what I am supposed to know
But you can't tell me what it is
Because you don't know that I don't
Know what it is.
You may know what I don't know
But not that I don't know it
And I can't tell you. So you will*

Have to tell me everything.
In this phase the home and daily life routines are dismantled and it is generally characterised by 'chaos'. A person usually has a sense of grief associated with the losses, confusion from a lack of schedule and task expectations, and over sensitivity in common problems. It is often a time of status-less-ness and ambiguity. Comfort and stability can be gained through clear identification of personal expectations, expression of questions and fears, and maintenance of daily rituals and practices (e.g. family times, personal devotions).

The rescheduling of the body clock through proper eating and rest gradually provides energy to begin the process of positively coping with the new state of being. It also reduces the tendency to withdraw, become depressed or panic. The assistance of supportive people to learn survival language and enable you to meet your basic living needs sets the stage for long-term transition.

Stage 4 - Entering

As you move on and begin to enter the new stage it is helpful to identify bridge people. "Bridge people" are people who can help you understand the new situation.

At this stage you find yourself facing many questions like: "What does it mean to be a person in transition? What is my status here? How am I ever going to cope?"

At this point you move from being a guest to being a learner. These first steps consume large amounts of emotional, physical and mental energy. The commitment to positive attitudes, realistic expectations, coping strategies and an awareness of

self will help to provide the focus for the main task of becoming comfortable again. By using all available learning and living opportunities you are able to build relationships and become comfortable in the new place and situation.

Stage 5 – New Culture

The final stage is where you become a part of the new. You have crossed the bridge and now can embrace your new life. In most situations you have a growing confidence. As you gain understanding and accept your new life, you will become more at home and comfortable. Nostalgia at special times like birthdays and Christmas is normal. But you suddenly realise that the place you are now in feels like home and that feeling continues to grow. Coming to this point requires a willingness to accept people and situations as they are, a recognition that it is not disloyal to family and past friends to enjoy one's present situation. Reflection during this phase identifies areas for growth and your own awareness of self.

Remember, transition comes to an end and you are no longer on the bridge. You will start to belong to the new.

KAREN NEWNHAM
Director of Human Resources



LOCALISATION & LEAVING

John and Angela Wilmot recently concluded ten years serving with Global Interaction among the Yao people in Malawi. But it hasn't been a case of just "up and leaving". No. The Wilmots have thought long and hard about how to best transition in the handing over of ministry to the Yao people.

Have you ever read a book with a bad ending? What a waste of time!

Considering all the time, energy and resources that are so often pumped into a task, it is somewhat surprising how often people find themselves plucked out without much time to prepare for how it will all end. And just like the book with a bad ending, the whole story flounders and fails. **While it is important how you start, it is perhaps even more important how you finish.**

When we first arrived in Malawi, a sense of urgency didn't exist for us. It had taken forever to actually jump all the hoops to get there and now that we were on Malawi soil there didn't seem to be a need for urgency. We were to be there for what seemed like eternity.

We got involved in initiating what is now known as LifeGroups. LifeGroups is a network of independent village faith communities that are figuring out how to follow Jesus in a truly Yao way. LifeGroups naturally evolved into a birthplace for innovative ways of empowering people to tackle the difficulties of life. Lots of things have been happening – a rural development program, community library and functional education programs. What's even more exciting than the growth of LifeGroups (there is now, across a huge geographical area, more than 120 LifeGroups with more than 4,000 adults regularly gathering) is that these groups are now being led and directed by the locals themselves.

Transition and succession became the key themes right from the very beginning, once we realised how temporary our involvement would really be. While some people may feel called to a place for life, for us that made no sense at all. We never came believing that the Yao needed us there forever. **Ultimately we came to do ourselves out of a job.** People are to be dependent on God, not us.

We realised that so much of our worldview had to be deconstructed. It was just too easy at the beginning to fall into the trap of it being about us and about what we came to do. In our Western culture, our identity is based upon what we do and achieve. Our titles, job and education define who we are. However many cultures are like the Yao, where your identity is an 'ascribed' identity. This means it's who you belong to, who you are connected to that matters and ultimately defines you. What you achieve is totally unsustainable if it is not connected with those to whom you belong.

Therefore, we spent the majority of our time resisting the urge to teach. Instead, we shared our stories, learned from those around us, until the depth of relationship earned us the right to share God's story.

We began to see ourselves as a scaffold: secure, but temporary. A scaffold exists for a purpose other than itself, totally focused on the purpose of what it exists to support. The endeavour had to involve the people we came to serve and include them in genuine partnership right from the start. It was our hope that as people began to follow Jesus, they would identify and reflect on the problems around them and solutions needed to rectify these issues. It was our hope that the local people, not the "foreign experts", would fill the gaps that existed; looking to God, each other and themselves. If experts were needed, they were to be part of the scaffold, not the centre of attention.

In understanding that we might not last the distance, sustainability had to be there from the beginning so that if we were to leave at any point, what was built could stand and function on its own. Strategically we developed some core principles which revolved around the concepts of our continued transition and succession to local leaders and people. Leadership became a key focus, as discipleship and leadership go hand in hand.

This emphasis on leadership is highlighted in LifeGroups' Leadership Training Program. This is a five-day intensive for the leaders of LifeGroups. These leaders then return to their home villages to pass on what they learnt to the other members of LifeGroups. A number of leaders have openly testified to God's work in their lives and have been challenged on a number of different levels. Clearly their faith is developing as they actively wrestle with how to follow Jesus in their own distinctive way.

The localisation of LifeGroups has been an incremental process, as is the process of transition and succession. In 2005 we began officially preparing with the leadership of LifeGroups for our succession, with the plan for us to transition to non-residential service by early 2009. This time frame provided LifeGroups with the opportunity to learn more and to plan a transition strategy, while looking seriously into succession planning and some of the external organisational complications.

The following list outlines the process of transition and succession of our work over the years that brought us to the point of full localisation and being able to leave Malawi.

LifeGroups - Process of Succession and Transition

1. Engage community and begin building social capital (ie. reputation in community)
2. Activate social capital at all levels and facilitate visioning and interdependence
3. Facilitate leadership and begin evolution of appropriate structures and experience
4. Facilitate growth through continued engagement and continue building of social capital and promoting independence
5. Facilitate values, vision, mission
6. Facilitate organisational identity and begin succession and transition planning
7. Facilitate institutionalisation and begin formalisation of legal and other requirements
8. Strengthen organisational structures, including the establishment of a stable administration
9. Facilitate key appointments, boards, constitution
10. Revise values, vision, mission
11. Review succession and transition
12. Implement and complete succession

Ultimately we didn't have the foresight to know how to make this succeed. It was faith. We came to the humble realisation that we brought nothing to the table and that it was God who provided everything.

Pulling away from things creates gaps. Its only when these gaps are apparent that people see the need to step in and fill them. **We chose to continually take steps back so the locals could take steps forward.**

So we chose to make our focus on local empowerment, local visioning, local structuring and local identifying of needs. We decided to live out our mission through strategy and intentionality. We came to leave, rather than make a career out of the people or become a victim of circumstance. But we also came to build genuine relationship through inclusion and interaction. These aims may seem a little like oil and vinegar; they make a great salad dressing but perhaps have some incongruence between them.

So we leave having enjoyed the most exciting and rewarding life but also experience an incredible ache of grief and loss as we leave our friends.

However, one of my favourite quotes illustrates the reason why we chose to leave.

Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say "We have done this ourselves." (Lao Tzu)

In a recent letter from Malawi, my friend and LifeGroups Coordinator wrote: "Please pray we can communicate well with our families and friends that ministry will continue growing with the will of God. I am also delighted to inform you that, on 30th September 2009, there will be a baptism whereby 500 people are going to be baptised which is a wonderful thing in LifeGroups."

When the time has come and you must leave, the people will say, "We have done it ourselves."

JOHN WILMOT
Outback Australia

John, Angela and their seven children are now planning on serving a little closer to home – among Martu indigenous communities in Newman, Outback Australia.

They thank all who have partnered with them and the Yao people in the past 10 years.

If you would like to support John and Angela financially or through prayer, call 03 9819 4944, go to www.globalinteraction.org.au or complete the form on the back page.

PICTURES:

LifeGroups in Malawi
(Scott)

Malawi kids
(Scott)

Wilmot family in Newman,
Outback Australia
(John Wilmot)



THREE COUPLES, THREE TRANSITIONS

We know that transition of any sort is not easy, especially when it involves settling into another culture. But three couples are taking the plunge yet again, reactivating their service with Global Interaction.

PICTURES:

Kazakhstan chill
(Pauline)

South East Asia
(Ros McGarvey)

Ky & Sharon: Ky and Sharon, along with their six children, lived in South East Asia from 1990 to 2000. Ky worked in the city waste management department. In 2006, Ky took on the role of Global Interaction State Director in South Australia. Now that their children are independent, Ky and Sharon are preparing to head back to the same people group South East Asia. Sharon is now a qualified primary teacher and Ky again has connections in the rubbish business.

Dave & Edwina: From 1983 to 1998 Dave and Edwina served cross-culturally in Papua with their three children, Heath, Linsey and Garrett. They were involved with community development projects and assisted local churches. Since returning to Australia, Edwina has been employed in the Global Interaction national office and Dave has worked in patient transport. Now, with their children grown up, Dave and Edwina are preparing to join the team in South East Asia.

John & Glenda: John and Glenda with their children, David, Andrew, Philip and Heidi spent 12 years living and working in Papua New Guinea. After returning to Australia, John took on the role of pastor and then Global Interaction State Director in Queensland. Their abilities, experience and training have prepared them for John's role as leader of the Global Interaction team in the Silk Road Area.

Why do you want to return to the field?

K&S: For us there is a strong sense of an unfinished mission. We have a hope that God will one day create a faith movement of wide-reaching proportions among the IS* people. It hasn't happened yet. I (Ky) had a word from God one day in 1993. I'd been nagging him, asking: 'Save the IS, save the IS,' when he replied: 'Well, are you prepared to be a part of the answer?' And when I eventually said 'yes', I heard him challenge

again, 'even if it takes 20 years?' So it's a long term job!

D&E: This is who we are. This is what we do. We believe this is what God is planning and calling us to. We believed our return to Australia 11 years ago would be temporary. So we've patiently, or not so patiently, awaited his timing and call to return. With our family moving on and opportunities opening up for re-entry to Global Interaction, we have felt confirmation in believing this is God's timing. We also believe this is what the people of South East Asia are ready for: a new strategy of witness to Jesus.

J&G: The call to cross-cultural ministry has remained in our hearts long after our return from PNG, and as our family became established in their own situations the Lord began nudging us with words like, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance...' (Deut 1:6-7) It became clear that God wanted us to be part of the solution to the imbalance that sees less than 1% of Christian workers serving the 26% of the world who are in unreached people groups.

What are you feeling as you prepare to go?

K&S: Apprehension due to the things we know (as compared to the things we really didn't know on the first journey): we know the character of the people group; we know the way corruption can dishearten; we know the spiritual battle will be sneaky, aimed at us, at loved ones and at colleagues. But we also feel excitement too. Sometimes we can hardly keep from shouting for joy!

D&E: Such diverse emotions! There's so much preparation to do. Yet we feel reassured that our past experience should be of advantage, even if from a very different cultural and ministry context. The most exciting thing is the knowledge that God is already there and active.

J&G: Considering we're now older and we're not returning to the place we knew, this time we feel more challenged about learning a new language, culture and religious environment. From experience, we know that challenges, frustration and tedium, as well as great privileges, come with cross-cultural work. We are sad to leave behind our children and parents, though communication options are now much better. We also feel excited and privileged to be part of the team in the Silk Road Area working towards a truly local expression of following Jesus.

Reflect on your experience of transition.

K&S: On our recent visits to South East Asia we've enjoyed catching up with old friends and enjoying some favourite aspects of the culture. But the confirmation came when on our last day there God spoke almost audibly: "I want you back here to live in a year's time."

D&E: God has been faithful at each transition event we've experienced. We've been blessed by his very generous provision of many good people who've journeyed with us or met us on arrival. On returning to Melbourne, for example, after our time in Papua, we were both given temporary work opportunities. In Dave's case this came through relative strangers, Christian men who responded to a request for assistance. These opportunities saw our family over the initial "hump" and on our way.

J&G: We remember returning to PNG after our first home assignment to find ourselves denied a seat on our connecting flight at Port Moresby. We became really frustrated as staff took hours to work out what to do with us. We thought we had adapted to Melanesian time, delays and inefficiencies. It reminds us now that, even with previous experience, cross-cultural work can stretch and surprise us.

What are some of the challenges of transition and what helps make it easier?

K&S: Simple things make transition easier like knowing

what to take and what would be silly to pack. What makes it harder is the age we are now at. It's a less adventurous time of life, when we tend to be cautious, anxious and conservative. Saying goodbye to family and friends and revisiting the feelings of parting and lost years of friendship, which we have experienced the pain of before, will be tough.

D&E: The challenges come through the expectations we have: expecting too much of ourselves; expecting to make fast progress; expecting too much of others. So the lesson is to give yourself time and to try to relax a little. It helps to surround yourself with people who will journey the transition with you, especially if they've had a similar experience in the past. What helps make transition easier? A firm conviction that this is God's plan and he is there already preparing the way.

J&G: It is easy to become judgmental or confused about locals' actions. We need to be teachable and continually ask questions so we can see things through their eyes. We can feel isolated – far from our own culture but not part of the local culture either. Being part of a team and making local friends will help us to feel at home in the community in which we live and serve.

What's your advice to those wanting to get involved in cross-cultural mission?

K&S: Do not worship your comfort zone.

D&E: Ask yourself a lot of questions, challenge your thinking. Ask yourself how you feel about people who are very different from you. Are you comfortable trying to make contact with others, even if it may seem initially superficial? How well do you see things from other people's point of view? And then, just jump in and do it! Have experiences in outreach ministry opportunities here to gauge your own interest in and response to this lifestyle.

J&G: Don't do it unless God tells you to. Otherwise you risk coming unstuck. Don't hold back if God does tell you to go. Otherwise you will miss out on some

great experiences and growth, and the joy of helping people

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