

2023 Media to Movements Training Coalition Research Report

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Overview

Media to Movements (MTM) is a range of outreach strategies that utilize social media to identify spiritual seekers and then lead them into a discipleship process. This strategy begins by intentionally connecting these media responders to a local field worker, who will engage them in spiritual conversation. The process continues by engaging disciple-making movement strategies that focus on reaching the new believer's family, friends, community, and ultimately, their ethnic group. A movement is defined as at least four church planting streams that have each reproduced four generations of churches with more than 1000 active members.

The MTM Coalition estimates that there are over 260 MTM initiatives¹ in the world in different stages of implementation. Drawing on various sources, the Coalition estimates that currently more than 2000² people in nearly every region in the world have been trained in the MTM strategy. Multiple mission agencies have collaborated to hold MTM Summits on four continents. These Summits were designed for MTM teams to sharpen their MTM skills. Currently, there are two MTM initiatives that are near the "movement level." One of the MTM "near movements" is Hindu-focused, and the other is Muslim-focused.

Research Approaches and Methods

Like the 2020 and 2021 studies, this research aims to evaluate the *trajectory* and *health* of MTM initiatives. A *trajectory* describes the direction of an initiative over time, and *health* observes the vitality of the initiative. Like the previous studies, a 42-item questionnaire was fielded to practitioners who are part of the MTM network. Questions included choice selection and short answers. This research analysis includes other sources such as *Global Movement Metrics* as well as reports supplied by practitioner teams.

1 As of February 1, 2023, we know of 845 active installations of the *Disciple.Tools* software. It would be inaccurate to say that all of these software installs represent teams using a media to movement strategy. However, because the software was initially built for a media to movement strategy, we can safely assume a lot of the active installations are using a media to movement strategy. Of the 845, 260 have Facebook plugins, something that only MTM teams use. Hence, our best guesstimate is "at least" 260 teams are using *Disciple.Tools* for MTM strategy.

2 4,500 people received an invitation to take the survey from the 10 partners. We don't know how much overlap there is among the lists.



Recruitment of the research population followed the pattern of previous studies. Ten Coalition partners sent invitations to their respective MTM lists. Of the 4500 people on their lists, members were instructed to take only one survey even though they may have had multiple invitations due to lists overlapping so as to prevent duplicate surveys. No duplicates were observed. Nearly identical to the 2021 study, there were 117 survey participants in 2023, with 97 reporting they were current MTM implementers, which became the research population.

2023 Key Observations and Recommendations

Observations

- ◆ Since 2021, the number of teams implementing MTM strategies has doubled.
- ◆ Over 35% of MTM teams report “significant” impact on ministry practice.
- ◆ MTM teams report 400% growth in face-to-face meetings and conversions with seekers over a two-year period.
- ◆ From a funding and oversight perspective, about half of the launched teams are maturing in their initiative.
- ◆ Regarding the religious blocks, the strongest growth was among “Secular” and “Hindu” focused strategies.
- ◆ Geographically, the most significant increase in the number of teams was in Central Asia, followed by Southeast Asia, then Europe and South Asia.
- ◆ There are increasing numbers of MTM practitioners for whom English is not their first language. For some, English is their 3rd or 4th language.
- ◆ Challenges for maturing initiatives include funding and accountability structures.
- ◆ Digital Filterers play a key role in MTM initiatives, yet teams note that finding, training and keeping Digital Filterers is a challenge.
- ◆ Newly launched teams need fewer funds and less structural oversight than more mature initiatives who require more funds and greater oversight.

Recommendations

- ◆ It is recommended that MTM resources be multilingual and reflect a multicultural view, including multi-ethnic and multilingual coaches.
- ◆ It is recommended that more post-launch and movement coaches be recruited to assist maturing teams.
- ◆ It is recommended that a robust LMS (Learning Management System) be developed so that teams can address their unique needs.



- ◆ Digital Filterers play a critical role in the need for ongoing training, mentoring, and member care.
- ◆ It is recommended that a think tank be developed to address the rapidly expanding funding and accountability structure needs.
- ◆ Facilitate mentoring of MTM leaders in the complexities of a movement mindset.

Overview of the Trajectory of MTM Initiatives

In the 2021 MTM survey, 77% of the respondents identified themselves as “Expatriate,” 21% as “National,” and 2% as “Not Sure.” In the 2023 survey, there was a shift in the survey population: 67% identified themselves as “Expatriate,” 28% identified themselves as “National,” and 5% as “Not Sure.” Whereas “National” increased 33% in a two-year period, “Unsure” reflected a 150% increase, a shift that suggests a likely increase in near-culture workers.

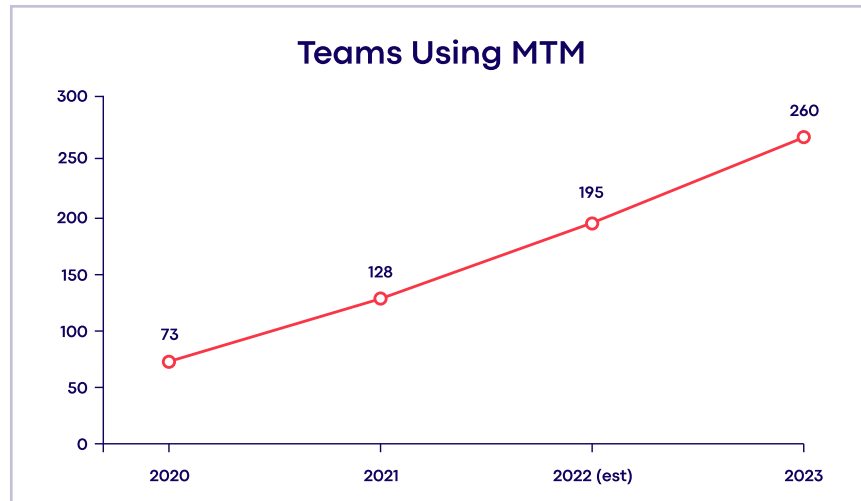
When asked if the targeted group was an Unreached People Group (UPG), 85% of survey respondents stated they were serving among a known UPG, 7% were unsure, and only 8% noted they were serving among a non-UPG

What are the language preferences of the MTM practitioners?

In the 2021 survey, 78% of respondents chose English as their first language, whereas in 2023 English was the first language for only 68% of the survey population. For some participants, English was a third or fourth language. Like the 2020 and 2021 studies, the 2023 survey was conducted in English, but an appropriate critique was voiced after the survey launch that the survey should be multilingual, which could give non-English speakers a larger representation.

How do we measure the trajectory of MTM initiatives?

One way to observe the trajectory of MTM initiatives is to measure the number of teams using an MTM strategy. In 2020, there were 73 verified MTM team initiatives. In the 2021 report, 128 verified teams were implementing an MTM strategy. Based on Disciple.Tools, a software program which can identify MTM users who have Facebook “plug-ins,” there are more than 260 teams currently employing MTM strategies. Since only 55% of MTM teams are using the Disciple.Tools CRM, the number of teams using MTM strategies can safely be assumed to be much higher than the 260 teams estimate. Survey respondents noted there are teams in both Southeast Asia and South Asia that have MTM strategies that are approaching a movement level.



The survey illuminated two aspects of growth related to the number of teams implementing MTM strategies, one being religious blocks and the other geographic locations. Regarding the religious blocks, the strongest growth was among “Secular” and “Hindu” focused strategies, though Muslim-focused strategies represent half of all implementing teams. Geographically, the largest increase in number of teams was in Central Asia by 250%, followed by Southeast Asia with 65% growth, and Europe and South Asia showing 20% growth.

Determining the increase in number of African teams based on the survey alone is inconclusive because the survey was written in English. However, there are indications of increased maturity of implementation in terms of seekers identified, professions of faith, and launching of discipleship groups. This points to a significant growing presence of African teams using MTM strategies.

“Persons of Peace”

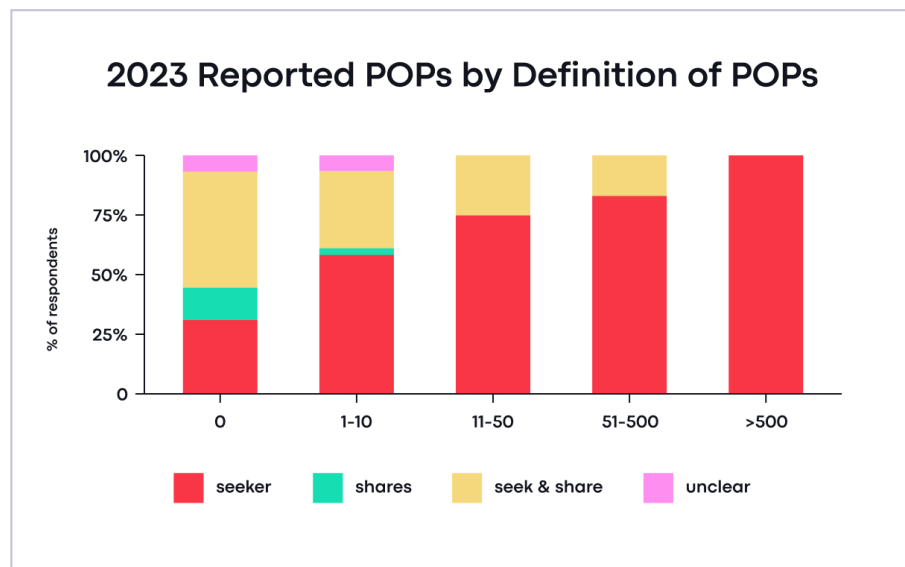
A key factor involved with the trajectory of an initiative that leads to disciple-making movements relates to the concept of a *Person of Peace* or POP. In their book *Contagious Disciple Making*, David and Paul Watson popularized the term *Person of Peace*, drawing on the passage in Luke 10:5-7. This passage highlights identifying someone in a community who welcomes a peaceful relationship with the messenger and his/her message and then encourages the community to also listen to the messenger.

However, various authors and trainers have used the term *Person of Peace* in different ways. In order to understand how MTM teams were using the term POP in measuring their POP outcome, the survey asked the practitioners how they defined the term *Person of Peace*. Four categories emerged from the practitioners’ responses: (1) a **seeker** who desires to engage in



a spiritual discussion about Christ and may also seek information about Christianity from other sources like the Bible, (2) someone who **shares** what they are learning with their friends and family, (3) a combination of being both a **seeker** and one who **shares** what they're learning, (4) response is **unclear** or *other*.

The survey asked, based on the practitioners' definitions, how many POPs were identified in the last year. In the "greater than 500 POPs" category, 100% defined a POP as a **seeker**. The least represented is the POP definition limited to one who **shares** what they've learned. The definition of a POP that includes one who both **seeks** and **shares** is represented most strongly in the 0 POP category, with decreasing representation through the 51-500 POP category.



What relationship might adherence to the **seeker/sharer** definition of a POP have with lower reporting of POPs? MTM practitioners using this multi-element definition could likely designate fewer digital responders as POPs compared to those using the single-element definitions for POPs. If this were the case, only people meeting these criteria would be passed on to field people. In this case, media responders who are indeed seekers could miss an opportunity to engage in spiritual conversations with a field person who could influence them to make a profession of faith.

As noted, most teams with more POPs were involved in their MTM initiatives longer and had more experience in an MTM strategy than those with fewer POPs. One team with more than 500 POPs voiced that they found using a seeker definition to identify persons who could

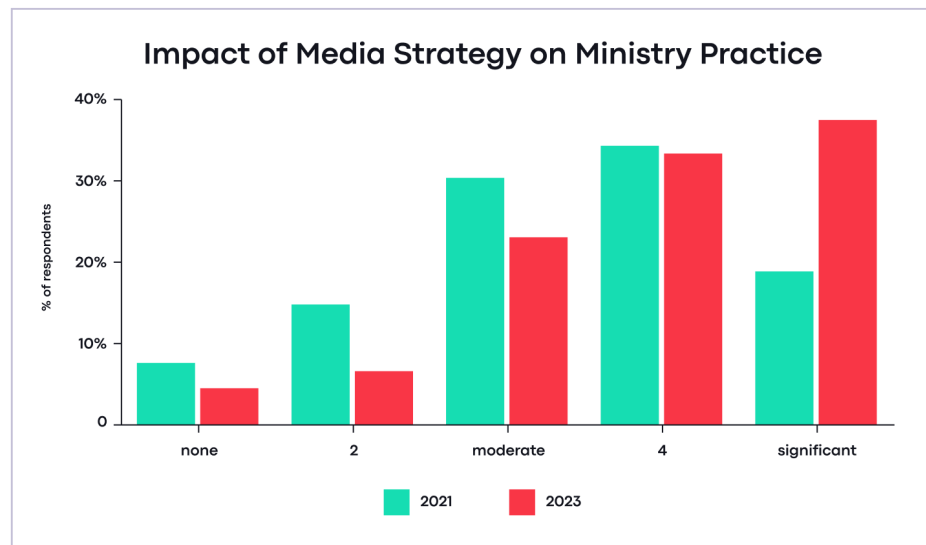


become new believers an approach that yielded a more satisfactory discipleship journey and a more stable ministry.

Sustainable Ministry Impact

Another measurement of *trajectory* is sustainable ministry impact. Respondents were asked to indicate the impact of MTM strategies on their ministry practice, rated from 1 (none) to 5 (significant). Noticeably, in each of the last two surveys, most responses were in the above moderate to significant range at 80% in 2021, and 90% in 2023. The highest impact in the significant range came in 2023.

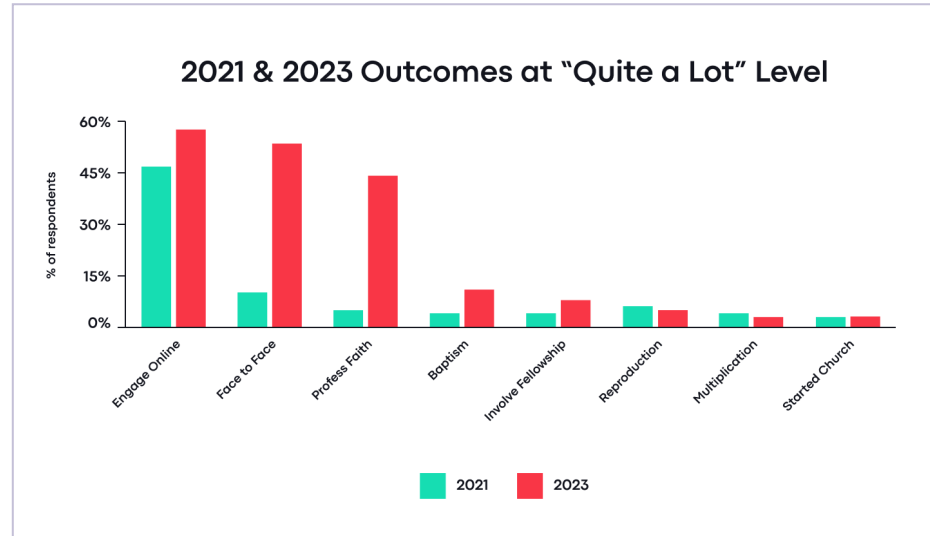
Respondents were asked to evaluate the outcomes of ministry in the categories noted in the chart below. Choices were “None,” “Some,” and “Quite a Lot.” Of interest to this research is the growth in the “Quite a Lot” category. Comparing the 2021 and 2023 data sets, there is a slight increase in the number of online engagements, but there was a 400% growth in face-to-face meetings between the seeker and a field worker. A similar increase is seen in professions of faith by seekers. It appears that these professions of faith can be attributed to increased experience in connecting seekers who are engaged “online” to meeting with field workers.



Global Movement Metrics can quantify these outcomes from the 2023 survey. *Global Movement Metrics* was launched in January 2022 to capture objective information from the 55% of MTM practitioner teams who use the *Disciple.Tools* CRM. Twelve months of data in 2022 record 137,580 direct messages from seekers sent to practitioner teams, 11,227 Bibles delivered to seekers, 772 face-to-face meetings between seekers and practitioner teams, 1,818 professions of faith from

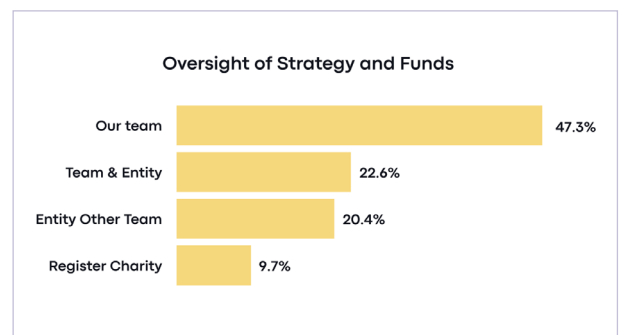
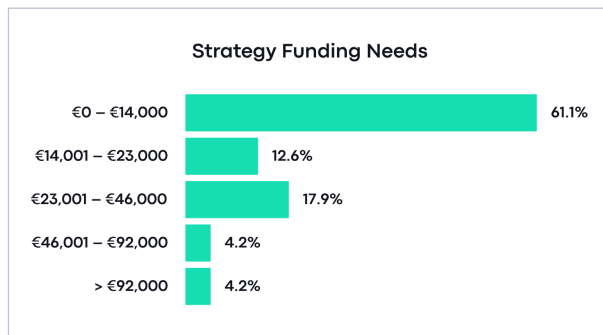


seekers who met with practitioner team members³, 698 baptisms of seekers, and 360 fellowship groups started. There is little comprehensive data from the practitioner teams who don't use *Disciple.Tools*, hence these data points can be considered conservative.



Financial and Accountability Issues Challenges Facing Teams

Another way to measure the *trajectory* of the MTM initiative is to measure teams' funding as well as what structural oversight these teams need. Newly launched teams need fewer funds and less structural oversight than more mature initiatives that require more funds and greater oversight. The survey had two questions that sought to confirm this observation. The first question asked, "Excluding supported expatriate workers, which category best describes your annual MTM strategy budget?" The second question asked: "Which best describes your ministry's **primary** approach to oversight of your initiative's outcomes and use of funds?"



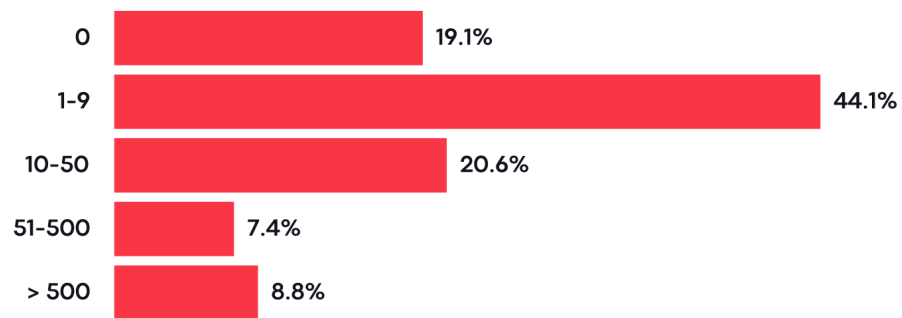
³ Conversions are higher than face-to-face meetings due to some seekers having friends and family join in gospel conversations. Group conversion is more normative among UPG populations.



A metric associated with funding and oversight is the number of POPs the teams have identified. Accountability for both funds and operational oversight parallels the size of an initiative based on the number of POPs identified in a year. From a funding and oversight perspective, about half of the launched teams are maturing in their initiative.

The 2023 survey indicates that more than a third of the teams had more than 10 POPs in the last year, and 16% had more than 100 POPs per year, or more than two POPs per week. Several recorded more than 2000 POPs within the last year, with the conversion and discipleship rates exceeding 40% of those POPs. The general pattern of those who have been implementing their MTM strategy for over three years is in the categories of “51-500” and “greater than 500” POPs per year. Two strategies that are at the “near movement” level have been engaged in their strategy for more than four years.

Number of POPs per year



Corresponding to this outcome is the level of integration of an MTM initiative into the overall team strategy. One question asked, “How integrated is your MTM strategy into your overall team strategy?” In the 2021 study, 15% of teams noted their initiative was fully integrated into their team strategy. In the 2023 study, 60% of the teams said their MTM strategy was fully integrated into their team strategy, again a maturing indicator.

Overview of the Health of MTM Initiatives

Participation in MTM Training

One of the main indicators of the health of an MTM strategy is whether MTM practitioners have the training they need and then have coaches to guide the team’s initiative. Over 95% of survey respondents had received training related to the implementation of MTM strategies. Over 50% of



the respondents had participated in two trainings and 25% received three or more trainings.

The 2021 report estimated that 950 people had participated in an MTM training. It is estimated that by February 2023 over 2,000 people have been trained⁴. As noted earlier, more than 260 field teams are implementing an MTM outreach strategy, a growth of 350% in two years. Based on reports from launched teams, it is estimated that over 75% of the 2021 teams are still implementing MTM strategies.

These trainings addressed a range of topics, including foundations of media theory, church planting, marketing, content development, and the use of digital tools to track ministry practices. Multiple organizations in the MTM Coalition contributed to providing training.

It appears that practitioners sought training based on the need to solve a specific problem, and there was no discernable pattern of who provided the training nor a specific problem to be addressed. Over 88% of those who received training also had a coach to guide them through the implementation of the training(s). Most MTM practitioners stay current with information on MTM issues by participating in podcasts or receiving newsletters.

Digital Filterers

When asked, “When is a person ready for follow up?” one MTM practitioner from the “over 500 POPs” group who was using the **seeker** definition answered, “[When] their spiritual openness has been confirmed through conversations (intangible measures). But there are also tangible measures: (1) they answer yes to having a face-to-face meeting for spiritual discussion, (2) they provide their location (not address, but at least in which part of the city they live), and (3) they provide their phone numbers (so they can be contacted by a field worker).”

When the same person was asked what lessons they’d learned from their strategy, they noted that the Digital Filterer (the person initially engaging a media responder online) was the most critical role on the MTM team. When asked about what advice they would give to those starting an MTM initiative, they responded, “Start with some ads immediately to get ongoing online engagement for filtering to start getting POPs⁵.” In other words, after launching ads, a skilled Digital Filterer is crucial to use spiritual discernment to determine if a media responder is a **seeker** or if the seeker needs continued conversations.

4 See footnote on page 2

5 PPOPs is shorthand for Potential Persons of Peace. Since the digital filterer can only observe predictive POP behavior, they add a “potential” qualifier to the POP designation.



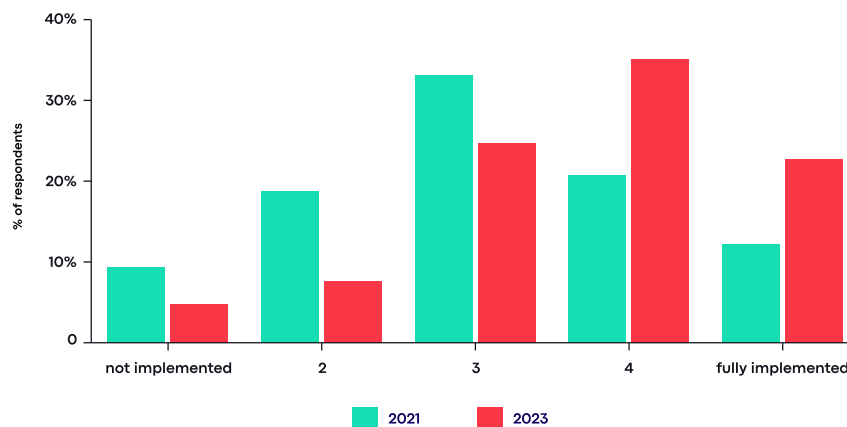
However, finding and keeping Digital Filterers is a challenge. When asked about how their teams recruit and train their Digital Filterers, most respondents indicated their MTM team recruited from local coalitions and partnerships. Many teams found it easiest to train Christian background believers (CBBs) without formal theological education as effective Digital Filterers. CBBs with formal theological training and Muslim background believers (MBBs) were often less effective than CBBs without formal theological education because they sought to counsel or teach seekers rather than to filter true POPs.

MTM practitioners have typically trained Digital Filterers by using training programs from various venues, but some have reported that mentoring people individually in that role has been more effective. One final item that emerged from the data was the need for teams to care for the emotional needs of Digital Filterers. Being constantly exposed to negative messages and a bombardment of spiritual warfare can be demoralizing for Digital Filterers. Many teams originally sought to fill the Digital Filterer role with volunteers, but some teams recommended that digital filtering needed to be a paid role.

Implementation of MTM Strategy

Another metric of the *health* of an MTM initiative is measured by the extent to which teams are implementing their MTM strategy. The survey question asking about the “current level of implementation of your MTM strategy” addresses this metric. Respondents were to choose from a range of 1 (not yet implemented) to 5 (fully implemented). In 2021, 14% of respondents reported they were at 5–(fully implementing their MTM strategy), with 21% at 4. In 2023, 23% of respondents identified as fully implementing their strategy with 37% at 4, an increase of more than 65% in both categories.

Team Implementation of MTM Strategy



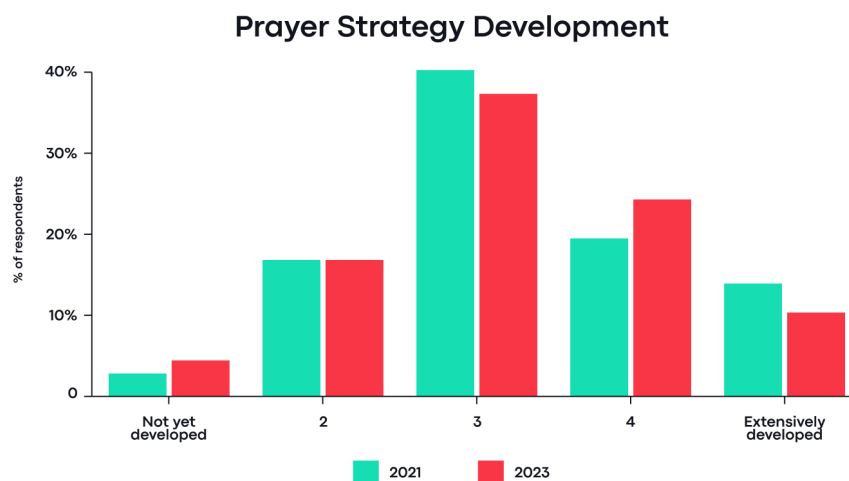


Prayer Strategy

The importance of prayer as a foundational element in an MTM initiative can easily be overlooked when other strategies seem more visible. However, Shodankeh Johnson, an African national involved with the training of Disciple Making Movement (DMM) leaders and responsible for the mobilization of intercessors across the world, has underscored the critical nature of prayer this way,

“A Church Planting Movement cannot happen without a prayer movement first. God’s people need to spend time in prayer and fasting. We should teach and coach our disciples to pray earnestly. If we hope for any success among the unreached, we need a praying ministry and praying disciples. Prayer is the engine of a movement”

To determine the degree to which teams have developed a prayer strategy, respondents were asked, “How developed is your prayer strategy?” On a scale of 1 (not yet developed) to 5 (extensively developed). The patterns of the responses from the 2021 and 2023 surveys are similar. The results of the 2023 survey show that 77% of respondents were in the 3 to 5 range with 37% of those in the 4 and 5 range and 11% of them in the five range. Given that the “extensively developed” description is used as the far end of the spectrum, choices in the 3 and 4 ranges also suggest intentionality and investment in developing these strategies.



There were several references to the need for prayer in responses to short-answer questions. One team in Asia mentioned that their prayer coalitions could use more development and focus. Under the question, “What are your greatest needs?”, one team mentioned



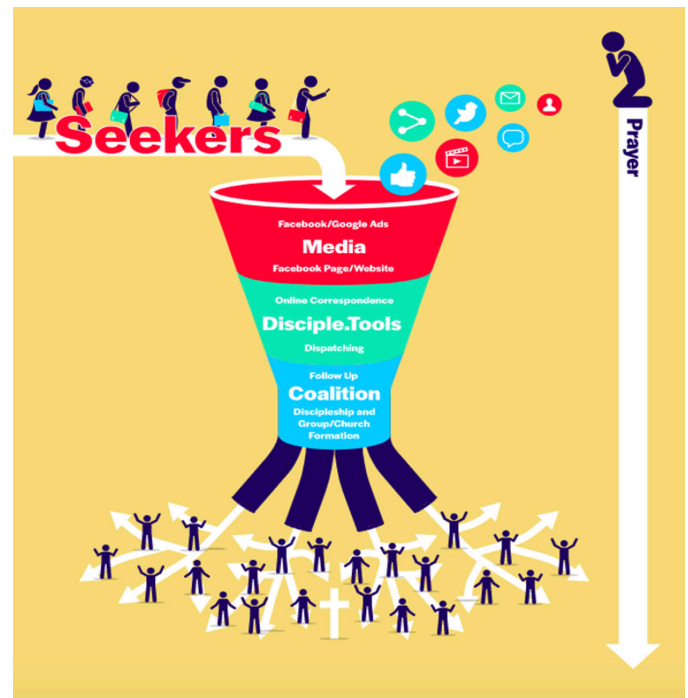
needing prayer to “breaking any strongholds that are keeping people from being willing to talk.” Several teams expressed they needed prayer, and one MTM practitioner noted they needed a prayer catalyst (a defined MTM role for a point person to catalyze a team’s prayer strategy).

Further Insights from Practitioners’ Survey Comments

Two short answer questions provided input about the *health* of MTM initiatives beyond the statistical analysis. The first question asked what was not working well in their MTM strategy. The biggest issue reported by 20% of the respondents was getting POPs from online conversations to meeting face-to-face. Associated with this is the stated need by 10% of respondents for more national partners to be part of their initiatives. These needs included a need for nationals to fill MTM media roles and also field roles. Getting media responses and finding seekers were challenges shared by 15% of survey participants. This is related to an expressed need for media content (6%) and having Digital Filterers who can turn a conversation toward fruitful outcomes (7%). Eight percent of the responses reported that moving seekers into *bottom-of-the-funnel* activities such as baptism, discipleship, and groups is a challenge. Even though the question asked about what is not working well in their strategy, 6% stated that all is working well.

The second question asked, “What are your greatest needs?” The highest need (16%) expressed was for qualified Digital Filterers. Field follow-up was also indicated as a need in 15% of the responses. Field follow-up requires local partners who have the skills to connect with seekers in a way that keeps the gospel conversation going. Having content creators design ad content that reflects local context was a need shared in 15% of the responses. Some comments reflected a need for funding for things like ads and “full-time filterers and multipliers.”

Finding Digital Filterers and field follow-up personnel are constant challenges. A second category of need is content that identifies seekers. It is a reminder of the integration of





media strategy with field strategy. In a question requesting advice from MTM practitioners, one person stated, “Do not redefine success. It is not *top-of-the-funnel* metric stats. Those are encouraging lead metrics. But relentlessly hold on to your vision of seeing *bottom-of-the-funnel* metrics increase and even multiply.” Keeping a relentless focus on the bottom of the funnel leads to strategy alignment for MTM practitioners.

It can be overwhelming to keep this alignment while launching an MTM strategy. Many MTM practitioners called for patience and persistence in their advice to other MTM practitioners, with one practitioner stating, “Work toward responses first and then be equipped according to the next phase.” In other words, an MTM practitioner does not need to have it all figured out before launching a strategy. Work toward launching and getting responses, and then find training and coaching for the next stage. In the MTM coaching guide, coaches look for teams to grow in four stages: (1) pre-launch foundations to prepare for launch, (2) post-launch identifying individual POPs, (3) individual POPs starting groups, and (4) groups starting other groups, approaching movement level. Each stage has activities and skills that need to be developed for MTM practitioners.

The summary from one MTM practitioner was instructive: “Receive training. Be patient. Keep trying. Pray.” Many of the practitioners’ advice echoed the advice to get a coach and stay prayerfully engaged over the long term.

Summary and Recommendations

From the observations in the trajectory section, it is evident that increasing numbers of teams are implementing MTM strategies and at greater levels of fruitfulness. Over half of all teams are newly launched with under 10 POPs per year, and the other half is identifying more than two POPs per month, some averaging a POP per day. Those newly launched teams need help transitioning online media responders to offline field connections. This is a pain point, and MTM practitioners have a great need for “how-to” mentoring. A critical “how to” is the challenge of facilitating a church planting movement.

The teams with growing numbers of POPs need more training opportunities and mentoring in encouraging POPs to bridge to their communities and start groups. They will also need to be equipped to support emerging leaders of groups. These training and mentoring concepts are embedded in movement constructs. It appears this is a current growing edge for the MTM Coalition that needs to be developed.

This growth poses a greater demand for the Coalition to look for additional pre-launch and post-launch coaches. The data is clear that each year the number of launched teams is



growing, with the 2021 to 2023 increase being 350% with more than 260 launched teams. Work is being done in developing LMS training delivery systems that can improve MTM practitioners' knowledge base, but giving teams personal problem-solving guidance will avoid what is called the "curse of plenty" when growth exceeds management capacity to resource growth.

It was observed that those for whom English is not their first language are the fastest-growing population of MTM practitioners. Multilingual material, world view considerations, and appropriate coaches for non-English speakers should be a consideration for the MTM Coalition's recruitment and training of coaches.

Funding for MTM initiatives is a growing challenge. Currently, most teams are self-funded and have accountability structures that are reflective of "team" level funding. Once teams reach the level where individuals start groups and then those groups launch other groups, the challenges of funding and establishing accountability structures grow increasingly complex. Media office staff funding decisions and associated decisions regarding emerging ministry leaders will challenge MTM practitioners. Are they funded or not and to what level? How will expenses for field training meetups be covered? These decisions are best handled by a governance board, which also grows more complex as a ministry grows. As more movements are launched from MTM initiatives, the coalition should develop a think tank to consider funding and accountability challenges for teams at this phase. Again, this is a "curse of plenty" challenge.

Another observation is that the role of the Digital Filterer is crucial to the effectiveness of an MTM initiative. Getting the content that will identify seekers is essential; identifying a media responder who is a true seeker and willing to meet with a field worker is a spiritual art. Training for Digital Filterers is a critical first step, but the need for ongoing mentoring and member care must be addressed. It appears that many teams make the Digital Filterer a paid position and then invest in their staff to sharpen their skills. Prayer with and prayer for these staff members is reflective of John 17:15.

In the 2021 survey, it was observed that the MTM Coalition was reaching an innovation threshold of adoption. The results of the this 2023 survey indicate that the coalition of practitioners is well into the tipping point phase as evidenced by the number of teams adopting a strategy, the impact of individual and collective strategies, fruitfulness based on multiple metrics, and kingdom growth in terms of conversions, disciples, fellowships and movements.

We are participants and observers of God at work to reach the nations. There is much to celebrate and much work yet to be done. May we continue to be branches to a fruit-bearing vine.