

MISSIONARY UPHOLDERS TRUST



Shamala and Livingstone (names changed) are dedicated missionaries, serving God faithfully in Orissa through a mission agency. Tragedy struck when Shamala was detected with breast cancer and the malignancy forced her to undergo surgery. The chemotherapy took a severe toll on her. The tiresome process, the complete loss of hair coupled with incessant pain in her calf muscle, which is symptomatic of loss of blood, ravaged her emotionally. Prior to her sickness, Shamala had a reputation for being bold and she was a source of encouragement to all who knew her personally. Her characteristic smile disarmed everyone. But now the sickness brought despair and proved a testing time for Shamala and her husband. Livingstone recently lost his mother and his wife's sickness only aggravated the grief he was going through. The daughters, who had applied for leave to be with their parents, were now unable to bear the anguish of seeing their parents suffer. To make matters worse, the steady increase in the medical expenses had put the family under tremendous strain, pain and misery. The mission agency, already burdened with the task of sustaining the ministry operations was unable to provide the sizable amount for them. Apart from the immediate financial help, the family desperately needed spiritual and emotional support. Completely left in the lurch, they had to fend for themselves. Until MUT stepped in.

A story such as this is commonplace among missionaries who serve through mission agencies and work oftentimes in far flung and inhospitable terrains. An estimated 40,000 missionaries and their family members operate under

the umbrella of different mission organizations in India. The sheer number of missionaries and the magnitude of needs in mission organisations have unwittingly created a gap in the care of its members. Some missionaries are fortunate enough to be taken care by the organisations or other sources, but most of them do not have any form of support. With their meagre resources, most missionaries are unprepared to meet any eventuality in the course of their daily lives. Barring few exceptions, missionaries have had to fend for themselves in other areas of need. This prompted the birth of Missionary Upholders Trust.

Missionary Upholders Trust (MUT) was formed in 1993 as an off-shoot from Missionary Upholders family (MUF). Missionary Upholder Family members who moved in closed quarters with missionaries were able to empathise with the spiritual, emotional and physical predicament missionaries go through. Leaving behind his career in the corporate world, J.J. Ratnakumar, MUT's General Coordinator, volunteered along with his wife, as full time honorary workers of MUT. Ratnakumar has provided the leadership impetus for the movement since MUT's inception. The organisation's vision statement reads: "As followers of Christ, care for, share with, and meet some of the common unmet needs of missionaries, at their affordable cost, working beyond all man-made boundaries, in a spirit of Christian love." With over 100 missionary organisations as members, and serving well over 11,000 missionaries in different parts of India, MUT has truly lived up to its vision. The projects cover medical help, calamity relief, rest house facilities, training and post retirement assistance,

Synergizing Member Care and Partnerships

says, "In the past, a mission organisation such as NMSI had an inadequate understanding of missionary welfare. MUT has opened our mind and forced us to think clearly in the direction of providing better member care for our missionaries. They have been a great source of blessing for the mission community." As an inter-denominational body indigenously supported by several churches and approved by the CSI Synod, NMSI has more than 350 full time missionaries and workers. MUT's facilities such as rest houses, master health check ups, IMPACT and Love Your Brother schemes have greatly benefited us". J.J. Ratnakumar has also impressed upon the board



precautionary steps such as preventive health education and master health check up assistance and medical assistance in times of sickness. Besides providing a slew of projects, MUT conducts consultation meetings regularly with mission organizations, missionaries, churches and leaders to deliberate on various member care issues, exchange ideas and encourage missions to make a concerted effort in implementing the projects.

"The number of indigenous missionaries of all categories is very large. As the years go by this 'call to obedience to the heavenly-vision' will result in missionaries who will need greater care and shelter. MUT is the present day answer to this immediate and projected need" says Samuel Kamaleson, President, Friends Missionary Prayer Band, a reputed leader in mission circles. Underscoring the role MUT has been playing in member care Kamaleson adds: "Missionaries, in Biblical terms are 'harvesters', and in sociological terms they are 'transformational leaders' who 'give and give and give....themselves' to transform the society. The two identities are exhaustingly demanding roles. Since their calling is not one that anticipates an appreciating understanding from others, they seldom get the care they deserve. They need the Member Care that MUT alone can give."

Scores of mission agencies can vouch for MUT's unique contribution to member care development, which goes beyond mere the catchphrase, and that has made a significant difference in missions. Samuel Prabhakar, General Secretary, National Missionary Society of India

members of NMSI to take up additional responsibilities for its missionaries. This is amply indicated by the fact that NMSI will be giving focused attention on raising funds towards Missionary Kids.

Similarly, going by one of the oldest mission organisations in India, Indian Missionary Society which is no less an admirer of MUT's unique member care programmes, D. Vedhanbu, General Secretary, IMS, states: "MUT has given us a frame of thinking to understand the real plight of our missionaries and provided us with practical schemes to help them collectively." With more than 650 missionaries, spread across 20 states, IMS has been taking interest in missionary welfare development. "Member care as a concept was something I learnt from Ratnakumar, an advisor in our IMS Board"

Calamity Relief – Real Impact

IMPACT (Inter Mission Plan of Assurance during Calamity Times) is MUT's primary project, which has fared well on the ground. The highlight of the scheme is the assistance it provides to the bereaved family during the death of the missionary. Around 106 missions including sub groups with a combined strength of over 11,000 missionaries have joined this scheme contributing Rs.10/- per death. Through this, each bereaved missionary family receives an immediate financial assistance of Rs. 5,000 as funeral help, later Death Relief of Rs. 1,00,000 followed by sustained annual care in child support & Christmas celebration gift. MUT also sees to it that the bereaved family receives sustained support after the death of the family member. This is critical as most



MUT's ministry is unique and invaluable - Dr. Kelly O'Donnell

MUT's ministry is unique and invaluable. We know of no similar member care organisation that is doing the same types of things.

MUT's commitments over the years and contributions

are noteworthy: Helping the bereaved, providing health care, setting up facilities to give workers a much-needed, break, offering affordable pension schemes, running seminars and conferences, and in general advocating for the whole-person needs of mission personnel. Also noteworthy are the special skills, personal sacrifice, and dedication of the many people associated with MUT, including staff, board members, and volunteers.

Managing such a diverse ministry like MUT is a challenging task. People can struggle at times from the wear and tear of this ministry. I respect the leaders for

their perseverance and ongoing efforts to do all they can to keep mission personnel--and themselves--healthy and effective for the long haul.

MUT is a great example to the global mission community and to the international member care field. They have innovated, pioneered, and provided essential resources to the mission senders/workers of India. They have loved mission personnel via their member care ministry. Mission organisations and member care groups around the world would greatly benefit from studying MUT's model and ministry in light of how MUT has so effectively contextualised itself for India.

Thank you MUT!

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mission organisations are not in the position to help them on a long term basis. The family of deceased missionary receives an annual support per child to assist with their education. During the year 2006-07, a total of 128 children from 68 bereaved missionary families received this benefit. Partial loan assistance upto Rs.25,000 is offered per annum per student for higher education beyond standard 12.

"The IMPACT project is a great source of encouragement and motivation for missionaries as many organisations including ours don't have the resources to offer such assistance to our staff," says Augustine Asir, General Secretary, Word for the World, a ministry with a vision to share the gospel with socially neglected people. The organisation staffs over 150 full time missionaries and workers and has its own welfare schemes for missionaries which apportions a descent percentage towards welfare. However, the amount doesn't amount to much when the overall budget is itself small. "Raising one Lakh for a deceased missionary is an extremely difficult task. But MUT makes our desire possible," he adds. Asir is also the chairman for the IMPACT Committee.

Another example is India Campus Crusade for Christ. (ICCC) with around 1100 of its workers registered under the IMPACT scheme. "We have benefited tremendously from MUT's IMPACT programme as we had lost around 10 of our workers in the last few years," says Mark Visuvasam,

Associate Director for South East India. Visuvasam is also an active volunteer for MUT and has been chipping his mite towards the progress of the MUT movement. ICCC president George Ninan has time and again affirmed MUT and contributed significantly in partnership endeavours.

Health Care

Rightly so, MUT has identified health care as one of its core welfare programmes for missionaries and since 1997 they have made good headway and have been engaged in providing assistance in health care for missionaries and their families. Smaller mission organisations lack the infrastructure to provide basic medical check up for its missionaries. Even so, some organizations find it next to impossible to give the required support for medical care of their missionaries. "Most missionaries work in cross cultural contexts and work in areas far removed from any health centre where there are high incidences of diseases such as Malaria and TB. Because of the demands in ministry they may not consider health as a priority and eventually postpone treatment. There are times when they don't reach the hospital on time. Lack of knowledge, faulty theology and disregard for preventive care are some factors why we find missionaries on the receiving end," says Violet Jayachandran, co-ordinator, for the medical unit at MUT. As analysis conducted by the IMPACT committee show, a number of deaths among missionaries were preventable.

MUT therefore launched a few preventive measures to combat this problem.

Following the senior level consultation with Mission leaders, the Master Health Check Up project was launched in 2003. Around 26 Mission Hospitals in various regions in the country were identified by MUT. They have joined hands with MUT by undertaking this check up scheme on a large scale. "Doctors at CMC Vellore, who are friends of MUT and well acquainted with its ethos are happy to undertake the Master Health Check Up which is subsidized to Rs. 400," says Dr. Lionel Gnanaraj, Medical Superintendent, CMCH. In a mammoth institute like CMC, with around 1700 doctors, any missionary seeking help can be given a raw deal. MUT established contacts with committed Christian doctors at CMCH, who are passionate about helping the poor and concerned about the welfare of missionaries. Dr. Gnanaraj adds: "MUT alerts us on missionaries coming to CMC with special medical needs and apart from the medical health check ups and preventive care we offer whatever assistance we can possibly provide." MUT pays half the cost of the check up and the other half is met by the respective mission organisation. Through its health bulletins and special health care manuals MUT has been striving to do its bit to keep mission organisations informed on the MUT health schemes and also educating missionaries on preventive care.

Love Your Brother (LYB) scheme

Providing opportunity for missionaries to help each another in the event of major illness, accidents or complicated child birth, each member missionary contributes Rs.10 per month and assistance is provided to missionaries, their spouse or children at times of need. The maximum that can be availed is Rs.10,000. However, if the amount required is more than Rs10,000 MUT will try to assist through Helped to Help Scheme. Says Violet: "It is a proven fact that LYB scheme is extremely useful to those in distress. It also facilitates fellow missionaries in assisting their colleagues and their families in times of need. However such schemes can work only if the number of enrolment is large enough. MUT has been taking steps to create awareness of this scheme among member missions." D.B. Kulothungan, who heads the Maharashtra Village Ministries, a pioneer ministry that specifically focuses on missions in Maharashtra puts it in perspective: "Both the IMPACT and the Love Your Brother schemes have proven very beneficial to our missionaries. It makes no sense to not avail the LYB scheme if an organisation has already registered under the IMPACT." Under this scheme MVM has claimed sizable medical assistance for its missionaries affected by illness or accidents.

MUT is the conscience of missions and churches in care giving

- K. Rajendran, General Secretary,
India Missions Association



MUT was the recipient of the 2003 IMA award for excellence in member care. What in your opinion is the unique role that MUT is playing in member care initiatives in India?

No one has done as much as MUT has practically done for missions in the areas of member care. MUT is beyond theories and is into organising the unorganised sector for member care issues. They have also become the conscience for missions and churches to be caring for their workers. This is unique for India and for the global Christian thinking.

How has IMA partnered with MUT in terms of addressing issues concerning member care in India?

IMA almost gave birth to MUT and has done several consultations and has put MUT in the Indian and in the global arena in some sense. As member of IMA we are very conscious of encouraging them in several ways possible.

What role is IMA playing in member care issues in India and at the international forum?

There are too much to list. IMA has been in the forefront of member care issues in the global scenario. Many of our emphasis and initiatives on member care are being replicated in many parts of the world. The five areas of member care is significant - care for the mission leaders [CEOs & responsible leaders], care for the missionaries, care for the missionary families, care for the Missionary Kids and welfare issues for missionaries. MUT basically follows these models in their programmes.

In the context of leadership what are some major roadblocks in creating a member care mindset among mission agencies?

Since there's paucity of funds, member care is the last thing on the agenda list of several mission agencies. More education on caring needs to be balanced with actually caring for the missionaries versus just faith teaching. The church by and large does not really understand the idea of care for the missionaries as it is in the mode of maintenance of its churches, workers and properties. The idea of sacrifice for Christ by missionaries made the church to be complacent on many other critical matters. Congregations gave funds to the miracle workers and not to the front-line missionaries. MUT broke this line of thinking in the churches in Tamil Nadu especially.



eMi2 team

REST HOUSES

Meant exclusively for the personal use of missionaries, the rest houses are a big draw for MUT with three rest houses functioning in Vellore, Chennai and Odanchatram. The houses are well furnished with all the required facilities for missionaries to stay with family, when they go for medical check up or treatment in CMC Hospital or for spending quality vacation with family. These homes are also meant for those who have admitted their children in boarding schools and are able to be with their wards only for a month or two in a year. Several missionaries are making use of these facilities and have found great spiritual, physical and emotional benefits. Missionaries covered by IMPACT/LYB are expected to contribute a token sum of Rs.10 for a night's stay.

Mission Possible: Odanchatram Project

A Rest House, Retirement Homes and Counselling/Training/Retreat Centre is being built at Odanchatram in a 6.4 acre land. Considered a dream project for the MUT family, the purpose is to provide full time Christian workers especially missionaries, a large comfortable facility, at affordable cost. The comforting prospect is that missionaries can seek professional counselling/debriefing, have prolonged rest after physical illness, receive continuing education, training and development in pastoral care, attend retreats to strengthen their spiritual life and obtain training to become Christian counsellors.

The ODC project was conceived some time in 2000 ever since MUT understood the critical requirement for meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of missionaries. This meant mobilising people and procuring suitable place along with effective programmes and good facilities to meet such needs. Ratnakumar visited several places both within India and outside to understand the actual requirements. It was found that such needs were being addressed adequately in other countries, while this will be a pioneering effort in India. With the experience gained from the existing rest houses, the plan was made for one more at Odanchatram. The concept was to provide a good facility

at affordable cost to those missionaries who require such support. "A team from eMi2 (Environmental Management International India), a network of volunteer architects, engineers and land surveyors committed to serve Christ using their talents, operating from Colorado Springs, USA came forward to provide the total engineering support & services free of cost," says Ratnakumar. 12 single room units and 4 single bedroom units had been completed within the Phase I. Plans are now afoot to begin work for the Phase II. The overall cost projection is estimated to be pegged at Rs.5 crores. MUT has managed to raise and spend 1.2 crores for the construction work in the Phase I. Several training workshops have already been conducted at the site along with also few missionaries resting there for medical treatment.

TRAINING

Missionaries have expressed a strong need for effective programmes in personal development. The plan is to conduct tailor-made, small-group short personal development programmes for grass root workers in particular, on some selected areas of interest or need. Silas Balraj, National Director, Compassion India and also a long time Friend of MUT (FOM) diagnoses the problem, "Evidently, many missions are not able to meet this need due to lack of funds to run such programmes for their workers, lack of number of missionaries with particular need to conduct an exclusive programmes, lack of understanding in the usefulness of such interventions, lack of agencies who conduct such programmes for the welfare of missionaries." Several Christian counsellors and trainers point to the lack of training and development facilities in many mission organisations. Most agencies, Samson Gandhi points out, have ministry orientation or evangelistic training programmes but hardly any priority given to all round personal development training. "The ratio between the care giver and the care receiver is too disproportionate. Counselling and personal development interventions in mission organisations are too few and far between," rues Gandhi, who heads the Hyderabad-based Person to Person, a Christian counselling ministry and works in sync with MUT when counselling missionaries.



Marriage Enrichment Seminar

Kamaleson makes a telling comment on the vital need for holistic training for missionaries: “My experience with FMPB over these many years has made me appreciate the need for the missionary in India to be competent in spiritual skills, professional skills and managerial-relational skills. Without the Biblical, spiritual disciplines burn-out will be unavoidable. Without professional skills the fitting into the functioning of the team to meet the larger needs of the society to which one is called, will not be possible. Managerial-relational skills enable the missionary to be accountable to the ‘team’ and the larger body of the Church for his/her time, talents and treasure (or management of funds - both organizational as well as personal). In all three areas - spiritual, professional, managerial-relational - the missionary needs training and mentor accountability.”

Marriage enrichment: This three-Day Seminar helps missionary couples to develop the tools that are needed to build a healthy marriage with God as the centre of their relationship. The programme is conducted on a voluntary basis by three trained couples. Joel and Caroline are one among the three who have been long time trainers at MUT. Firmly grounded in handling marriage counselling programmes and workshops, Joel and Caroline understand the unique problems missionary couples go through. So far, seminars were conducted for 30 batches representing 50 mission organisations. “At least 50 per cent of couples claim to have a better understanding of each other. However, several issues surface when dealing with specific topics, such as emotional breakdown owing to anxiety regarding children’s future, inadequate time spent with children as they may have been placed in MK schools, conflict between husband and wife due to ministry, severe financial crunches, and several other issues,” says Joel, who has counselled enough couples to observe a pattern.

Joel and Caroline have had to counsel couples undergoing depression or when marriage had reached crisis point. Joel points out: “Sometimes mission organisations send missionary couples for the marriage enrichment seminars when maximum damage had been done and when psychological help was required. And many missions don’t have a proper forum where couples can share their pain or seek counselling. This becomes damage control rather than preventive care giving.”

Very often when the husband is deeply involved in church planting, promotions or translation work, it is sometimes the wife who has to bear the brunt of deep seated emotional turmoil. However, there are other missionary couples who have seen their marriages enriched and strengthened after attending the seminars.



Odanchatram Projects

Inner Healing Seminar: MUT has recognized the need for inner healing in the life of a missionary. Designed to enable the participants to discover the inner damages and lead into fullness of life, the seminar enables them to lead themselves and others also into healing. The seminars facilitate reconciliation with God, the worker’s past and

others paving the way for spiritual healing.

Life Revision Seminar: This life revision seminar is a time set apart from all activities in mission workers lives while entering into the needs of the inner person. It’s a time for sharing and learning from fellow missionary and growing in intimacy with God. Dr. K.O. John, who facilitates this training is a veteran doctor from Christian Fellowship Hospital, Odanchatram. He points out: “After attending the seminars many missionaries leave with a sense of hope and with a renewed perspective of life. Participants are asked to summarise their learning. Transformation and a change in attitude to life takes place. But there are other missionaries who have not created enough time and space to listen to God. They are very hard pressed in their daily responsibilities. There’s no prior preparation.” John has led several missionaries through a process of positive change but he is quick to admit that due to absence of proper member care ethos in organisations, problems arise. “Despite working for several years for their organisations, many workers lack clarity in their vision. Year end reports have to be submitted and results shown but at the cost of



Music For Missions concert



MUT Consultations

spirituality and intimacy with God,” observes Dr. John.

Interpersonal skills: The Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills (SYIS) workshops were designed to enhance the knowledge, attitude and skills of a missionary in how they relate to one another, family, students, co-workers, friends and those from other cultures. This is an interactive workshop. Participants work and share together in pairs, small groups and in the whole group. They observe the skills and practice them with each other. The knowledge, attitudes and skills are based on practical application of God’s Word.

In addition to these training programmes, MUT has structured for missionaries, pastors, and counsellors, a special programme to focus on the needs of missionary member care personnel that will upgrade counselling and member care skills.

MK EDUCATION

Missionary Kids (MKs) welfare was added to the objective of MUT in 2005 as a result of the stress study on 500 missionaries in India. One of the areas of concerns raised by missionaries was higher education of their children pursuing professional courses. As a result, MUT initiated its first step towards the welfare of MKs by prioritising and assisting MKs for Higher Education. “It also emerged from the 5th MUT’s Consultation with mission leaders that MKs education and care needed to be addressed seriously and sensitively,” observes Ratnakumar. MUT has laid down guidelines and formulations in order to provide adequate schemes for Missionary Kids Welfare, which may be small yet significant strides in the broader scope of concerns surrounding MKs.

SHELTER FOR RETIRED MISSIONARIES

MUT’s breakthrough plan is to help missionaries in their old age after spending their lifetime working with a registered organization, for reaching the un-reached for Christ. The target group of missionaries who will be helped by this scheme are those who do not have any property/land/own house, who do not have children to support them, those who wish to spend their retired life alone and those who

have the desire to continue their ministry in some form or the other as long as they are healthy and have the energy. When they become too old to help themselves, there will be people & facilities to ensure adequate care & comfort. Ratnakumar along with other MUT leaders have spelt out ambitious plans for top quality retirement houses. “It’s just a question of time before the Odanchatram project becomes fully operational in order to provide excellent retirement homes for missionaries who have given their entire life for missions,” declares a confident Ratnakumar.

CONSULTATIONS – A FORUM FOR SYNERGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Once in two years, a consultation with top leaders of member missions as well as other leaders of umbrella bodies and churches is organised to create awareness for organisational excellence through systems, procedures, methods to encourage and motivate staff for effective ministry, increase awareness on Human Resource Development and various other measures. The consultations have seen the active participation of the best in mission leadership in terms of panel discussions, plenary sessions, keynote addresses, debates, consultation findings, analysis, case studies and reports. “The consultations provide mission leaders a forum to share ideas and hear from others what we have not thought about. It’s also a beautiful time of fellowship and reflection among several mission leaders who may otherwise not have the opportunity to do so,” says John Kirubakaran, General Secretary, FMPB. He has several times introduced FMPB’s model of member care and candidly spoke his mind on the topic. Introducing the schemes provided by MUT has helped in achieving clarity on MUT’s role and also crystallizing the concept of member care in the minds of mission leaders. Some mission organisations, inspired by MUT’s challenge have installed member care department in their organisational structure. The fact that mission organisations of various size and ministry congregate and jointly address issues of concern is a remarkable indicator of synergy and mission partnerships moving in the right direction. A case in point is Maharashtra Village Ministries’ initiative in deputing two of its talented and committed staff to MUT in order to

provide them the needed workforce support. “Since we see MUT as the good Samaritan of Indian missions, we thought it right to support them by deputing two of MVM’s staff for full time work at MUT. And they’ll be paid by us. ICCS has also deputed one of its worker to MUT to oversee the work at the rest house in Chennai.

VOLUNTEERISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

As things stand, a growing movement such as MUT is sustained and driven by the collective passion of its voluntary workers. Most of the full time leaders at MUT are volunteers who don’t receive any remuneration from the organisation, many of whom had left promising careers in order to be part of the movement. MUT has deliberately encouraged voluntary work in order to limit its operational costs, overheads and administrative expenses which currently stands at 6 per cent. MUT’s financial policy is principally aimed towards assuring donors and supporters that money received will be used singularly for the purpose of ministry and project activities.

But with the organisation shouldering greater responsibilities, the need for full time staff is acutely felt and hard to come by. Leaders like Ratnakumar and others have voiced their apprehensions on inducting full time paid time, which needless to say would shoot up the administrative and operational costs. “Volunteerism with limited engagement will not prove helpful for MUT on the long run. What we need to focus is on the need for full time voluntary workers dedicated for various departments and projects with each of their job descriptions clearly defined,” says Visuvasam, who is also MUT’s board member. While there is seeming tension between raising full time voluntary workers and recruiting paid staff, MUT may have to face up to the eventuality of compromising MUT’s cherished guidelines and ethos in its evolution process, a prospect which may prove to be a tricky issue in the future.

Besides, not all mission agencies registered under the IMPACT scheme have enrolled for the Love Your Brother scheme. To compound it further, some of LYB registered members have not been regular in sending their contributions which is crucial to keep the programmes function effectively. Fundraising events like Music for Missions organised by Friends of MUT (FOM) to raise funds for medical schemes and other projects of MUT have helped in some good measure. Friends of MUT based in Canada have been dishing out creative ideas such as Cooking for Missions, the proceeds from which are donated

back to MUT in India. Innovative ideas like these could help the organisation to keep afloat financially.

At the strategic level MUT is yet to make inroads into North India and the North East region. MUT’s predominant membership comes from the organisations headquartered down South. Kulothungan states: “With several organisations based in the North, MUT needs to strategically work towards intentionally gaining greater access to missions and supporters in North India. One practical step would be to move the MUT Consultations to the North.”

Sustainable leadership in MUT is another issue stakeholders are concerned about. “As a stakeholder in the ministry of MUT, I am concerned about the immense load of work shouldered by the General Coordinator. In the event of a serious eventuality, at stake is the future of MUT’s leadership and its ministry. Firstly, leadership development at MUT should be of prime concern and secondly, nothing short of full support by the mission leadership would be required to address member care issues,” says a concerned Balraj.

Leadership development at MUT is of prime concern and secondly, nothing short of full support by the mission leadership would be required to address member care issues

MUT previously had not expanded the scope of its schemes to cover Christian workers in churches and associations involved in evangelism but who are not missionaries in the conventional sense. “With, SMILE - yet another innovative project up its sleeves - thousands of pastors and workers from innumerable local churches and institutions that come under the aegis of EFI will now stand to benefit by the SMILE scheme,” says Noel Kotien of the New Delhi based, Evangelical Fellowship of India. Richard Howell, EFI’s General Secretary has been endorsing the SMILE scheme to give it the much needed fillip that could eventually spurt MUT’s overall strategic direction.

However, with MUT having provided the momentum in practical member care and the learning curve appearing to be steep, stakeholders of MUT are still concerned that there hasn’t been much of a demonstrable urgency shown at the mission leadership level. Some prefer to go it alone. MUT, now straddle with several critical projects, has high expectations from the mission leadership across the board, on which rests the onus of implementing MUT schemes to meet the crying need of missionaries in India. Until that happens thousands of missionaries like Shamala and Livingstone will have to live on the brink of uncertainty and despair... silently.

Bennet Emmanuel

