

Charting Your Course through the Sectors

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Can we really offer justice and freedom from want to a mid twenty-first-century earth of perhaps nine billion people, one-third of whom may live in squalor and desperation? [Surprises and setbacks] should not deter us from responding as best we can, using our talents to improve this always mixed record of trying “to save generations from the scourge of war,” “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,” and to promote “social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” The original Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations had it right. The question is, can we do it? (Kennedy 2006, 279, 289)

This chapter is designed to help orient you to the process of crossing sectors. I discuss the nature of sectors and their relevance for member care in mission/aid. I also present ten lessons that I have learned and three suggestions for crossing sectors. You are encouraged to refer back to the suggestions at the end of this chapter periodically as you make your way through the material in this book. So have a go at charting your course through the sectors, serving humanity with good practice.

What Is a Sector?

Sectors are fascinating. But what are they exactly? Mathematically, a sector is the area of a circle bounded by any two radii. (Think of a sector as being a triangular piece of pie cut from a round pie.) From this geometric definition emerges the concept of human sectors, or specialized groupings of *people*. For our purposes a sector is a distinct part of society (analogous to the area between two radii in a circle or a piece of pie) with a special albeit broad purpose. It is a large, amorphous yet recognizable block within the international community that provides different types of services and products to people. Each one is comprised of a wide array of people who are part of different organizations; influenced by various disciplines, practices, and goals; and intertwined with many related networks. A sector fundamentally is a *human* entity.

A prime example is the humanitarian sector, which overlaps with many other sectors, including the Christian mission sector. It would be accurate to refer to this sector as a *macro* sector (or even as the humanitarian *world*), which is comprised of many other sectors and subsectors. Just browse through any of the online issues of the *Humanitarian Exchange* from the Overseas Development Institute, and you will quickly see what we mean about the macrosector nature of the humanitarian world (<http://www.odihpn.org>). The humanitarian sector includes thousands of nongovernmental organizations, government and intergovernmental agencies, and groups from civil society including faith-based groups. These entities provide a myriad of worthwhile services such as medical care, military and civilian peacekeeping in conflict zones, relief response in natural disasters, human rights advocacy, HIV/ AIDS prevention, childhood education, maternal health care, water purification, and so many other areas. Collectively they represent much of humanity's concerted effort to alleviate human misery and promote human well-being.

Sector Connectors

Trying to grasp sectors both conceptually and practically can thus be a bit of a challenge. It is akin to trying to grasp the sky. Both are readily observable. Both are highly influential. Yet both are hard to “contain,” especially as they are so vast and full of variation. It can also be daunting and confusing entering into a new or even overlapping sector. It can feel very “foreign”—a bit like the proverbial fish out of water—as my wife, Michèle, and I found out in our initial efforts to connect and contribute to the global health (GH) sector.

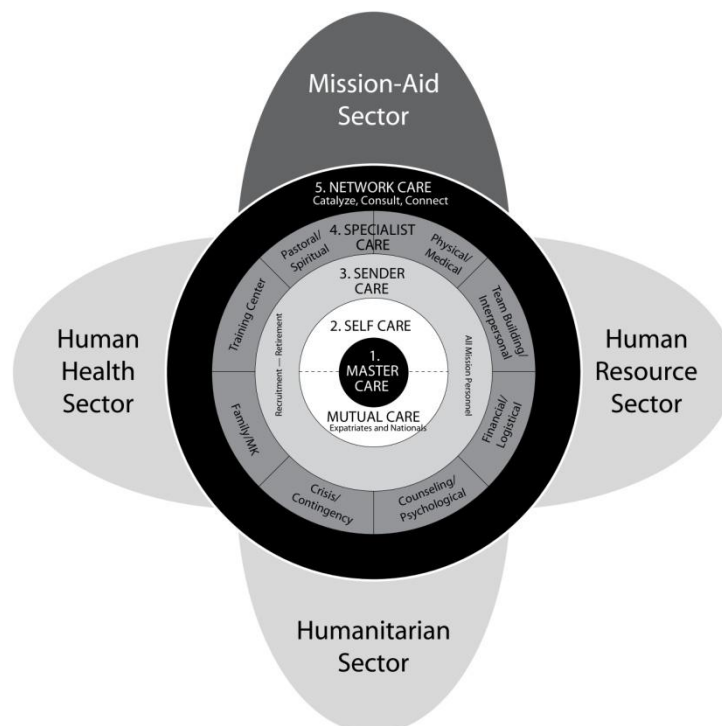
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Being psychologists with international experience helped us to enter into GH, of course. Yet coming from the faith-based mission sector with involvement in the humanitarian sector did not guarantee it would be easy to find our way into the mainstream of GH. Entering into different sectors is a dynamic process, not simply a static concept. It felt like a cross-cultural experience, exhilarating yet at times unnerving as we were stretched by our encounters with a variety of highly experienced people, challenging ideas, and new areas of learning. This diverse sector though, like learning a new culture or language, started to make more sense over time. We attended conferences, workshops, and webinars; learned about projects and research studies; read materials and watched videos; served on committees and task forces; asked lots of questions; and above all met and talked with people from many NGOs, countries, and disciplines within the sector. We built relationships and saw how much we all had to offer each other, highlighting our mutual emphases and goals.

In short, the global health sector, especially the global *mental* health (GMH) part of it, which lies within the much larger human health sector, gradually became more familiar, less foreign, and even less perplexing. So the moral of this short account is to be encouraged as you cross into sectors and subsectors. Maintain your core values and worldview, but be open to new ideas. With time you will learn to navigate your way around the relevant parts of the sectoral terrain—and the sectoral sky!

Member Care: Going Macro

Crossing sectors fits well with the global member care model from *Doing Member Care Well* (O'Donnell 2002, p. 16). This model has been updated and now includes a sphere for sector care (see fig. 2). The sphere is permeable and overlaps with specialist care (Sphere 4—with its eight domains/disciplines of care) and network care (Sphere 5—with its emphasis on catalyzing, consulting, and connecting broadly). All sectors invariably receive input from many disciplines (Sphere 4) and many networks (Sphere 5). This additional sphere reinforces the macro nature of this model as well as the global purview of the member care field.



A macro, global model for member care, updated to include the sphere of “sector care”

Each sphere in the member care model is summarized with a one-paragraph “Good Practice Principle” (ibid., ch. 1). Here is the summary for Sphere 6, sector care: People with member care responsibility in mission/aid stay in touch with sectors that are relevant for their work. They are willing to cross into new areas—emphases, projects, disciplines, and fields within related sectors—for mutual learning, exchanging resources, and developing skills. Crossing sectors includes a continuum of involvement which is carefully considered in view of one’s primary focus in member care: being informed by, integrating with, and/or immersing in a given sector or part of a sector.

I think that intentionally crossing sectors is the next developmental phase for the member care field. What are some resources/practices and challenges/problems within these sectors? What can we learn from each other? How can our experiences in these sectors help us improve our member care efforts for supporting and managing mission/aid staff? We are entering into some new terrain while at the same time solidly building on the field’s foundations and core focus on mission/aid workers. In so doing we seek to broaden and further shape the contours of good practice in member care.

Sector Pair

Sector care also involves the learning process of “sector pair.” Concepts and practices from the different sectors are paired with (related to) similar ones in the member care field. There are just so many helpful points of contact conceptually and practically! For example, thinking of personnel as “human resources having strategic worth” for the humanitarian sector can be compared with the concept of “human beings having intrinsic worth” for member care in the mission/aid sector. Another example is comparing the perspectives on safeguarding international/national staff in unstable settings: how much risk does one take, and what price is one willing to pay regardless of the faith- or non-faith-based motivations for one’s service to humanity?

Another application of sector pair involves linking spirituality and core values. For many workers, healthy spirituality, including faith in God, is fundamental to their well-being and work effectiveness. For others, it can involve transcendent principles rather than referencing God per se. Some examples of these principles would be to “do good and do no harm” as derived from the Hippocratic Oath in the health-care fields, the “humanity principle” of the International Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement and similar groups which emphasizes protecting life and health without discrimination, the social responsibility commitment in the business/corporate sector to both “do well” (making money) and to “do good” (helping humans) (e.g., see Crutchfield and Grant 2012), the guiding sociopolitical value of “enlightened self-interest” emphasizing the well-being of others as one seeks his or her own benefit, or other benevolent principles reflected in one’s life philosophy. *The point is that there are lots of points—connecting points—when crossing sectors!*

Relating Relevantly

Connecting with other sectors is not new. People, disciplines, fields, and sectors do it all the time! If we simply review how we spend our days—the people, media, and news events we encounter—we quickly realize just how much we actively interact with different sectors. One example with much relevance for member care and highlighted in chapter 3, is Families in Global Transition (<http://www.figt.org>). This organization brings together people from several sectors to share research and resources and discuss issues and strategies for supporting international, expatriate families. The annual conference, now in its fifteenth year, is a rich source of cross-fertilization and networking with participants from the humanitarian, mission, education, military, arts, human resources, business, and health sectors. The well-being of families, understandably, is a major common concern for all kinds of organizations that send staff and their families to international assignments.

The relevance of crossing sectors is clearly seen in the research by Johnson, Barrett, and Crossing, which advocates for greater interactions between the major religious blocs, especially Christians and non-Christians, in the service of humanity.

What percentage of non-Christians personally know a Christian? . . . The [research] results are startling in the sense that Christians and non-Christians appear to be living in quite separate worlds. This distance has implications for Christian missions but is also problematic when it comes to dialogue, peace initiatives, environmental and health challenges, and many other areas of human interaction. Our hope is that highlighting the problem will help in planning solutions for the future. (2010, 29)

It is also seen in the need to work together—intergovernmental and civil society—in order to resolutely confront the “problems without passports” that plague humanity. As Shashi Tharoor, the former under-secretary-general of the United Nations, explains in his poignant article “The Good for Something UN”:

The United Nations is a 20th-century organization facing a 21st century challenge as an institution with impressive achievements but also haunting failures, one that mirrors not just the world’s hopes but its inequalities and disagreements, and most important, one that has changed but needs to change further . . . The single greatest problem facing the United Nations is that there is no single greatest problem; rather there are a dozen different ones each day clamoring for attention. Some, like the crisis in Lebanon, the Palestinian situation and the nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, are obvious and trying. Others we call “problems without passports”—issues that cross all frontiers uninvited, like climate change, drug trafficking, human rights, terrorism, epidemic diseases, and refugee movements. Their solutions, too, can recognize no frontiers because no one country or group of countries, however rich or powerful, can tackle them alone. (2006, 15)

And from a theological perspective, the relevance of multisector involvement is seen in the very nature of Christian mission, described here by David Hesselgrave in terms of Ralph Winter’s “kingdom mission”:

The Christian mission requires that we meet basic human needs for education, food, water, medicine, justice, and peace. As is evident in the Apostle John’s assertion that Jesus was sent to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8 NASB), our mission is to continue his earthly mission by undertaking the kind of organized research and enterprises that combat evil in all its forms—violence, injustice, poverty, environmental exploitation, drug trafficking, and disease. (2010, 196)

These three quotes suggest that it may in fact (always) be a good time for us as people—as well as for organizations, fields, and sectors—to review the parameters of our involvements, including “comfort zones,” and consider how our work can increasingly relate to the plethora of world challenges (see also Stott, 2006).

Trans-Practitioners

I want to consider another term that I recently introduced into the member care field: trans-practitioner. This term sounds a bit theoretical, but it is actually very practical. Trans-practitioners in member care and other fields are *learners-helpers*. They are skilled, passionate humans who intentionally cross a variety of sectors, usually with others, for mutual learning and good practice. They regularly “stretch” their experiential levels for the sake of benefiting other humans. Some may

even be considered “social entrepreneurs”: transformative forces who creatively and resolutely initiate and advocate for important causes, changes, and resources to help others (Bornstein 2004).

In addition to crossing sectors, trans-practitioners regularly cross other borders such as disciplines, organizations, networks, and cultures, and are particularly adept at working in “clusters” (groups of people with a diversity of backgrounds and skills focusing on a special topic/problem area). Further, they also willingly cross “deserts” as they sojourn through the refining hardships in life and work. Trans-practitioners in member care and other fields are thus committed to *go broadly* as helpers (connecting and contributing professionally with sectors, disciplines, networks, cultures) and to *grow deeply* as persons (developing personally through difficulties and through their commitment to lifelong learning). Trans-practitioners are good practitioners who help pave the way forward in our increasingly globalizing world.

Lessons Learned:

Ten Practical Examples for Good Global Practice

As shared previously, cross-sector experiences are a two-way street. We learn and receive input from other sectors, even as we do from other disciplines and we offer input to other sectors. This section contains ten important lessons (perspectives, principles, and practices) that my wife, Michèle, and I have learned from crossing sectors over the years. Many of the lessons listed in this section are from the humanitarian sector. This makes sense, of course, given the major overlap between member care for mission/aid and human resource management in humanitarian assistance.

One important caveat is that sometimes involvement in the mission/aid sector can be viewed with suspicion. Much of this seems related to a view that faith-based mission/aid is being done by people who proselytize others, inappropriately try to change others’ culture and spiritual beliefs, are afraid of diversity, and make assistance contingent on another’s religion—all taboos in the humanitarian sector in particular. Likewise, there can be the view (and suspicion) within the faith-based sector that “secular” humanitarian agencies are ignoring or not adequately addressing the spiritual needs of the people with whom they work, that Western commercialism and “relaxed” sexuality will negatively influence and alienate those in need unless other values are modeled, that those who have well-defined moral values are intolerant of others, and that there is a bias against aid workers whose spiritual values motivate them to do good. Misperceptions and genuine concerns are also present when we try to cross sectors and learn from one another. For some helpful perspectives on such contrasting and common views, see chapter 13.

Ten Lessons from Crossing Sectors

1. Good management of aid workers is just as important as good support for these workers. Skilled managers and helpful policies are also key resources for worker well-being. Both management and support have become two sides of the “member care coin” for us as we practice member care in mission/aid (People In Aid 2003). See chapter 29.

2. Health hazards including traffic/household accidents and malarial/HIV infections must be included in preassignment training for staff. They are also to be monitored as physical risk factors in various settings. There is thus much more involved in the well-being of workers than approaches to individual stress management (InterHealth and People In Aid 2003). See chapter 30.

3. Sending agencies are not simply accountable to senior leaders or to God. There are recognized codes to follow and standards for good practice and benchmarks to which to aspire. The human resources program must be evaluated regularly in terms of its relevance, and the same is true for any member care program (Management Sciences for Health 2005). See chapters 12 and 26.

4. The collective agreement of humanity, recognized by the vast majority of governments/countries, is that human rights are inalienable, interdependent, and indivisible. These rights are founded upon respect for the dignity and worth of human beings. In particular, religious liberty, via the freedom to have or not have a religion, is a universal right. Human rights are an additional foundation upon which to build the practice of member care (in addition to Judeo-Christian Scripture and good practice/ethics codes) (United Nations General Assembly 1948). See chapters 5 and 15.

5. Aid is not to be used to further a particular religious or political viewpoint. Aid is meant to be neutral, and thus the religious/political beliefs of a recipient person or community do not influence whether they receive aid. The corollary is to be very careful when you share your religious/political beliefs with vulnerable populations (even on request or as “a normal part of talking about life”) who are in some important ways dependent upon you (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 1994). See chapter 7.

6. Mental health and psychosocial support is just as important as physical support when providing relief/development services and primary health-care services. Getting psychological support, for example, to people and communities in disaster settings can help facilitate recovery—to foster *active survivors rather than passive victims* (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2007; World Federation for Mental Health 2009). See chapters 23 and 24.

7. People in areas of conflict often experience psychological wounds. Yet many also yearn more for social justice than they do for some type of healing for “inner trauma.” Do not *de facto* import Western approaches for trauma care into areas where there are conflicts/calamities. People have social memories associated with trauma and not just individual memories. Help faith-based mission workers understand the sociopolitical context and justice yearnings of the people with whom they work (various sources including Summerfield 1998). See chapters 23–25.

8. Corruption is widespread throughout the world, including the humanitarian sector. It is also rampant in the faith-based mission/aid sector. There are plenty of people who will gladly pray for you Sunday and then prey on you Monday. Corruption is not simply limited to financial matters, but rather it is based on the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. In Christian settings, think of it as “crimianity”—the nefarious substitution of criminal vice for Christian virtue (Bailey 2008). See chapter 10.

9. Transparency and accountability are core practices at all levels of mission/ aid. The leaders in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were committed to assess the quality and influence of the organization’s culture on its staff and operations. They also brought in an independent researcher to conduct the assessment. The agency leaders also published a version of the subsequent report online so that the public and its stakeholders could see it. Such transparency/ accountability is a good model for the mission/aid sector and other sectors (Wigley 2005). See chapter 32.

10. Humanitarian journalism is essential to accurately research and inform the public and build global awareness, including informing mission/aid workers, about international events. The humanitarian media is a key part of the humanitarian workforce and should be considered as a viable career/emphasis for mission/ aid workers to undertake as well (Hieber 2001).

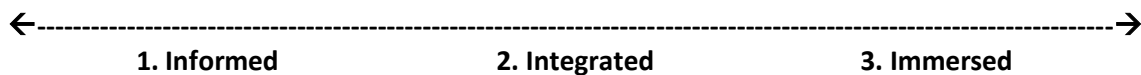
The list of lessons goes on and on. And in addition to the humanitarian sector, there are so many opportunities to connect and contribute with various other sectors, such as the international business, education, and diplomatic service sectors.

**Charting a Course:
Three Suggestions for Crossing Sectors**

So how do we in fact go about navigating the vast terrain of sectors? Here are three suggestions to further orient us, described in terms of issues, involvements, and influences.

1. Issues: focus on the areas that matter to you. What are you already interested in or involved in? What are you passionate about? What are you naturally motivated to learn a lot more about? Take it further by exploring what is happening in these areas within other sectors. Be prepared to expand your “experiential boundaries,” knowing that it can be a bit uncomfortable but also rewarding. It may take time and effort to significantly connect and contribute. Don’t go alone but get involved with others. Find compatible colleagues with similar interests and key groups and networks in which you can be part. Need more ideas about an area of focus? Just browse through the articles in this book, including the URLs to the many short video pieces!

2. Involvements: choose your level of activity in crossing sectors. The process of crossing sectors can be understood as a “continuum of involvement.” This continuum has three reference points to help identify the degree to which we may want to get involved in a given sector.



The continuum begins with more minor involvement in a sector, such as reading the quarterly magazines from a human resources organization about things like staff selection and people management (*informed*). It then proceeds to a midpoint and the inclusion of a sector or parts of a sector in one’s work such as travel health resources for preventing road traffic accidents and malarial infections (*integrated*). The end of the continuum could involve becoming a recognized part of another sector such as working part time as a human rights advocate in a nongovernmental organization or developing culturally relevant psychosocial support for victims of gender violence (*immersed*). We note that people can also be involved with different sectors informally or formally, occasionally or regularly, conceptually or experientially, and so on.

Crossing sectors might get all of our adrenalin flowing, but as we have learned, it requires clear personal boundaries. If we light a candle at both ends, it gets used up twice as fast. So too much of a good thing is disruptive and can certainly distract us from work priorities. This means we may have to bypass many of the wonderful materials/opportunities that come our way from different conferences, organizations, disciplines, etc., and at times inundate our offices and email boxes. Nonetheless it is still well worth the effort, provided that we draw our parameters and pace ourselves well. Crossing sectors is a practice to intentionally and carefully build into our lifestyle and job description.

3. Influences: get a grid. What has influenced your desire and ability to cross sectors? The grid below can help you to get a better handle on some of the main influences. Use it to track some of the main influences that have personally affected your involvement in crossing sectors. To give you an idea, I have listed some examples from my own life for each of the six categories. As you review your past, you may very well get a better sense of what your future course might look like (the last part of the grid).

Crossing Sectors: Personal Influences

Principles/Beliefs

1. The “unity of truth” across time and subjects
 2. The imago Dei as a basis for loving truth and peace
 3. Moral duty and “blessed to be a blessing”
 4. Resilient virtue is stronger than resilient evil
 5. Human history has a direction and purpose
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Documents/Materials

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)
 2. *Doing Member Care Well* (2002)
 3. Partnership principles (general)
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Organizations/Groups

1. People In Aid (human resources)
 2. Overseas Development Institute (humanitarian assistance)
 3. World Health Organization (global health)
 4. Movement for Global Mental Health
 5. Member Care Associates
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People/Models

1. My parents
 2. My wife
 3. The poor in Mexico
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Milestones/Gravestones

1. Spanish classes and Latin America (1970–83)
 2. Integration of psychology and theology doctorate (1978–84)
 3. Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course (1981)
 4. “We must develop a macro model for member care” (1990)
 5. Global Member Care Resources affiliation (MemCa, 1998–2006)
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Crossing Sectors: Charting a Future Course

1. Greater involvement in global mental health and with mental health as mission
 2. Greater involvement in training/consultation within the mission/aid sector
 3. Greater involvement in international affairs/international relations
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Final Thoughts

Perseverance and lots of mutual support are needed as we chart our course for crossing sectors. I encourage us all to form a caravan of colleagues and to travel together for the long haul. My conclusion in a recent article about global mental health is also applicable to those of us working with and across sectors.

Keep in the forefront the need for “selfless moral struggle” in partnering with others (Patel et al. 2011, 90) and the “duty and choice to risk one’s own rights and wellbeing” on behalf of vulnerable populations (O’Donnell 2011a, 187). Finally, and in spite of challenges or setbacks, let’s celebrate our . . . progress—the “social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”—as envisioned by the United Nations Charter and as yearned for by humans everywhere. (O’Donnell 2012, 201)

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Related Resources

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