

Adult Asian MK Statement 2012

Introduction

We are eleven Adult Asian missionary kids (MKs) who have met in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 22 - 23 April 2012, representing Asian MKs from Hong Kong (1), India (3), Japan (1), Philippines (3), Singapore (1), South Korea (1), and Taiwan (1). This first gathering is an outcome of the Asian MK/TCK Planning Forum held in Singapore from 2 – 3 September 2011.

This brief statement serves to firstly outline the distinctiveness of the Asian MKs in contrast to our Western counterparts, secondly, highlight the keys to successful pre-field preparation, on-field experiences, and re-entry issues¹; thirdly, draw attention to what we believe churches, organizations and education personnel need to know with regard to Asian MK care; and lastly, our proposed strategy moving forward.

Distinctiveness

We are ethnically Asian, often influenced by at least three cultures – our home culture, multiple fields, the Western culture and a plethora of religious backgrounds. While we recognize and value our strong family and socio-cultural heritage, we struggle with the expectation to uphold the innate obligation to show respect to elders, and adhere to the “save-face” culture so as not to disrupt the status quo or bring shame to the family. Asian MKs also face the challenge of maintaining their mother tongue, returning to mono-cultural contexts for some, and fitting into predetermined roles.

As the Asian mission scene is evolving and growing, we are an emerging phenomenon that seeks to be better understood, supported and connected.

Pre-field

Pre-field preparation is rooted in healthy family relationships that include MKs in the decision-making process and working through it together. Proper closure in leaving the home culture/country (e.g. RAFT²) is essential, with a need for open communication of the challenges and joys of transitions.

¹ There are 3 important stages in the normal cycle of families in cross-cultural ministry:

- i) Pre-field – before departure to the field
- ii) On-field – the period of cross-cultural life
- iii) Re-entry – the process of leaving the field and moving to the home culture/passport country

² **RAFT** is a useful transition tool made popular by David Pollock. It can be applied to any major transition experience for an individual or for a family. **RAFT** is an acronym that stands for **Reconciliation** = restoring relationships well ahead of departure. **Affirmation** = expressing appreciation for those friends and peers whom you will be leaving and whose friendship you value. **Farewells** = consciously saying goodbyes to people, places, things, pets, events – those things that hold significance in your life. **Think destination** = preparing for the new place, practically, e.g. university applications/ where to live.

On-field

On the field, maintaining open communication with parents help Asian MKs embrace their cultural origins and foster a healthy balance between their 'Christian missionary community' and the transient local context.

Re-entry

Re-entry is very often a challenging process that starts with many painful "byes" and continues with the difficult "hi". This needs to include recognition of differences between field and home culture, which are then integrated in a determined effort to connect with a home church and peer groups, while maintaining quality family ties.

School

Educational institutions need to be equipped to support MKs' wholistic education needs, and partner with agencies and parents in order to help develop and cultivate growth amongst the diverse Asian MK population.

- Diverse Asian backgrounds result in different competency levels, therefore schools need to provide curriculum that caters to all, and teach from an unbiased global perspective.
- It is essential for schools to be equipped to accept MKs for who they are as individuals and prepare them for impending changes and related emotional needs within a caring environment.
- Agencies and parents need to work together to plan ahead and gain insight to their MKs educational and personal development.

Church

Churches need to provide pastoral care to MKs in a spirit of non-judgmental acceptance and love, acknowledging that they are different and that they may not have a typical understanding and experience of church.

Pastoral care must persevere to push past the external front put up by MKs as they have a tendency to cover up internal conflict.

There is also a need to view the missionary family as a whole unit. We strongly believe that the focus on results should not be at the expense of the well-being of the missionary family unit (i.e. children should not be sacrificed on the altar of ministry).

Mission Organizations

Mission organizations should consider setting aside dedicated personnel to be involved in the lives and development of Asian MKs and help them feel valued.

Our Response and Strategy

We recognize that every Asian country is at a different stage in MK care. Thus the way forward needs to be tailored to each country's needs.

We believe that MK care starts with connecting MKs of the same country, compiling a database - formal or informal - of existing MKs, and linking them into local networks. MK camps have also proven helpful by fostering a sense of belonging that enables them to enter their local culture and home country. Efforts to raise awareness of the uniqueness of Asian MKs and their issues (through the publication of compiled stories, translated versions of this document, presentations, etc), among churches, mission agencies, missionary parents and those involved in the educational scene, also raise the profile of Asian MK care.

At a regional level, those at the forefront of MK care in their home cultures/countries will continue to network, support and share resources with each other to strengthen the work in their own countries. We hope to organise the second Adult Asian MK Consultation in India in 2013. We aspire to be a collective voice, and advocate the needs of Asian MKs in order that every MK will receive the care and support they need to realize the wealth of their experience and individual potentials.

Conclusion

We believe as Asian MKs we have a rich spiritual and cultural inheritance, combined with a wealth of cross-cultural experiences, and that investing in our potentials will enable us to fulfill all God created us to be in this world and in His Kingdom.

Names:

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