visionSynergy

September 2017

Dear Prayer Network Leaders and Mobilizers,

Over the past year Strategic Resource Group (SRG) has partnered with visionSynergy on an ambitious project to *discover and document the state of prayer movements focused on the Middle East and North Africa region.* The project's purposes were to identify ways to increase prayer for the region, identify effective prayer approaches, and learn more about those who are leading and engaging in MENA-focused prayer.

You and your prayer movement participated in this project, and because of your contribution we have gained new insights on MENA region prayer mobilization. We couldn't have done this without you! Please know we are grateful that you shared information with the Global Research Team of One Challenge International. We are also grateful to the OCI Research Team for its thorough, professional-grade research.

As you read through the Executive Summary of that research that we have attached, we welcome your further interaction and discussion on the critical role of prayer and its mobilization for the cause of Christ in the MENA region.

The Executive Summary includes
- the background for this study of MENA prayer initiatives
- findings from a review of prayer websites
- findings from the survey of "Prayer Producers"
- findings from a survey of "Prayer Intercessors"
- a section on an application of all those findings to MENA Prayer Initiatives
- a set of recommendations the researchers conclude would further benefit and enrich the mobilization of prayer for the MENA region.

The research confirms the enormous commitment of a wide variety of prayer producers, prayer requestors, and prayer intercessors to mobilize prayer for MENA. To be specific, the research identified 157 Prayer Streams on over 40 topics (countries, regions, and issues) being produced by 53 Prayer Producers.

As a result of your collective work, hundreds of thousands of people participate monthly in MENA prayer through the prayer your organizations mobilize!

In addition to these commendable research findings, the research highlights points for improvement and emerging best practices to enhance prayer mobilization for the region.

SRG especially wants to highlight, below, a set of points for improvement confirmed from the research that may light the path toward increased MENA prayer mobilization. You can review these in depth in the Executive Summary.

Succinctly stated, the research indicates these practices will likely enhance prayer mobilization for MENA:

- Don't let security prevent mobilization
- Increase sharing answers to prayer to encourage intercessors
- Increase measurement and self-awareness for continuous improvement
- Increase tech savvy and learn new tools
- Focus more on email and Twitter
- Diversify target audience, methods and broadly mobilize
- Replicate and distribute prayer requests in a variety of languages
- Increase the link between prayer mobilization and giving
- Build up links between 'on the ground' ministry and prayer networks
- Link and share requests with other networks

The research has yet more insights than these! So please do dwell over the results as your read the attached Executive Summary of the Prayer Research. You may distribute the Executive Summary to whomever you wish.

Advocating for deeper and richer prayer to power the work of the global Church in MENA,

David R Hackett

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The MENA Prayer Network Initiative:

A Summary of Research Findings

By Gordon Bonham, Dan Eyestone. Russell Mitchel and Kelley Copley
One Challenge Global Research Team

April 22, 2017

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The Background for this Study of MENA Prayer Initiatives

A number of organizations promote prayer initiatives that focus on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Most of these are web-based and may promote prayer for the region as a whole, for specific parts of the region, or for specific issues or ministries. No comprehensive listing of these initiatives existed, and they often operate without contact with or knowledge about other similar initiatives. Most lack good information about the results of their and others' efforts. Strategic Resource Group (SRG) and visionSynergy proposed a multi-year MENA Prayer Initiative Research Project and sought assistance from the Global Research Team of One Challenge (OC International) to collect the basic data for this project. The strategic information obtained will provide a basis for subsequent discussions with and among these independent prayer initiatives on how to better focus their efforts. This report presents the baseline data for this project and provides some suggestions derived from the findings, questions for consideration, suggested actions and recommendations for prayer.

This research project was divided into four Phases: Website Abstraction, Organizational Survey, the Intercessor Survey, and the Requestor Survey. This research identified 157 prayer initiatives that had websites, Facebook pages, or a centralized email address. These prayer initiatives were connected to 69 websites. The Website Abstraction recorded publicly available information from them during October and November 2016. These websites appeared to be produced by 49 organizations. These, plus four groups with just centralized email address, were invited to participate in the second phase of the research by completing the Organization Survey. This survey collected more information about the organizations and their MENA prayer initiatives. Responses were received from 33 of the organizations (67%) during December 2016 and January 2017. These responding organizations were asked to provide contact information for those requesting prayer (requestors) and intercessors who prayed over these requests. Six organizations assisted in the third phase of the research, in which 50 people responded to the Intercessor Survey during January and February 2017. None of the 33 organizations were able to assist in the fourth phase of the research, the Requestor Survey, although another organization, focused world-wide rather than on MENA, assisted in contacting three people who completed the Requestor Survey in March 2017.

Findings from the Website Abstraction

Prayer Initiatives

The initial information provided by visionSynergy contained the names of 140 prayer initiatives focused on the MENA region. Ninety of the prayer initiatives focused on specific countries, with more focused on Saudi Arabia (8), Iran (8), and Morocco (6) than other countries. Five of the other countries had five prayer initiatives each, five more had four prayer initiatives each, and five had three prayer initiatives each. Twelve of the prayer initiatives focused on the total MENA region or the Middle East or North Africa parts, eight focused on specific topics, six on people groups, and twenty-four had more general prayer foci. The abstraction process identified additional prayer initiatives, bringing the total number to 157. These 157 prayer initiatives were associated with 86 websites or Facebook pages. Most of the websites had a single prayer initiative, but one had 23, another had 21, and a third had 17 prayer initiatives. Additionally, some prayer initiatives initially identified by visionSynergy were not abstracted because they could not be found on the Internet, were not active or accessible during the time of abstraction, or duplicated other websites. The 86 website addresses resulted in 69 abstractions.

Prayer Websites

Most of the sites (61%) offer the visitor two or more ways to get prayer materials, generally on the websites plus social media or direct receipt (email, postal mail, text messages, apps, etc.). (See **illustration A**.) Others offer only one way: 16% through only the website and 23% through only Facebook. Among the 42 with multiple ways, the most frequent include Facebook (31), Twitter (31), email (16), and YouTube (8).

Two-thirds of the websites present a single focus on prayer for the MENA region, either on the home page with few distractions (39%) or with prayer points prominently displayed or easy to find (26%). The other third are general websites for organizations with much broader goals than prayer (16%), but some had very obscure ways to find prayer points (9%), and no prayer points could be found for some (10%).

Illustration A: Percent of websites offering multiple ways to receive prayer requests
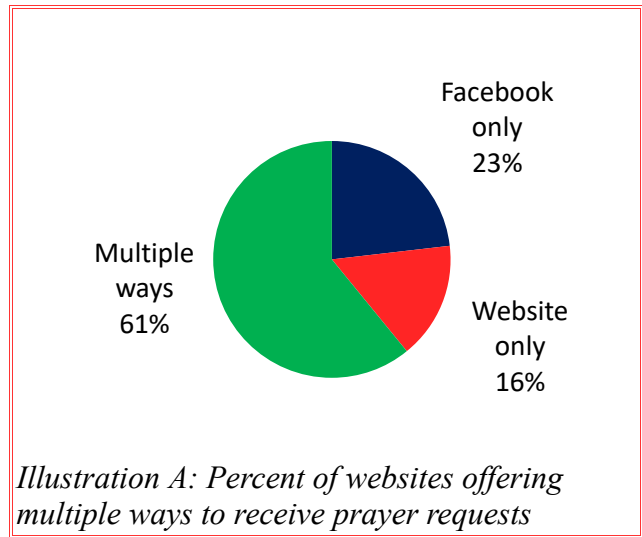
English was the only language that appeared available on 55 websites. Arabic was the sole language offered by two websites, and Portuguese was the sole language used by one. Eleven of the English-based websites also offered materials in other languages: Portuguese (3), Korean (3), Arabic (2), Chinese (2) and one each for Afrikaans, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, and Turkish. In addition to these, three sites offered from 12 to 100 other languages that probably included all those previous mentioned.

About half of the websites offered prayer requests posted daily or weekly, but a much smaller number sent out requests daily or weekly, most frequently by email. (See **illustration B.**) Some post and some send out requests monthly or less. Some offer group prayer gatherings. Many of the websites profile countries, peoples, religions, and/or issues. A substantial number provide different types of prayer guides. A few offer prayer assistance, including mobile apps.

Illustration B: Number of sites by type of prayer material offered
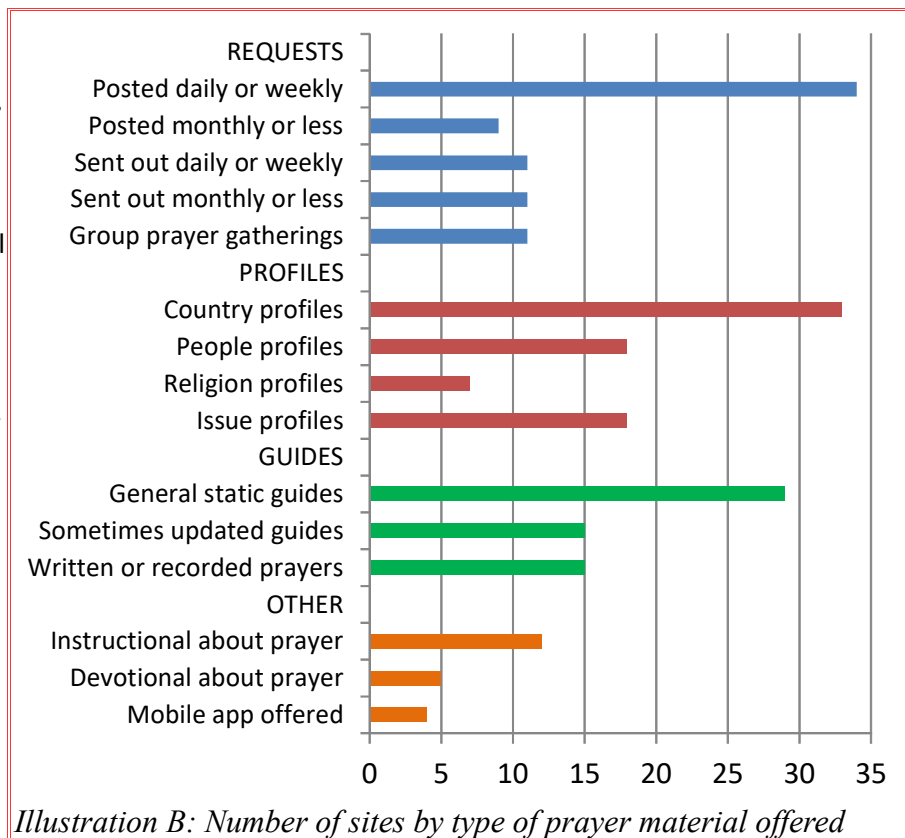
Intercessors desiring to access prayer items are given free access to such on 33 sites with no option to sign up to receive them by other means. Twenty-eight sites offer optional registration to receive prayer items, usually through email. Eight sites require registration to receive prayer requests.

Most sites show no evidence of reporting the results of prayer. Three share stories of God's work within the region, and four sites share stories and news bits which they call "answers to prayer" or something similar. Five sites allow visitors to post a prayer item, although one requires prior registration and vetting.

Three-fourths of the sites provide the ability to share prayer needs with other people: 39% with click-to-share buttons and 35% indirectly through their alternate access social media page. All those with sharing provision included Facebook.

Most websites have no indicator of when they were last updated, whereas social media sites always date each post. The abstraction process found many items outdated, suggesting that at least some of the websites are not being maintained. This was subsequently confirmed by one administrator who reported putting resources into their Facebook homepage since their website is seldom visited.

A majority (57%) of the websites mentioned or linked to other MENA prayer websites. However, 17 of these were Facebook pages that referenced a particular prayer producer. While they were set up and managed by independent groups, they all had the same format that appeared to have been supplied by that prayer producer, which was assumed to be the underlying producer. Only 35% referenced websites that were obviously by other producers. The most frequently referenced other websites all had six references each.

The abstractors found that 21% of the websites have basic and static homepages with simple visual design and navigation. The majority (59%) are static but with good visual design and functionality, perhaps including resources to download or subscribe to prayer material. Only 20% are dynamic and give the visitor the ability to like, share, comment or contribute, with some having video features. Only one site goes further with multi-language capacity and the ability to tailor site content to the viewer's preference or profile. Using Website.Grader.Com it was found that the technical sophistication of 19% of the websites could be better, 40% are OK, 40% are good, and one is great. (See **Illustration C**.)

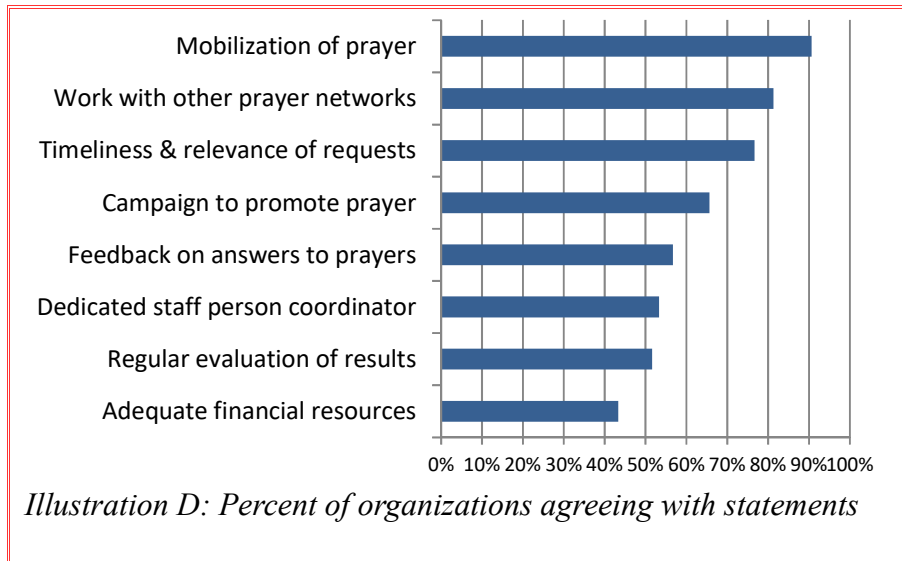*Illustration C: Technical sophistication of prayer websites*
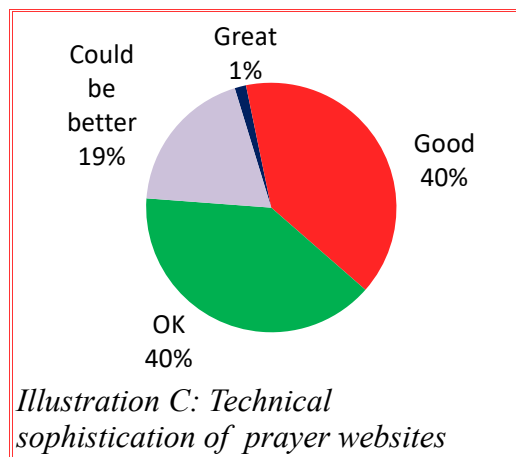
Five organizations had multiple sites. Two sites were only in languages other than English. While the names of the producers could not always be clearly identified, it appeared that the 69 sites were produced by 49 organizations that could be contacted to participate in the English Organization Survey, the second phase of this research.

Findings from the Organization Survey

Organizational Self Evaluation

Representatives for 33 prayer website producers responded to the Organization Survey. They were first asked to evaluate their organizations in eight areas. They evaluated their organizations highest on mobilizing prayer: 91% strongly agreed, agreed, or were OK (codes 3-5 on a 5-point scale). (See **illustration D**.) They rate themselves next highest on working with other prayer networks. The greatest disagreement related to regularly evaluating the results of their efforts and having adequate financial resources to implement their prayer mobilization program.

Mobilization of prayer
Work with other prayer networks
Timeliness & relevance of requests
Campaign to promote prayer
Feedback on answers to prayers
Dedicated staff person coordinator
Regular evaluation of results
Adequate financial resources

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Illustration D: Percent of organizations agreeing with statements

Respondents were asked to record what they thought were the most effective methods used by their organizations to mobilize prayer. Their answers were classified into five broad categories with respondent answers fitting into an average of 3.5 categories:

- **Methods** of distributing prayer requests were mentioned 54 times:
  - 11 mentioned social media;
  - 11 mentioned email;
  - 7 mentioned prayer guides;
  - 5 mentioned videos;
  - 5 mentioned their websites;
  - Others mentioned prayer sessions, prayer letters, mobile apps, face-to-face interactions, other networks, and using heart languages;
- **Frequency** of distributing requests was mentioned 22 times:
  - 6 mentioned annual distributions;
  - 6 mentioned weekly or biweekly distribution;
  - Less frequent mentioned were daily, monthly, quarterly, or "permanence" distribution;
- **Focus** of the websites was mentioned 15 times:
  - 6 mentioned their focus on a specific country or sub-part of MENA;
  - 5 mentioned their focus on a specific people group;
  - Others said their focus on unity and love or differentiating among groups of people for different types of intercession was effective;
- **Intercessors** were mentioned 14 times: effective mobilization of them, commitment of their staff to pray as intercessors, providing assistance to intercessors, targeting different groups of intercessors for

different prayer requests, matching and linking intercessors with prayer requestors, and training intercessors;

- **Requestor** effectiveness was mentioned 7 times: the importance of communicating prayer outcomes, the ease of posting requests, training and motivating field workers, and assurance of confidentiality.

Organizational respondents identified an average of two barriers to mobilizing prayer. These barriers were related to the organizations, intercessors and requestors:

- Organizations:
  - 10 cited communication barriers with workers in the field and linking requestors and intercessors;
  - 9 cited lack of resources;
  - 7 cited security;
  - 3 cited lack of networking.
- Intercessors:
  - 8 cited apathy;
  - 5 cited busyness and overload;
  - 3 cited prejudice.
- Requestors:
  - 7 cited the absence of answers to prayers;
  - 6 cited barriers in obtaining prayer requests or lacking sources of prayer requests;
  - 3 cited the burden on field workers.

The Source of Prayer Requests

Respondents were asked to rank eight possible sources of prayer requests, and 28 did so. Some organizations use all eight sources and others only two-- no organization relies on a single source of prayer requests. Some added other sources not mentioned in the survey. Most organizations (25 or 89%) receive prayer requests from national field and church workers, but national sources are primary for only seven organizations (25%). (**See Illustration E**.) Most also receive prayer requests from expatriate field workers, and expats are the primary source for the largest number of organizations. Two organizations say

Illustration E: Organizations' sources of prayer requests

they primarily rely on other sources that were not listed in the survey: A ministry effort, and the Department of Justice list of most wanted terrorists.
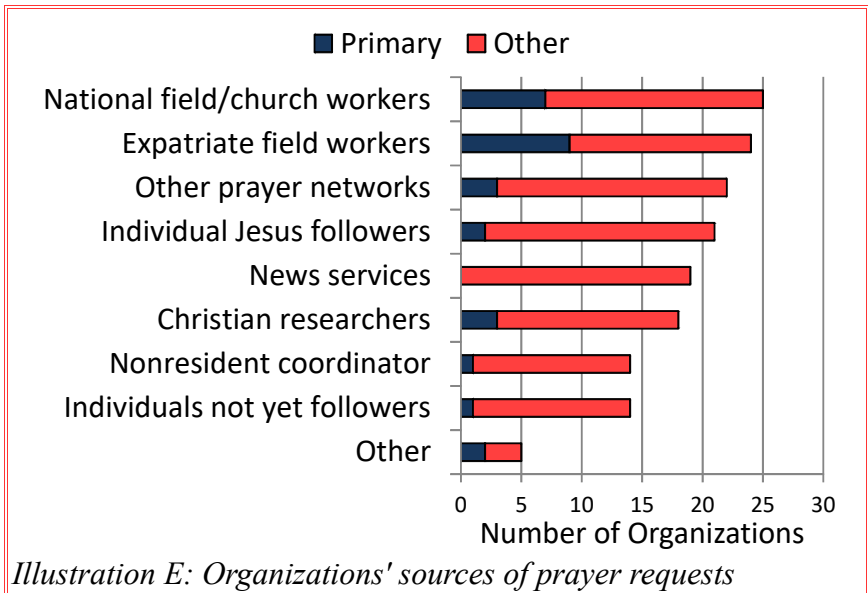
Prayer requests come through various media formats. Email is used by 93% and is the primary method for 41% of the organizations. Prayer letters and newsletters are used by 69% and is the primary method for 24%. Fewer than half of the organizations use other organization's reports, other websites, personal interviews, Twitter, conference calls and call-in message centers to receive prayer requests, and only one organization primarily

relies on each of these. Between one-third and one-half of organizations receive prayer requests through text messages and Facebook, but none use these as their primary format.

Half of the organizations update the prayer requests daily (21%), weekly (21%) or biweekly (18%). The largest number (32%) update requests monthly. The remaining 7% say they updated their prayer requests less than monthly.

The Distribution of Prayer Requests

Organizations distribute prayer requests with about the same frequency that they update them. Nineteen organizations (63% of those with responses) distribute requests biweekly or more more frequently. (See **Illustration F**.) Seven organizations (23%) distribute requests on a monthly basis, and three (10%) distribute less frequently than once a month. One does not distribute requests, but provides the prayer requests to intercessors when they connect to the organization through an app.

Illustration F: Organizational frequency of distributing requests
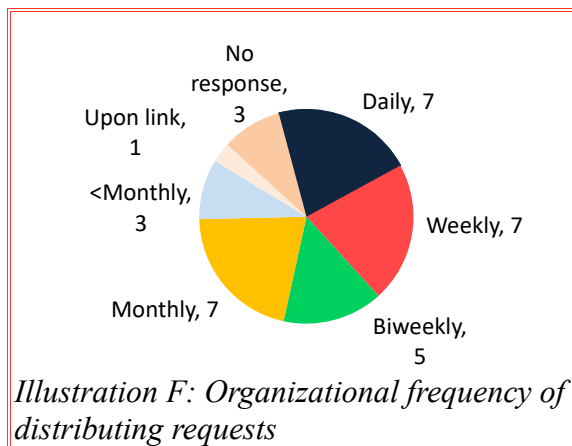
Organizations use an average of 5.5 ways to distribute prayer requests to intercessors. These are much the same media formats as they use to receive the requests. Almost all of the 30 with responses distribute requests by email, and half of them use email as their primary method of distribution. (See **Illustration G.**) About half (53%) use prayer letters and newsletters to distribute requests, and 20% say this is their primary method. Facebook is the main difference between receipt and distribution: 73% of the organizations distribute prayer requests by Facebook while only 33% receive them by Facebook. One organization primarily distributes requests through this social network while none primarily use it to receive requests. One-fourth of the organizations use text messaging to distribute requests while half receive requests through text messaging.

Illustration G: Formats through which organizations distribute prayer requests
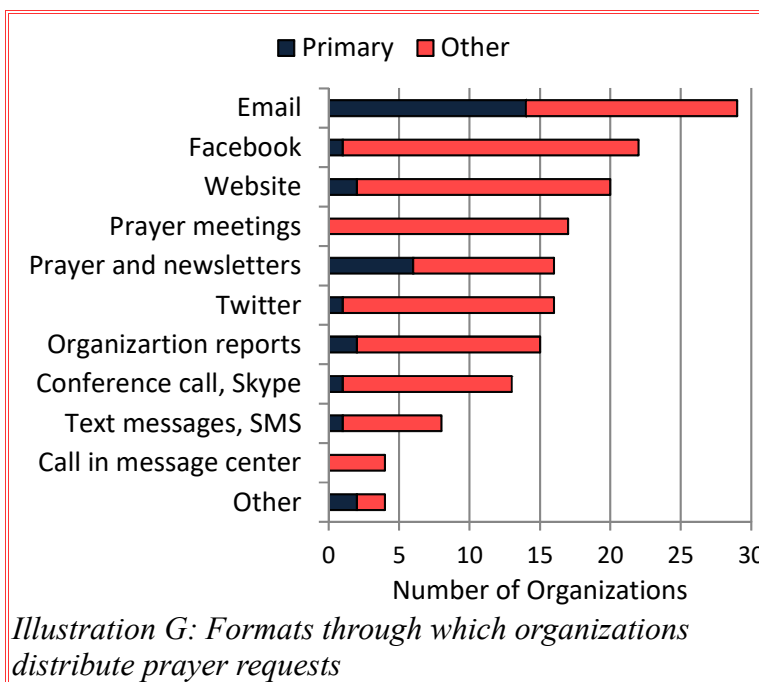
A strong relationship exists between the frequency of distributing prayer requests and the frequency with which prayer requests are updated. Six of the seven organizations that distribute daily also update daily. Six of the seven organizations that distribute weekly update weekly. At least six of the seven that distribute monthly update monthly. All three organizations that distribute less than monthly update monthly or less frequently. The organization that distributes prayer requests whenever someone links into their app, also receives prayer requests posted directly to their app.

Organizations mobilize intercessors in an average of 3.3 of the 15 world regions identified in the survey. Most (84%) mobilize intercessors in the US-Canada region and a majority (57%) mobilize intercessors in Western Europe. No more than one-fifth of the organizations mobilize intercessors from any of the other regions of the world.

All of the responding organizations have some degree of limitation on distributing prayer requests that identify individual people. Half do do not accept or share such prayer requests at all or else delete the identifying information before sharing. The remainder will share personal identities with a select group of intercessors who have been vetted. The next greatest security concern is for prayer requests that identify specific organizations: 36% of the organizations do not accept or share these prayer requests and 29% share them confidentially. Four organizations, however, do not have any restrictions on sharing prayer requests which identify specific organizations. Prayer requests about a specific political or social issue raise the fewest security concerns, although one organization refuses to accept any prayer request of this nature and five others distribute them confidentially.

The Number of People Engaged through MENA Prayer Initiatives

Questions were asked about the number of people reached by the prayer initiatives through their various media formats. Many of the respondents did not provide this information which limits our ability to estimate the total number of people involved. However, the reported information indicates the potential reach of the media formats. The greatest potential distribution is through prayer alerts. Five organizations averaged more than 600,000 alerts a month, with one of them distributing 3,000,000 per month. (See **Table A**.) The maximum number of visits to a website was 180,000 a month. The maximum number of unique visitors was about three-fourths the maximum number of visits. The most complete information was provided by 18 of the 33 organizations relative to email--62% of the organizations use email to send out prayer requests. These organizations average about 3,000 email messages a month, with 25,000 as the largest number. About half of the emails are opened. Only eight of the respondents provided information on the number of unique website visitors in a month and these ranged from 50 to 130,000, with an average of 25,000. Organizations with Twitter followers reach about five times as many people in a month as those with Facebook users, and Twitter appears to have the potential of distributing prayer requests to 13 times as many people as Facebook. The smallest maximum reach (140 people) appears to be through conference calls.

Table A. Reach of reporting organizations			
Media Format	**Number Organizations**	**Average Distribution**	**Maximum Distribution**
Prayer alerts in a month	5	620,940	3,000,000
Website visits in a month	7	54,999	180,000
Website unique visitors in a month	8	25,291	130,000
Email messages sent in a month	18	2,931	25,000
Twitter followers	9	2,344	16,800
Facebook users active in a month	9	533	1,300
Conference call participants in a month	6	37	140

Identifying Requestors and Intercessors

About half of the organizations provided the information that they have email address lists of people who submit prayer requests and of the intercessors who pray about these requests. Many of them said they could help the research survey intercessor and requestors by providing samples of email addresses to whom the researchers could send invitations. A few others said that they could post links on their websites or send the invitations themselves. In actuality, only three organizations provided email address of intercessors and only three achieved any response by intercessors to their posted link or invitation. Fifty intercessors from these six organizations responded to the Intercessor Survey with the findings discussed in the next section. No organization provided a list of email addresses of prayer requestors, nor achieved any response by requestors if they posted a link or sent out an invitation. The only response to the Requestor Survey came from three people contacted though another organization, and these were not analyzed.

Findings from the Intercessor Survey

Intercessor Characteristics

Fifty people getting prayer requests through six prayer initiatives responded to the Intercessor Survey. A large number of these were from one organization, and it is not possible to know how representative these 50 people are of all the intercessors being reached through MENA prayer initiatives. However, these 50 provide the best information available for this research on MENA intercessors.

About one-third of the intercessors have been getting prayer requests from the website for three or more years. About half were men and half women. Most of the intercessors live in the United States of America or Canada. Over half of them were 45-64 years of age. If potential intercessors have the same age distribution as in the total US population, these websites are engaging only half of the potential young adult intercessors (25-44 years of age), over engaging middle age adults (45-64 years of age), and engaging the expected proportion of older adults (65 years and older). One-fifth of the intercessors are paid church staff. Most of the others are equally divided between mission committee members and prayer groups.

Fewer than half (44%) of the intercessors have financial involvement in the MENA region:

- 8% support the prayer website either directly or through their churches (one also supports ministries in MENA);
- 14% support MENA ministries directly;
- 12% support them through their churches;
- 10% support MENA ministries both directly and through their churches.

More than half (52%) of the intercessors have personal experience with the MENA region:
- 18% with residential ministry experience, all are financial involved;
- 18% through visiting MENA, 2/3 are financially involved;
- 9% through their non-residential ministries, 1/2 are financially involved;
- 7% in the process of planning a MENA ministry, 1/3 are financially involved;
- Of those with no personal experience in MENA, 1/5 are financially involved.

Intercessor Website Usage

One-third of the intercessors has been accessing prayer requests from the website for three or more years and one-fourth had been with the website 1-2 years. The rest had been with the website less than a year, with some starting getting prayer requests less than one month before the survey.

The frequency that intercessors get prayer requests largely reflects the frequency that the websites update their prayer requests. Half of the respondents represent an organization that distributes prayer requests less than once a month, although it updates its prayer requests monthly. Most of these intercessors get their prayer requests less than monthly. At the other end, half of the respondents representing an organization that updates and distributes prayer requests weekly reported that they get prayer requests weekly basis. As a result (see **Illustration H**):

- 47% get prayer request less than once a month;
- 20% monthly;
- 18% weekly;
- 15 % at varies frequencies.

Illustration H: Frequency of intercessors getting prayer requests
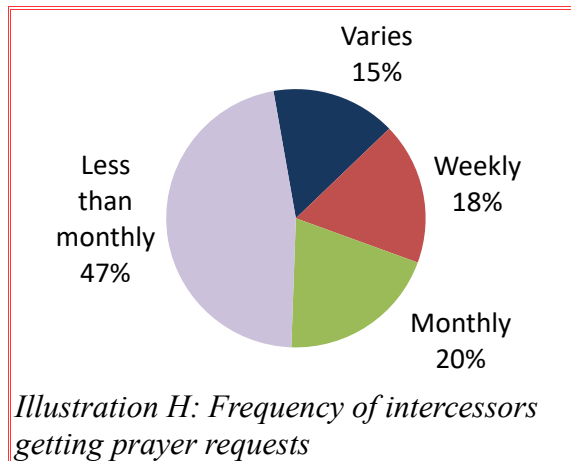
In commenting about the websites, six people said that receiving emails from the website reminds them to pray. Five had little experience with the website, either just having registered or had forgotten that they had registered. Four people mentioned that the prayer requests came inconsistently or were not easily available for them for their prayer schedule. Two suggested additional content that would help them. Others wished they had updates on earlier prayer requests, have Scripture suggested that relates to the requests, and that the website should be more widely distributed and used.

More than half (54%) of the intercessors report that they get prayer requests from websites other than the one through which they were invited to complete the survey. They report an average of 3.6 additional websites, and as many as 24. Fewer than half (46%) of the intercessors share with other people the prayer requests they access from the website.

Intercessors rated highly the information on the websites about prayer requests, with an average of 4.3 on a scale of 1-5. In terms of answers to prayer, they rated the websites only slightly lower (4.0). However, the websites do not appear to be doing as good a good job as they might at communicating answers to prayers. Most of the intercessors did not answer a specific question about awareness of answers to prayers. (See **Illustration I**.) Only eleven said they were aware of answers to prayer, and only six of these said that their

Illustration I: Number of intercessors by awareness of answers to prayer
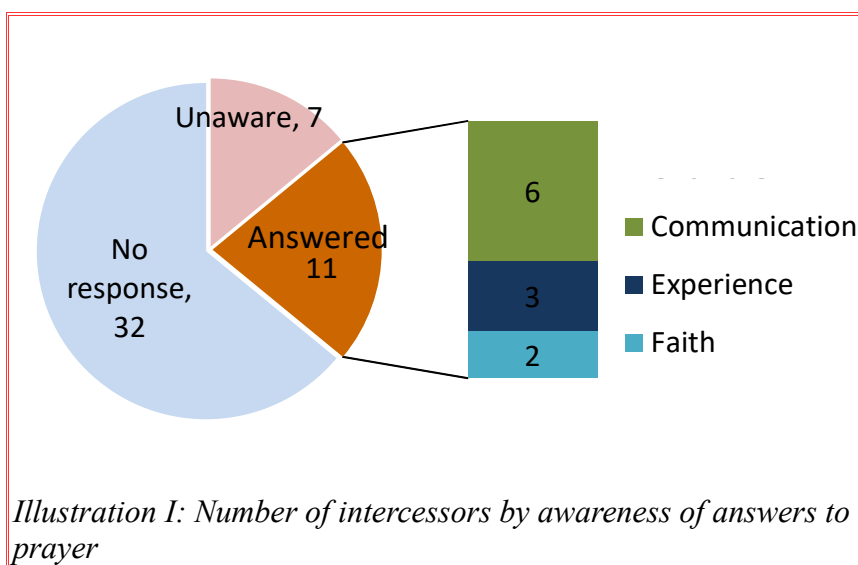
awareness came from communications they had received. Three had experienced answers first hand, and two were sure of answers based only on faith.
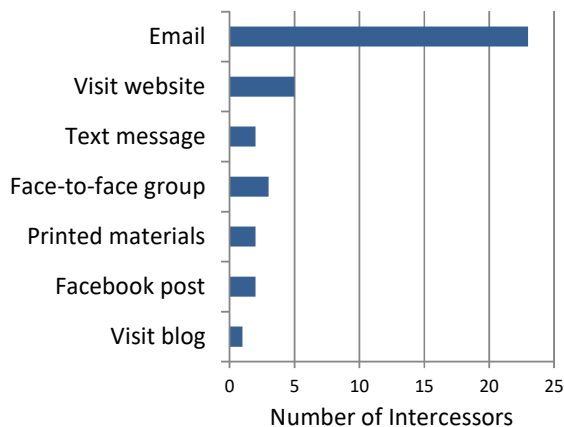
Distribution of Prayer Requests

Intercessors get prayer requests through various media methods, some as many as four ways other than go to the website:
- 36% only get prayer requests when they go to the website;
- 49% also through email;
- 11% also in printed material;
- 9% also on Facebook;
- 9% also during dial-in-groups;
- 9% also during face-to-face groups;
- 4% also on mobile phones
- 2% each through Twitter, WhatsApp, and a particular North American network;
- None through blogs, text messages, or the organization's prayer sheet.

Intercessors preferences are somewhat different from the current way they get prayer requests. (See **Illustration J**.) Email is the preference for 23 of the intercessors (59%), higher than the 49% who currently receive prayer request by email. Only five (13%) prefer going to the website for their requests, one-third of those who currently go to the websites. One or two said they would prefer text messages and blogs, which are not now being used by these organizations to send prayer requests. No one said they preferred receiving requests through dial-in-groups, mobile phone, Twitter, WhatsApp or the particular North American network, although they are current ways of delivery. However, the way the respondents prefer access to prayer requests probably reflects the large proportion of middle-age adults among them. Young adults may have a stronger preference for social media, text messages and mobile phone apps. All this suggests the value of prayer initiatives taking the leadership in sending to or notifying intercessors about prayer requests rather than expecting intercessors to remember to come to the sites.

Illustration J: Primary way intercessors prefer prayer requests

This was emphasized by seventeen respondents who gave suggestions for how prayer networks could engage more intercessors to pray for the MENA region. Sending prayer requests to intercessors rather than expecting them to access the websites was suggested most frequently. Other suggestions included additional or alternative content, wider publicity about the networks and recruitment of intercessors, and distributing prayer requests through text messages, MENA prayer apps for smart phones, and a Google + page.

Praying for the MENA Region

Intercessors' primary interest in praying are:
- 31% in the whole MENA region or the ME part; none were primary interest in the NA part of MENA;
- 26% in a specific country;
- 18% in a specific people group;
- 18% in a specific ministry;
- 10% in a specific topic (e.g., ISIS and refugees).

Forty-one of the fifty intercessors said what encourages them to pray:
- 34% cite a specific prayer request;
- 22% cite the needs of the region;
- 20% cite life-changing testimonies;
- 10% cite stories about people;
- 7% cite answers to prayers;
- 5% cite Bible teachings on prayer;
- 2% cite mission workers' stories.

A number of events may trigger them to pray:
- 54% by receiving notification of a new prayer request from the website;
- 43% by a prayer list or calendar;
- 41% by their regular devotional time;
- 32% by finding a new request on the website.

The majority (62%) of the intercessors pray for two or three requests at a time. One-fourth (26%) pray for only one request at a time. Only 12% typically pray for four or more requests at a time.

Insights into What Stimulates More Prayer for MENA

Statistically significant relationships within the data suggest a model of intercessor praying and sharing, even though cause and effect cannot be determined by a single survey. Intercessor experience in MENA and the financial involvement in MENA are the only characteristics of intercessors that had significant independent effects on praying and sharing requests. Although they are highly related to each other, they seem to affect praying and sharing in different and independent ways. The greater the intercessor's personal experiences in the MENA region, the more likely their prayers are triggered by receiving new prayer requests. Independent of personal experience, intercessors who are financially involved in MENA are more likely than those not financially involved to have their prayers triggered by their regular devotional times. When praying is triggered by receiving new prayer requests, intercessors are likely to share those requests with others. Praying triggered by regular devotions has no relation to sharing prayer requests with others. Websites can encourage intercessors sharing prayer requests with others by increasing the frequency with which new prayer requests can be gotten. Since receiving new requests triggers praying and this increases sharing, the more frequently websites send requests (perhaps with some upper limit), the more the prayer. Even when they do not send out new prayer requests, increased frequency of posting new requests on the website results in increased frequency of intercessors visiting the website, the more frequently intercessors visit the website, the more likely they are to share with others independent of praying triggered by regular devotional time. (The full findings report has a visual picture of this model.)

Application of Findings to MENA Prayer Initiatives

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. (1 Corinthians 14:33, NIV)

Sometimes it is difficult when looking at a lot of data for the first time to see order in it and to understand how it might be used. The authors go beyond the straight forward presentation of findings in this discussion section and attempt to bring an order impressed upon us during our analysis involving all four phases. As part of this, we suggest a number of questions the reader might ask as a foundation for deciding how to use the information. Then we offer possible actions that prayer initiatives might consider. Finally we recommend prayer in a number of areas that God will further reveal how He is working in MENA. We trust that the results of this research will contribute to order and peace within the praying community and eventually throughout the MENA region.

Research Highlights

The observation in an early email from a respondent to the Organization Survey is largely supported by the results of this research. He wrote:

> *"I think your questions reflect a bias seen in many of the prayer campaigns. The bias is [that] the needed element is a safe sharing of prayer request. Praying people need accurate information to pray effectively. [Security is an] important element but [is] not what is needed. What is needed is praying people. What is needed is praying people to pray regularly, in unity, [and] prayerfully listening to the Holy Spirit as they pray. We need prayer recruiters and prayer leaders!"*

One of the first things that can be noticed about prayer initiatives, organizations and intercessors is the diversity among them. Organizations may have between 1 and 16 prayer initiatives. Some prayer initiatives are narrowly focused while others may be looking at MENA as only one part of a world-wide prayer effort. They host their prayer efforts on websites, on Facebook, through mobile apps, or from personal email addresses. They communicate prayer requests through various media: in-person prayer meetings, teleconferencing, call-in prayer meetings, website postings, social media postings, email, text messages, apps, through print. They have diversity in their content: prayer guides, prayer letters, and specific prayer requests. They receive prayer requests from many different sources and distribute them in various ways. And they reflect diversity among their intercessors—some like to go to a website to get requests, most like receiving email, others like social media or mobile apps, while others want to pray face-to-face. They also differ greatly in the number of people they reach and in the technical sophistication in the way they engage people.

With all this diversity, however, there have a number of similarities. They are all committed to prayer, particularly for the MENA region. All think they are doing a good job in mobilizing prayer. All have great concern for safety and security. All feel limited by resources. They are limited in the sources, timeliness and specificity of prayer requests. They are limited in the ability to identify and share answers to prayers. Most operate in isolation, unaware of what other prayer initiatives are doing. Few have evaluated how they are doing and who they are reaching. From what we can tell from the limited sources of intercessors, they are mostly enlisting middle age adults, half of whom have direct experience in the MENA region and a large number are financially engaged in MENA and would probably pray for MENA as part of their regular devotional

time whether the prayer websites sent out prayer materials and requests or not.

Questions for Further Consideration

This research did not address deeper issues related to prayer that might be useful to ask. How they are answered might affect the course a prayer initiative may take and help focus resources. Some of the questions immediately bring to mind some specific Scriptural references, and there are probably many more. Sets of questions might include:

1. Why promote prayer for MENA? How do we know that it is having any effect?

2. What constitutes effective prayer? Can effectiveness be measured? What would be a ranking in importance of effectiveness-- the number of people praying, the frequency with which they pray, the number of requests they pray for at a time, the number of times they pray for a particular request, the immediacy and specificity of prayer requests and prayer intercession, being able to identify answers, being scriptural-based, and being part of a bigger vision? (James 5:16-18)

3. Who should be engaged in praying? How can we Identify them? How can we make contact with them and engage them? What type of guidance or training do different types of people need? How can we encourage our intercessors to pray? (1 Timothy 2:1-8)

4. What should be the focus of the prayer we promote? Should intercessors focus on specific Incidences or problems? Should they address broad issues? Should they focus on individual persons, individual ministries, specific people groups, or specific countries? What is the role of "spiritual warfare?" (Ephesians 6:10-20)

5. When should people pray? Should it be immediate whenever triggered by receipt of a new prayer request? Should it be part of regular devotional and prayer time? Should it be at a defined time when a group gathers for prayer?

6. Where should intercessors focus their efforts? Alone in their prayer closet or where others have gathered to pray? (Matthew 6:6 as compared to Matthew 18:18-20, Acts 1:14) Does it make a difference how geographically close to the need a person may be when praying?

7. How can I (my organization) best contribute to effective prayer for MENA? What are the strengths, gifts, resources, contacts and experiences God has given to me (us)?

Suggestions from Findings

The findings of this research suggest more people might engage in prayer for MENA through the following actions:

1. Make it easier for the public to identify and link with prayer initiatives that will best encourage them to pray. This might involve greater understanding and linkages among prayer initiatives in a network with a portal or centralized nodes that can be found and navigated by the public.

2. Design websites to give prominence to prayer for the MENA region that make it easy for visitor to find prayer material and requests.

3. Recruit and develop more direct and regular contact with ministries in MENA to provide more frequent and specific prayer requests, and to share results when these requests are answered. This needs to be

done while respecting ministry and security.

4. Be intentional in advertising the importance of MENA prayer and recruiting intercessors who have no experience in MENA, training them as necessary in intercessory prayer for the region, and encouraging them to gain experience with MENA.

5. Make greater effort to keep people who have visited the websites informed about and engaged in prayer intercession. This includes both sending prayer requests to intercessors (through printed materials, email, Facebook, Twitter, other social media, apps, etc.) and encouraging intercessors to regularly visit their websites. This may also involve identifying and classifying intercessors as to how and when they wish to receive what types of prayer materials and requests.

6. Identify what type of prayer request, in what format and what timing most effectively mobilizes the maximum number of a website's intercessors in passionate prayer for MENA.

7. Establish links with complementary networks so that together they can promote maximum prayer for MENA.

8. Consider greater use of social media feeds and apps to engage more young adults. These need to be actively (or automatically) managed, notifying intercessors of new posts, encouraging sharing through "liking," and engaging greater interactivity through comments and sharing answers to prayer.

9. Become familiar with and employ multiple ways to measure the preferences, involvement of requestors and intercessors, and the impact made by any changes in prayer initiatives.

10. Further mobilize the vast portion of the worldwide Church which does not use English as its preferred language. Mature prayer networks in, for example, South Korea, Brazil and francophone Africa can benefit from multi-lingual resources as suggested above.

Prayer Recommendations

1. Pray that as the findings of this study are reviewed and discussed, they will lead to God-given insights that will begin to reduce the barriers to mobilizing prayer for the MENA region.
2. Pray that a time, place and format for a consultation can be developed with a core group of organizations to explore how their diversity and experience might be built upon through cooperative efforts to increase and strategically focus prayer for MENA.
3. Pray about how my prayer initiative can maximize the use of our existing resources to most effectively identify prayer requests that will engage the full range of our current and potential intercessors to fervent prayer for MENA.
4. Pray for wisdom and guidance as to the best ways to increase the awareness, commitment and effectiveness of people to pray for MENA using all the various methods of communications with which people are comfortable (language, media, technology, format), while being good stewards of the resources you have provided.
5. Pray for the development and implementation of new technologies, such as apps, that can provide secure ways to send and receive specific prayer requests and answers to prayers that will more closely connect requestors and intercessors, and encourage both requestors and intercessors to share and pray more frequently and fervently.
6. Pray for where up-front investments in newer technologies that incorporate social media, along with technical support, would help organizations increase the number and commitment of MENA prayer requestors and intercessors by providing more timely and direct communication between them without increasing staff time to bridge between them.

7. Pray for greater awareness and sharing between prayer initiatives birthed in non-English speaking countries.

We learned through this research that a number of organizations are taking the initiative to promote prayer for the MENA region. They often have focus on specific countries, people groups or topics. They develop or receive prayer requests from different sources and distribute them in various ways. Yet there is no centralized way for the public to find out about these initiatives and to discover which ones might most encourage them to pray. Even the prayer initiatives are frequently unaware of and do not collaborate with other initiatives. This suggests value in pursuing greater coordination, networking and partnerships and research on how to best develop these.

We also learned through this research that these prayer initiatives are likely linking only a small portion of potential prayer requests with a small portion of potential intercessors. Only some of the prayer requests relate to specific situations being directly faced by people within MENA due to lack of connection to those ministering within MENA, concerns for confidentiality and overload, and lack of understanding and empathy through shared experience and language. This suggests value in broader enlistment of prayer requestors and prayer intercessors and developing ways they can more effectively be securely linked, which may require more research on how to do these things effectively.

We also learned through this research the value of using all technologies available to convey prayer requests and to encourage effective passionate prayer for them. These may involve web-based technologies of social media and email, mobile-based technologies of apps and text messaging, paper-based technologies of letters and guides, and real-time voice communication through telephone, in-person and virtual meetings. Additional research may be needed to know which technologies most encourage which people to pray more frequently and fervently.