



*Aila Tasse – Lifeway Mission International  
Innovation in Mission*

My name is Aila Tasse. I'm from Nairobi, Kenya. I'm the founder and president of Lifeway Mission International based in Nairobi. I'm also serving as the Regional Director for New Generation, East Africa.

I just want to give you a little bit of my background in missions, but I just also want to think with you and learn with you about the subject of innovations in mission but the perspective is the East Africa perspective. A place that we've served for about 30 years. Lifeway Mission where it serves, is an indigenous missionary training and sending organization started in North Kenya. About thirty years ago God gave me a vision of our coverage of growing in the desert, which symbolizes the unreached people group in the deserts of Northern Kenya. By obedience and faith, we started pursuing that vision. And today, by God's grace through all our networks, we are engaged in about 14 countries and in the network of about a hundred and one unreached people groups being engaged. Through these years, God has shown us and have taught at so many things. We've seen changes in missions. We've seen changes in how to engage the people. And those changes have taught us to think and to act innovatively. And so, in my subject of our mission innovations, I want to discuss a few things.

Number one, I want us to discuss, **Why Innovation?** Why is it needed? And there are about few things that I want to share in this area.

Secondly, I also want to share with you about the innovations that we had in our own context in this part of the world. And then number three: What do we need to do so that we can be innovative in missions? How can we remain to be people with a lot of innovations so that we can be able to finish the task of the Great Commission? But let me start by giving you the- to answer the first question- Why Innovation? About few things that I've been thinking about, because Jesus led us into engaging the people. Earlier when we started the ministry, not so many things were there. So now let me share with you the things that we've been learning about this in innovation in mission. I want to discuss first, why innovation. There's several reason in this, because if you don't understand why then we will not be able to be innovative in mission.

Point number one: The reason why we have to be innovative in mission it's because **we live in a different world today**. When I say about different world, we live in a world that is multicultural and multiethnic. And so for us to do mission in this kind of context would be very challenging. And so we need to be aware that this is a different one.

Number two: Today **we live in a global village**. It's not like, we of course live in countries but many of us live in neighborhoods now that have people from many parts of the world. We just have to accept that the reality today is that my neighbors are people who do not look like me or speak the same language that I speak. So the world is in my neighborhood. So this should make us to think innovative.

Number three: We also need to know that **we are in the age of information technology**. That this information technology both for communication and connection is there to help us to be innovative because it's much more easier to connect and to communicate today. We also have to be innovative in Mission because there is the raise of indigenous missional leaders. In what used to be traditional mission fields, God is raising leaders from the people group or from the countries who have taken their roles of being leaders in their own nations. We also know that some of the real one of the other realities of our world today is the raise of political instabilities or religious extremisms. And this, we've seen this in the last few years in different parts of the world, and these are to change how we think about mission and how we practice it.

We also know some of the challenges, some of the reason why we have to be innovative, it's because the shift of the center of Christianity has changed. It used to be in the West and now this gravitated, has changed from the West obviously from the global North to the global South. South Africa to Africa, South America or maybe Asia. And this reality of changing where places that used to be the majority Christians are now the minorities and this has to help us understand that the mission is not from one place to the other. It is from everywhere to everywhere. And so this reason would make us to think and to be innovative.

And as we were observing all these, I looked at our own mission, started asking myself a question, how can we engage with the people that we are called to engage with. Our mission went from being a small indigenous mission within a tribal context into a national mission and then went into different nations and now we have engagement and networks in many different other parts of the world. About three or four things that has helped us to respond to these new changes that I just I earlier mentioned.

**Number one**, we started learning to be creative and innovative in the area of wholistic mission. We looked at ways of looking at mission, not on one sided mission of only proclamation. We started thinking of using other available ways of including compassion ministries, getting access to the people and that way it started expanding our horizons. We also had innovation ways of thinking intentionally on making disciples. And this process of making disciples as of DMM is so different from traditional ways of just proclamation. People in our context are used to crusades or things like that and you know in our world today, in the context where we work, especially in the Islamic context, we cannot be using crusades because historically it is very negative. And so we started thinking of ways and methods that we can engage with our host people without offending them by relating to them, by walking and working closely with them.

Another way of innovation in our own ministry is using the available platform to board, train and equip leaders without leaving their context. Today and since COVID-19, we've been using Zoom and WhatsApp and other available training platform. And we've had people from all over the world join our trainings and learning with us, forming our community on internet. Because that way, we were even able to reach out to people who are in Panamas, some in Asia, some in Africa, and some in America. We've seen that. That worked for us a lot. And we couldn't help. We have to be innovative if we have to respond to the needs of mission.

Another way for us that made us to be innovative is a way of looking at what is working among the people. We actually did not need to start new things, we already saw things that was existing in the community. For example, in engaging the community, sometimes we find people, kids or young men playing soccer. It's already there. They're playing soccer. The question is not going and starting another soccer club. It's bringing the Gospel into the soccer club. We started learning to be a church within the group. It's not about inviting them to the church, it's about helping them to become the church in the soccer field. These are ways that help us to be innovative. And the other thing also that we were using in a way of innovation is our building networks and collaboration. We realized that we cannot do much by ourselves. If we can collaborate, creatively network with others, learn from them as they learn from us and put all our resources and efforts together, we would do much more than us trying to use our own efforts to do things by ourselves. The last one I want to share about being innovative that I've seen in our mission and it has really, really helped us is a way of helping people to discover, learn and start what they believe in. Ours is not about passing our brand to people. We pass our DNA to them but they choose their own brands because that is something that they can own. If people own something, it will be sustainable. They will do it because it is theirs, but we keep these people within our fellowship relationship and network so that we can all learn and grow together. At the end of the day, this is about the Kingdom of God. It's not about our ministry and so all these innovations that we're trying to effect in our ministry and use them, it worked so much for us. \*\*\* during this COVID-19. And while we were going under these lockdowns and restrictions, we realized we were even more effective during this difficult time. Why? Because innovation could help us! We could do our team meetings by being even far from each other, by learning from each other.

Having said all those innovations that we witnessed in our ministry, we cannot leave or do mission without being innovative. Leaders of missions, churches who send missionaries, believers who believe that they are called by God to be missionaries of God needs to be innovative so that we can finish the work and the task of the Great Commission. Thank you so much. I hope this is helpful that it will help us to remain innovative in engaging the people that were called to meet. Thank you and blessings.