the FIN News

Ministering to Diasporas:

An Interview with Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira

Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira, Filipino-Canadian missiologist [Global Ministries Diasporas Specialist for the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada] and Lausanne Movement Senior Associate for Diasporas, talks about "people on the move" and how Lausanne's Diasporas Leadership Team is working toward Lausanne's mission of "the whole Church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world."

Q: What is your role as Lausanne's Senior Associate for Diasporas?

A: Part of my responsibility is, using the Lausanne platform, to initiate and motivate diaspora Christians to actively participate in world evangelization. Another responsibility is to communicate and represent Lausanne's work whenever and wherever I am given a chance. I do have a team of associates called the "Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team" who work with me toward Lausanne's mandate and goal. (*Continued on page 2*).

From the FIN Desk

Dr. Mary Wilder, Professor of History of Missions at Western Seminary, said of the Filipinos, "...100 years ago, the Filipinos were a mission field. Now, they are moving out to take their place in missions, reaching around the world in very creative ways!" What a statement full of celebration and hope!

Since its organization in 1995, FIN has brought together Christians committed to motivating and mobilizing Filipinos globally to partner for worldwide mission. In 2008, FIN partnered with the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) to motivate and mobilize not only Christian Filipinos, but the whole Church, to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. This issue of The FIN News explores the diasporas ministry of the LCWE.

As you celebrate Spring and the Lent Season 2009, pray with FIN that more people -- of every nation -- from the "mission field" will move out and take their place in missions.

-the FIN staff

ABOUT FIN

The Filipino International Network (FIN) is a catalytic movement of Christians committed to motivate and mobilize Filipinos globally to partner for worldwide mission. FIN has played a key role in deploying career field workers in regions that have been difficult to penetrate with traditional missionary methods, and in the mobilizing of a significant tentmaking force present in almost every country of the world.

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Q: Briefly discuss the "global diasporas" as you see them with the eyes of missions.

A: To begin, I need to define our use of the term "diaspora." Then, I will give you a brief overview of the global diaspora situation and how it is relevant to missions.

We use the term "diaspora" to refer to the phenomenon of "dispersion" or movement of any ethnic group. For our discussion, I will also use the terms "migration" and "people on the move" to refer to this people movement.

In 2005, the International Organization for Migration estimated that the number of international migrants had reached 192 million. This means that approximately one of every thirty-four persons in the world is a migrant. This figure, extrapolated by experts, is expected to reach 200 million by the year 2010. This is a lot of people—five times more than the entire population of Canada. This is not to mention the Internally Displaced People within their region or country. This includes refugees, migrant workers, trafficked people, international students, government and armed forces personnel, people involved in family reunification plans, permanent immigrants to accepting countries, etc.

Factors leading to diaspora can be of a voluntary or involuntary nature, such as urbanization, rapid globalization in the labour industry, geopolitical shifts, catastrophic natural disasters (e.g., hurricane, flood, earthquake, tsunami), national and ethnic conflicts, socio-economic advancement, cultural exchanges, and pandemics resulting in a crippling of the workforce (e.g., HIV/AIDS). The "push" factors contributing to mass migration are as myriad as are the "pull" factors drawing the migrants to host countries.

The top ten receiving countries are the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany, Ukraine, France, India, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Pakistan.

We read in the Bible about "people on the move." In the Old Testament we read about Abraham and his children, who during their journey encountered Jehovah. In the New Testament we read about Jesus Christ, who came with the message of the good news for all nations (Matthew 28:16-20). We read stories of the early Church being persecuted and consequently scattered (i.e., diaspora).

In Acts 17:26-27, Paul articulated a missiological purpose for human migration:

> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

This time of mass migration in our borderless world presents the whole Church with unprecedented opportunities to take the whole gospel to the whole world—a world that is wide open because of people who are moving to all four corners of the globe. This brings us to the idea of "diaspora missiology."

Q: "Diaspora missiology." Would you describe that term for us? What is the difference between "diaspora missiology" and "traditional missiology"?

A: If "diaspora in missions" refers to dispersed ethnic groups who are actively engaged or actively involved in fulfilling the Great Commission regardless of vocation and denominational affiliations of individuals involved, then "diaspora missiology" is, as Professor Enoch Wan of Western Seminary defines, "a missiological study of the phenomena of diaspora groups being scattered geographically and the strategy of gathering for the kingdom."

Now diaspora is not a new phenomenon. People have been moving throughout all human history. Social scientists (including sociologists, anthropologists, and human demographers) have always studied the mass movement of people. But now, due to the number of migrants, even lawyers (immigration lawyers), economists, and political scientists are carefully paying attention to this phenomenon.

Migration seems to be affecting everyone and promoting change in many communities. We also have to remember how the migration factors (e.g., the post 11 September 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attacks context; natural disaster situations) are requiring change in government policies. Epidemics such as AIDS and the HIV-virus are a push force for thousands of people—a situation calling for the attention of the international medical community. Furthermore, in a world where everyone is increasingly connected, something like an illness affecting a small number of migrants has the potential of affecting many more, and so migration is a factor in national health care programs. The challenges and opportunities presented by migration are all-pervasive!

In recent years, missiologists too have started to focus their attention on the great "scattering" of people. This is what "diaspora missiology" has focused its lens on. In this emerging field of missions, researchers are to learn much about (*continued on page 3*)

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(*continued from page 2*) the phenomenon of diaspora from social and political scientists in the thematic study of topics such as globalization, urbanization, ethnicities and race relations, ethnic and religious conflicts and their resolutions, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Then, missiologists face the task of integrating the factual findings with missiological understanding in ministry planning and evangelism strategy.

To clarify, diaspora missiology has these elements:

* Its focus is holistic Christianity and contextualization.

* Conceptually, diaspora missiology is de-territorialized (the "loss of social and cultural boundaries" in mission strategy), glocal (a mission strategy that is simultaneously local and global), inter-disciplinary, and hybrid.

* The perspective of diaspora missiology is non-spatial (not geographically divided or confined; i.e., home/foreign, regional/global, urban/rural), and is borderless. It is transnational and global. For example, planting churches is not only on land, but also aboard ships among seafarers.

* The diaspora missiology paradigm goes where God is going and moves providentially where God places people spatially and spiritually, in contrast to traditional missions' "sending and receiving."

Q: How are you addressing the opportunities presented by diasporas through the Lausanne platform?

A: There are many groups (churches, organizations, denominations, local parachurches) already engaged in reaching diaspora people (i.e., international student ministries reaching foreign students on university and college campuses). We have organizations ministering compassionately to "people on the highway" (refugees). In the academic field, there is the Institute for Diaspora Studies (IDS), hosted by Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA, and by Alliance Graduate School in Manila, Philippines. Specialization in diaspora studies is also taking form at Fuller Seminary, Torch Trinity Graduate School in South Korea, and Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (U.K.) has several African and Asian students studying specific diaspora groups. This is an encouraging development in recent years.

For the first time, the Lausanne Movement formed the "Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team" (LDLT). The LDLT is convening a strategic consultation from 4-9 May 2009 in Manila, Philippines, gathering diaspora specialists, including sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, theologians, government policymakers, legal experts, key denominational leaders, and mission organizations that have a diaspora mission thrust. We are also inviting representatives from non-government organizations, particularly labour recruiters and select business people.

We are hoping to formulate an Evangelical Diaspora Theology and Strategy to present at Lausanne III in Cape Town in 2010. Hopefully, our humble contribution to mission literature and practice will be embraced by the whole Church. It is our prayer that this will result in a calibrated and synchronized advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ among people on the move.

**This article appeared in the March 2009 issue of *Lausanne World Pulse*, www.lausanneworldpulse.com, P.O. Box 794, Wheaton, IL 60189, USA.

Calendar

April 9-11, 2009

New Life Training Curriculum 5 (NLTC) Evangelism & Discipleship training - Isabela, Philippines

April 17-19, 2009

NLTC for youth - Tarlac, Philippines

May 4-9, 2009

LCWE Diasporas Strategy Consultation - Manila, Philippines

May 14-16, 2009

Great Commission Training Curriculum (GCTC) 3 -Tokyo, Japan

September 2009

GCTC 4&5 - Tokyo, Japan

**Training continues throughout the year in Limited Access Nations (LAN)*

Diasporas Highlight

Read more about "Migration, Diasporas, and Displaced Peoples" in *The Lausanne World Pulse(LWP)*, www.lausanneworldpulse.com March 2009 issue.

The Lausanne World Pulse is the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's (LCWE) webzine. It is published on a monthly basis. We encourage our FIN News readers to regularly visit and read the themed articles for insights, instructions and inspiration on current initiatives in missions.

NOTICE:

Please note that due to financial constraints at this time, following the current issue, FIN will no longer be publishing The FIN News in print, but will be publishing The FIN News on its website: www.fin-online.org. The website also features a full archive of The FIN News.

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DIASPORAS AND MISSIONS: A NEW STRATEGY

The Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team (LDLT) will be joined by other missions practitioners, theologians, sociologists, demographers, anthropologist, lawyers etc. to discuss the global migration situation and assemble an evangelism strategy for the "People on the Move" to be presented at the Lausanne III or the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization to held in Cape Town, South Africa on October 16-25, 2010. The Convener of this consultation is Dr. Sadiri Joy Tira, FIN International Coordinator and LCWE Senior Associate for Diasporas. Some of the issues to be discussed are:

-Portrait of Global Diaspora

-Biblical Theology of Diasporas

-Diaspora Studies and Theological Institutions

-People on the Ocean: Seafarers

-People in the Market Places: Economic Migrants

-People in the Embassy: The Diplomats

-People on the Battlefied: The Military

-People in the Cities: Urban Migrants

-People at the Airport: The Tourists and Recreational Travelers

-The International Church

-People at the Poles: The Researchers

-People in Space: The Astronauts

-People on the Highways: The Refugees

-People in Slavery: The Women and Children at Risk

-People without Permits: The Illegal Immigrants

-Evangelism Resourcing, and Global Discipleship Training of Diasporas.

Visit the LDLT website, www.gatheredscattered.com, for more information about the LDLT and the upcoming website.

NEWS BITS

- ACAS (Alliance of Churches at Sea) leaders met in Germany on March 2nd to discuss how to accelerate the training of Filipino-Christian Seafarers who will help plant churches on board the ships.
- Dr. Roy Versosa (and family) of the Apollos Project has relocated from Cebu City, Philippines to Toronto, Canada. The Apollos Project, through Dr. Versosa conducts hermenuetics and homilitics training for Filipino Christian Workers. Pray for the Versosa family as they adjust to Canadian life.
- The FIN Gulf Committee recently met in one of the cities in Arabian Gulf for practical training, coordination of activities and planning for the future. There were 45 participants who also elected their leadership team.
- In December 2008, FIN partners worked together with local churches in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to distribute 50,000 Jesus Film in DVD format to many New Canadian families. Eternity will reveal the results of this project.

CONTACT FIN

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