

Addiction's Impact in the Mission Field: Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse, HIV/AIDS, Human Trafficking, and Missionary Vulnerabilities.

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Based on experience as a recovering missionary with GOAL Project in Eastern Europe and Tanzania

In this talk, after telling the story about how I got involved in international recovery work, I made the case that the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the problems of domestic violence and sexual abuse, and the issue of human trafficking all contain a hidden component of substance abuse/addiction. While none of these is caused by substance abuse/addiction, it is a clear aggravating factor in all three, and none of the three issues can be successfully addressed without attention to the abuse and addiction issues. Indeed, as I state in my final conclusion, part of RMEC's mission needs to be to teach the larger church that none of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved without attention to the issues of substance abuse and addiction. Personal experience in recovery and as a missionary in Romania, Moldova, Russia, and Tanzania provide anecdotal evidence for a case that is now beginning to be made in the scientific literature. Notes from the talk follow.

- I. Romania Working through GOAL with St. Dimitrie Program of Romanian Orthodox Church
Floyd Frantz, OCMC
 - A. "Street Kids" even in the guidebooks HIV/AIDS warning
 - a. On the street because they are abandoned or kicked out in early adolescence, or at the Prison Fellowship Home (Nadasel) because a parent is in jail, usually for a crime committed while drunk or as a response to an alcohol fueled incident of domestic violence. Abandoned and turned out kids a direct result of poverty, but often exacerbated by an addiction to feed in a parent.

- b. Motto: “We smoke, we rink, we fuck.”
- c. Sexual tourism very high. Kids can earn more money at that than anything an agency can offer. Throwing money at them is no help.
- d. Digging deeper, especially with therapist at Nadasel, almost all the kids had been subject to severe domestic abuse, often including sex.

B. Moldova (2006) Even more intense. Meeting with Romanian Orthodox social service agencies, in addition to alcohol and drug fueled HIV/AIDS and domestic violence/sexual abuse, outright human trafficking, especially severe in Moldova, Belarus, and parts of the Ukraine. Often the same cartels run the drugs and the humans trafficked. They are used mostly for prostitution and porn, but some for forced labor. This is where we really got it that it is one nasty hair and wax ball, with the addiction factor the most neglected.

II. Africa

- a. GOAL in Kenya, PEPFAR grant 2006-2009
One of the few agencies making the connection to addiction issues, and urging prevention activities in that arena combined with AIDS education and safe sex messaging.
- b. Most of the other agencies are involved only in palliative care and medication, distribution of condoms., etc.
- c. So, we found ourselves one of a very few voices advocating recovery, though new USAID papers are beginning to come around on this.
- d. WE were very strong on program deliverables but struggled at home and in Kenya to create and sustain an infrastructure that could meet USG expectations in monitoring and accounting.
- e. Tanzania 2010, personal experience as a missionary for six months, including 2 large A & D trainings
 - i. Pombe and the men
 - ii. Heroin through Zanzibar, drugs come in, trafficked kids go out.
 - iii. Here as in the other sites the big problem is follow up after the trainings, getting meetings actually started.
 - iv. A second issue is the need to blend AA and NA. No time or resources for fine distinctions that work in the

West.

III. Connections

- a. First, there is a strong link between Alcohol and Drug Addiction and increased poverty and the need to turn kids out or even sell them. This is not unimaginable to anyone in recovery who has some experience of the lengths we will go to obtain and protect our drug of choice.
- b. Link to HIV/AIDS “After a couple of drinks you are liable to go to bed with someone that sober you would not to lunch with.” Because of the areas of the brain alcohol impacts, good judgment goes out the window and high risk behaviors come in. Stir in some poverty and addiction is often used to keep people in prostitution and engaging in high risk behaviors.
- c. Link between addiction and domestic violence and sexual abuse is not direct. Substances do not cause abuse or violence (many abusers are not users and many users and addicts are not violent or abusers). This combined with some feminist dislike of alcohol and drugs as an excuse caused the literature to downplay the connection until recently. But the aggravating link is obvious – again mental restraints on negative behavior are weakened and use and abuse of drugs can be like throwing gasoline on a fire. This is especially true in cultures which lack negative sanctions for violence against women and children, or in some cases actually have positive sanctions for such, as in parts of Eastern Europe and Africa. In addition, I should note Barbara’s experience doing workshops for the unwed mothers, many recovering prostitutes, in the “baby home” in Romania that partners with the addiction recovery programs. 100% of the women had themselves been victims of childhood sexual abuse, and drugs or alcohol were almost always an aggravating factor.
- d. Links to human trafficking.
 - i. Children of addicts are most likely to be sold, turned out, or abandoned, as well as abused.
 - ii. Drugs and alcohol are often provided by those being trafficked, especially those being pimped into prostitution, which dulls the pain and makes them dependent on the pimp.

- iii. Often the same cartels run both the drugs and the trafficked humans.
- e. General conclusions:
 - i. Harms reduction, methadone, needle exchange not enough, even in advanced democracies like Holland. Some of these have a proper place in a system of motivational interviewing that still maintains abstinence as the ultimate gold standard.
 - ii. More exploration is needed of interfaces among 12 step and therapeutic community approaches that address the issues of those who have addiction issues, HIV/AIDS. Rape and incest survivors, and those seeking to get out of prostitution.

IV. Implications for missionary training

There are no missionary arenas where these issues are absent, as far as I know, and they almost always have some corrupting effect on government and church alike, as well as on the people themselves. Both short and long term missionaries need training in identifying these issues and knowing appropriate coping strategies.

In addition, missionaries need to be aware of the increased pressure they will experience from cultural isolation on their own addictive and compulsive tendencies. Alcohol, drugs, and pornography have been particularly destructive.

Finally, all missionaries, but especially college age, need to understand that importing their “normal” behaviors with regard to alcohol and sex may be personally dangerous and/or completely undermine the credibility and effectiveness of a mission effort.

V. A few suggestions for RMEC

- a. First, hooray for the new name. Recovery is what we stand *for*, by all its names and fruits, including sobriety, serenity, resurrection; recovery is also a positive outcome for all the major areas of the big waxy hair ball.
- b. While we can share or support the ministry of others addressing other aspects of the hair ball, our focus needs to remain sharply on substance addiction issues as a piece that cannot be forgotten, ignored, or downplayed if we are to have any hope of addressing the others.

- c. I think we could take a more prominent role in training ministers and missionaries, lay and ordained, about the issues they will face in context and in themselves.
- d. Let me make a bold claim I think we must hold before the whole Church: None of the Millennial Goals can be achieved without addressing precisely the systemic interface of the issues in the hair ball.

Sample Bibliography

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