

# Building a National Prayer Network

## Some guidelines and principles to start and maintain a national prayer network

1. When you start to build a national prayer network, be careful not to focus on titles and positions. Simply start a process by being a facilitator (do not call yourself a coordinator and leader of the national network, etc.)
2. Bring together leaders from different denominations and organizations. Start with a few people that are interested. Share the vision or concept of a national network. Tell them things regarding prayer that is happening in other countries around the world and the importance and benefits of a national prayer network.
3. Let this group appoint a person who they want to facilitate the process. Do not establish a national prayer network too quickly. Consult widely and share this concept with a good number of key leaders.
4. Make sure that you involve and consult other existing prayer networks in the country. Try not to establish just another prayer network. Remember that the main purpose of a national prayer network is to bring together all existing prayer groupings and prayer initiatives in the country. Do not start another national prayer network if there is an existing one in your nation. See how you can strengthen what already exists.
5. Be as inclusive as possible. Be careful and wise then you decide not to include some people or groups. Share the vision, provide a very simple and basic statement of faith and let people decide for themselves if they want to be part of it. It is also a fact that not all groups, churches and fraternals will join such a national prayer network. Some will only join later. Work with those that are ready, and treat all with love. Be open for more churches and groups to be part of the network.
6. Local churches have their own programmes; be careful not to do things in a way that ignore the programmes of the local churches and the way they do things. Do not expect the local churches to stop all their programmes in order to be part of "your" initiatives. Strategise carefully so that churches will understand that you are not just doing your own thing, and do it in such a way that it will be easy for churches to be part of any initiative that you may launch. It is always good to consult at least a few pastors in local churches.
7. Never prescribe to people what to do, what to pray about and how to go about things. Give ideas, principles, guidelines and suggestions on what is possible and can be done. Share ideas, tell stories of what God is doing in other churches, towns/cities, countries. Motivate and encourage, but never dictate or force people to do something. Always invite.
8. Divide the country into regions or provinces or geographical areas. Start by finding coordinators for these regions. In the beginning it is best to call them facilitators (see no. 1 above) until that region appoints a specific person as a coordinator, whom you then as the representatives for that region.
9. New prayer groups will continue to emerge. Every year new groups and individuals will come with prayer initiatives - groups and individuals that are not necessarily part of the national prayer network. Do not oppose them but encourage them and ask them to be part of the greater national prayer network. Support what they are doing as much as possible. To support something does not always mean you have to be actively involved in that.
10. The rules and guidelines of the national prayer network should not restrict creativity or kill legitimate initiatives. Do not force people into your mold or try to get them to do what you want them to do.
11. The purpose of a national prayer network is to: support, inform, build relationships, create new opportunities, give guidance, pray together, strengthen, encourage, network, motivate, to determine what needs there are and trying to find suitable solutions - but never to tell people what to do and what not.
12. Avoid having a heavy infrastructure, which may be very expensive. It is not always necessary to have an office and expensive equipment. It is more important to decentralize as much is possible - give as much responsibility and authority to the different regions. If you succeed in that, the administrative

functions are much less and the financial demands are also minimal. Try to keep the office as small as possible and the personnel as few as possible.

13. When you decentralize the authority and responsibility to the regional or provincial networks, it generates a sense of ownership and help people to take responsibility for the work.
14. It takes time to build a national prayer network. Under normal circumstances it may take anything from 4 to 6 years to start and establish a national prayer network. The key words are patience and the building of relationships. Often leaders or other people will accuse you of things that are not true. Make sure it is not true and humbly continue to do the work, build new relationships, cast the vision, encourage and share what God is doing.
15. There are two ways to motivate people. Firstly you motivate people by telling them about all the evil and problems that the world is facing to "compel" them to go into action. Secondly you can share stories of breakthroughs, positive things that are happening, the faithfulness of God and His eternal promises. Make sure you use both these "methods" when you invite and encourage people to pray.
16. There must be a balance in building relationships and moving towards unity on the one hand and encouraging people to participate in a national or international prayer initiative on the other hand. You need to do the one and not neglect the other. Many networks die because people take too much time in building relationships and working towards unity, without doing something together. Prayer proofed itself as one of the best ways to unite people. Often people will not want to work together on certain projects, but will most probably join hands with others in praying together for the national elections, HIV/AIDS, violence, crime, poverty, the unsaved, etc.