Outreach to Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore: Understanding partnerships in diaspora mission between church and parachurch organizations

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Abstract
The existence of a church–parachurch network for diaspora mission to Indonesian domestic workers offers a fresh perspective on the possibilities for church–parachurch partnership in Singapore and beyond. The four themes that characterize this network are: (1) a common vision; (2) generosity in resources; (3) camaraderie in partnership; and (4) collaboration for improvement. In this partnership model, the traditional categories of sodality and modality have undergone a reconfiguration. The partnership dynamic also witnesses a greater overlap of roles between the church and parachurch. Furthermore, communication in the church–parachurch network has gone beyond the usual church–parachurch relationships to include church-to-church connections. This church–parachurch network can therefore be a model for diaspora mission in other places.

Keywords
Diaspora mission, female migrant workers, church–parachurch partnership, sodality, modality, Indonesian domestic workers, Indonesian, Muslim, gender, Singapore

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Introduction

The acceleration of people’s mobility in a globalized world has led to increased opportunities for diaspora mission (Lausanne Movement and Global Diaspora Network, 2017: 2). One such opportunity has emerged as Indonesian women migrate to Singapore for employment as domestic workers. This phenomenon has afforded some Singaporean churches (which traditionally sent missionaries to Indonesia) and a certain parachurch organization (which shall remain unnamed for security reasons) the benefit of so-called ‘mission at our doorstep’. A shared interest in mission to Indonesian domestic workers (IDWs) led to the founding of a church–parachurch partnership in Singapore in 2005. This partnership has operated somewhat differently from partnerships found in traditional overseas mission since ‘mission at our doorstep’ has characteristics that are different from traditional overseas mission. Therefore, a study of this particular church–parachurch partnership can offer new insights for understanding church–parachurch relationships in general.

Background on IDWs

The context of IDWs influences the ministry conditions of IDW mission. The four considerations that uniquely shape their situation are: (1) the push–pull factors in migration; (2) the employment environment in Singapore; (3) workplace risks; and (4) their religious background.

Push–pull factors in migration. Every migration pattern has its characteristic push–pull factors (Boyd and Grieco, 2003). For IDWs, the main push from Indonesia has been a shortage of low-skilled labour opportunities (World Bank, 2017: iii). The pull from Singapore comes from the common practice of hiring low-waged foreign domestic workers to carry out quotidian household chores and provide care for children, the elderly and the disabled. As domestic workers fill in for household needs, their employers are freed up to pursue more life or career choices in a fast-paced urban society (Chong, 2018a: 63; Haley, 2018). According to reports from two Singapore-based non-profit organizations – the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (Wessels, 2015: 11) and Transient Workers Count Too (Tay, 2016: 1) – these push and pull factors have led to approximately 100,000 Indonesian women migrants being in Singapore.

Employment environment in Singapore. The employment environment for IDWs is similar to that of other foreign domestic workers in Singapore. Whether they are married or not, IDWs travel to Singapore on their own, leaving their families behind in Indonesia (Chong, 2018a: 63). They are usually recruited and placed in their jobs through employment agencies, colloquially known as ‘maid agencies’. The job placements commonly entail that the domestic workers become live-in help at the homes of their employers. The terms and conditions of the employment are specified in employment contracts which are renewable every two years.

Domestic workers reported in a study by the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (Wessels, 2015: 11) that they received an average monthly
salary of S$515 (roughly US$370 as of this writing) while working an average of 13 hours a day. About half of the domestic workers were granted a weekly day off, while the rest received days off less frequently or not at all. It is possible for employers to give monetary compensation in lieu of days off, in accordance with the recommendation by Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower. Overall, it appears that most of the employers provide domestic workers with adequate working and living conditions as required by the state’s regulations, based on a survey conducted by Transient Workers Count Too. Some employers go above and beyond the state’s regulations in several respects (Tay, 2016: 37).

Workplace risks. Although most employment arrangements appear to be satisfactory to domestic workers and their employers, some domestic workers are exposed to certain workplace risks. One of these is the lack of privacy (Wessels, 2015: 2; Tay, 2016: 8–10). Another is an employer-imposed restriction on communication with their families in the home country or with friends in Singapore (Wessels, 2015: 2). This restriction can destabilize the emotional well-being of the domestic workers. Furthermore, the language barrier between domestic workers and employers can also lead to misunderstandings, particularly for new arrivals to Singapore (Wessels, 2015: 2).

The Singaporean and Indonesian governments have both made considerable efforts in recent years to prevent the abuse of domestic workers. However, according to the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (Wessels, 2015: 3) report, 35% of domestic workers still suffered some form of economic abuse (mostly as late salary payments), 51% some form of verbal abuse, 6% some form of physical abuse, 7% some form of moral abuse, and 7% some form of sexual abuse (mostly as sexualized comments). These findings show that there continues to be room for improvement in the overall treatment of domestic workers. In sum, workplace risks affect domestic workers’ perceptions of their personal safety and employment satisfaction.

Religious background. Indonesia is the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world. Some regions have a significant Christian population, but the majority of IDWs come from areas that are over 90% Muslim. Compared with Singapore’s Muslim population of 14%, the home towns of IDWs have substantially higher percentages of Muslims. It seems that IDWs are unlikely to have meaningful exposure to other religions prior to leaving their home towns. However, they are likely to be exposed to other religions in Singapore, especially in their employers’ households. The religious background of the IDWs is thus a significant motivator for both local churches and a parachurch organization to take an interest in IDW mission.

Literature review

The following review of the literature examines the relationship between the church and the parachurch, specifically as it functions in Singapore’s context. The differences in organizational structures between the church (i.e. modality) and the parachurch (i.e. sodality) affect their respective roles in mission even as they work in partnership, as
seminally explained by Ralph Winter (1974). For Singapore in particular, WM Syn (2017) and Ivan Liew (2013) have studied the partnership dynamics between the church and the parachurch with reference to overseas mission. Although diaspora mission differs in notable ways from overseas mission, Syn’s and Liew’s works remain valuable since they describe the nature of most church–parachurch partnerships in Singapore.

Syn (2017) finds that mission agencies face decreasing interest for partnership from local churches, though there continues to be a strong push in Singapore for traditional mission. To mitigate this trend, he advocates more dialogue between the two entities to address changes in mission practices, to discuss the expectations of parachurch organizations from local churches, and to resolve issues regarding overlapping roles.

Liew’s (2013) research takes a different angle from Syn’s. Instead of looking at broader trends in church–parachurch partnership, Liew focuses on mission mobilization and missionary member care in the partnership. His investigation identifies gaps in mission mobilization—an issue that calls for improved coordination between local churches and parachurch organizations. For missionary care in particular, their cooperation seems to be stronger than for mission mobilization. Liew (2013: 149–152) proposes a model of ‘church as family, agency as work’ to distinguish between the roles of the local church and the mission agency in missionary care.

Although Syn’s and Liew’s works primarily concentrate on church–parachurch partnership for overseas mission, they provide important background for the environment of church–parachurch partnerships in Singapore. They also furnish a basis for comparison with church–parachurch partnership in IDW mission. The goal of this research is thus to add to previous studies by investigating the church–parachurch relationship in IDW mission.

**Purpose statement**

I approached this study with a twofold purpose. Firstly, I hoped to contribute to current understandings of church–parachurch partnership from the perspectives of Christian workers involved in IDW mission. Secondly, I sought to highlight a grass-roots missionary movement to the often overlooked population of IDWs in Singapore.

**Methodology**

I chose a qualitative research method employing semi-structured interviews with an interview guide (see Bernard, 2018: 164–165) so that the participants could tell their stories while providing answers to cover the topics mentioned in the guide. The interview guide included three areas. The first set of questions focused on the participants’ journey towards involvement in IDW mission; the second explored the organizational strengths and weaknesses in the participants’ contexts; and the third investigated the participants’ experiences within the church–parachurch network. For the semi-structured interviews, the participants were encouraged to describe their experiences conversationally without following a specific order of topics, although I used the interview guide to ensure that all the topics were covered in the wrap-up.
Christian workers in IDW mission from eight local churches and a parachurch were asked to be participants. They were selected using a combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling (see Bernard, 2018: 146, 150) to represent varying perspectives in the partnership experience. Table 1 provides a description of the participants.

Of the 11 participants I contacted, 8 agreed to be interviewed by me. The interview sessions lasted from one to three and a half hours, depending on the participants’ availability and our mutual agreement on the point at which the interviews had satisfactorily addressed the topics. The other three participants chose to submit written responses covering the topics in the interview guide instead of taking part in face-to-face interviews. Follow-up questions to the written responses were conveyed through further written communications. The interviews were conducted and the written responses were received during February 2020. Following ethical standards of research, all of the participants signed an informed consent form prior to their participation.

Audio recordings of the interviews were converted to transcripts. The texts of the transcripts and written responses were analysed using qualitative data analysis (see Barbour, 2014: 259–265; Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 214–215; Richards, 2009: 95–112). I began by assigning a short description and a numerical category (open coding) to each topic or concept I observed in the texts. Then, I organized the topics and concepts according to thematic relationships (axial coding) based on my interpretation of the categories generated. Hence, my assumptions and biases could influence the analysis of the data. A sample of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

**Research results**

From the research data, several themes emerge regarding the nature of church–parachurch partnership in IDW mission. The four most prominent themes are: (1) a common vision; (2) generosity in resources; (3) camaraderie in partnership; and (4) collaboration for improvement.

**A common vision**

It is *a common vision* that has brought together Christian workers from local churches and the parachurch organization into partnership. Before the inception of the partnership in 2005, some churches in Singapore were already reaching out to IDWs who worked for their congregation members. However, P2 notes that some of these churches either lacked volunteers who spoke Indonesian or lacked gospel materials in Indonesian. A seed was planted in 2005 when a church placed a phone call to an Indonesian parachurch organization requesting help. This seed germinated into the formation of a new parachurch organization with a specific focus on partnering with churches in IDW mission. Both P1 and P2, along with a senior mentor, were involved in launching this new organization and partnership. Over the years, different churches have joined the partnership network because of this shared sense of purpose.

For P1 and P2, the motivation for IDW mission was preceded by a passion for mission, especially towards Muslims in Indonesia. As native Indonesian speakers, both P1...
Table 1. Description of the participants.

| Identification code<sup>a</sup> | Gender | Age | Indonesian speaker | Other spoken languages | Organizational affiliation<sup>b</sup> | Paid staff or volunteer? | Number of years in IDW mission | Number of IDWs in affiliated organization |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| C1 Female 50s Yes               | English, Chinese                   | Church                           | Paid staff             | 18                                    | 35                       |
| C2 Male 40s Yes                 | English, Chinese                   | Church                           | Volunteer              | 9                                     | 30                       |
| C3 Female 50s (but non-native)  | English, Chinese                   | Church                           | Volunteer              | 16                                    | 35                       |
| C4 Female 40s Yes               | English                            | Church                           | Volunteer              | 4                                     | 15–25                    |
| C5 Male 60s No                  | English, Malay                     | Church                           | Volunteer              | 11                                    | 10                       |
| C6 Male 40s Yes                 | English                            | Church                           | Volunteer              | 8                                     | 15                       |
| C7 Female 50s Yes               | English, Chinese                   | Church                           | Volunteer              | 20                                    | 4                        |
| C8 Female 30s Yes               | English, Chinese                   | Church                           | Volunteer              | 3                                     | 5                        |
| P1 Female 30s Yes               | English, Chinese                   | Parachurch                       | Paid staff              | 15                                    | 70<sup>c</sup> |
| P2 Female 30s Yes               | English                            | Parachurch                       | Paid staff              | 15                                    | 100                      |
| P3 Female 30s Yes               | English                            | Parachurch                       | Volunteer              | 10                                    | 4                        |

<sup>a</sup>For ethical considerations, the identity of the participants is protected by the assignment of identification codes. The eight church-based participants were coded with a C prefix (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8), while the three parachurch-based participants were given a P prefix (P1, P2, P3).

<sup>b</sup>All of the individuals and organizations mentioned in the course of the research process were anonymized.

<sup>c</sup>Although P1, P2 and P3 represent the same parachurch organization, the numbers of IDWs they reported diverge from one another. The differences in the number of IDWs between P1 and P2 probably reflect the fluctuations in attendance which characterize IDW ministries. Also, the comparatively lower number reported by P3 seems to indicate that she counted only those to whom she directly ministers, rather than all the IDWs connected to the parachurch’s network.
and P2 had a language advantage for undertaking mission to this audience. Before realizing that their target group was right on their doorstep, they were both involved in regular short-term mission to Indonesia. When the first phone call for help precipitated more requests from other churches with IDW ministries, they were pleased to discover local opportunities for mission to Muslims from Indonesia.

Several of the participants on the church side possess a similar perspective on mission, which led them to IDW ministry. C5 was involved in short-term mission to Indonesia prior to starting IDW mission in his church. He feels that the opportunity for IDW mission was divinely orchestrated: ‘Ironically, God changed everything by bringing the [IDWs] here’. IDW ministry did not only offer new opportunities for mission, but also lowered barriers to mission. C1 explains: ‘Back in Indonesia, these people would not have the chance to hear the gospel because they are from remote villages and the churches cannot go in’.

Because of their common goal to reach Indonesian Muslims through IDW mission, cooperation has occurred across the church–parachurch network. P3 notes that ministry workers in the network plan joint outreach events. These events have strengthened their shared vision and often led to an exchange of ideas and best practices, according to C8.

The priority of reaching Indonesian Muslims with the gospel has also kept the participants from a provincial outlook. They appear not to be overprotective about the IDWs in their respective ministries. C2 explains that ministry success is not about increasing numbers in his church, but about connecting IDWs to a church in which they can continue to grow in faith. In summary, a common vision forms the foundation for the church–parachurch partnership in IDW mission.

| Table 2. A sample of axial coding for themes. |
|--------|--------|--------|
| Theme | Code | Quote |
| Common vision | Common purpose in partnership | P1-321-01/02: Every different Indonesian fellowship in different church has their own story of how they started . . . Generally, we share the same vision to reach out to IDWs. |
| | Common purpose in partnership | C7-321-01: The good thing about [the partnership network], we are Indonesians who are burdened for our fellow women. So, it doesn’t matter who owns what ministry. |
| | Big-picture ministry approach | C2-048-01: A few of them become [Christians, and] also helping our church, which is good. Few of them in other churches. One of my leaders become a minister in one of the big churches. I am very proud of her. I said, ‘Yes, you do not need to actually come [to my church], be fruitful over there. As long as you can grow in faith, I am happy for you.’ She is very actively in that church, not my church. |

Hwang 381
Generosity in resources

The second theme of generosity in resources is expressed in many ways in the partnership network. From its inception, the primary function of the partnership has been to meet gaps in resources for church-based IDW ministries. One of the ongoing gaps is the lack of Indonesian speakers in Singaporean churches. On the one hand, Singaporean churches face a language barrier when they wish to establish an IDW ministry for those employed by their church members. On the other hand, the parachurch’s connection with Indonesian-speaking Christians in Singapore means that they have access to volunteers with the needed language ability. This convergence then becomes the primary means through which the parachurch provides resources to help the churches.

In addition to meeting personnel needs in churches, the parachurch offers training for Christian workers by inviting mission practitioners from Indonesia. C1, C2 and C3 mention that the training in contextualization provided by the parachurch proved to be a valuable sharing of resources. For some of the church-based participants, this training filled a gap in their Christian experience, particularly if they had no prior experience in religious dialogue with Muslims. For this reason, proper missiological training for the workers improved their ability to contextualize the gospel and minimize unnecessary cultural barriers.

Besides the resources provided by the parachurch, generosity in resources flows in other directions as well. Local churches also offer their personnel, financial support and venue to support parachurch events. Furthermore, between the churches in the partnership network, they regularly share resources with one another. One example is the case of C8, who was introduced to C3 through the network and started to assist in C3’s ministry regularly while the IDW ministry in her own church was still in its nascent stages. Another example of resource-sharing occurs in C1’s ministry, in which she invited IDWs from other churches with less resources. C7 mentions that her awareness of events hosted by other churches has allowed her to direct the IDWs in her ministry to join events which her own church lacks the means to organize. It appears that the partnership network promotes an atmosphere of generosity in which different parties share the resources available to them with one another to increase opportunities for mission. In P1’s words: ‘Through the partnership, the resources used become more effective, because we can combine effort [sic] in organizing events, in the sharing of resources through the partnership’.

Camaraderie in partnership

When Christian workers have shared their resources generously in the partnership network, they have also developed stronger relationships with one another. Indeed, camaraderie in partnership is crucial for some of the Christian workers at an emotional level. In many of the church-based ministries, the participants (C1, C2, C4 and C5) experience uneven support from the church. It might be that there is pastoral support but apathy, or even opposition, from the congregation or lay leadership. In this ministry environment, relationships from the partnership network turn into a support system. C1 explains: ‘People may feel they are very much alone in the ministry. Then
The shared experience of having uneven levels of support has inadvertently become a uniting factor for the partnership network.

Several reasons contribute to this lack of church support. One is a general lack of awareness that IDW ministry constitutes mission. Many Christians in Singaporean churches still view mission solely in the traditional overseas mould, and thereby neglect to consider opportunities for diaspora mission with migrants in their midst. C5 says: ‘It’s kind of ironic that people like to go on missions, but when it’s missions at our doorstep [they don’t get involved]’. The phenomenon of overlooking diaspora mission seems to be a broader issue in Singapore’s church environment (Chong, 2018b: 5–8). In certain churches, as in C4’s case, IDW ministry operates outside of the church’s mission portfolio, thus limiting its outreach opportunities.

Another reason for a lack of support, or even opposition, is when church-based ministries are sandwiched between a challenging employer–employee relationship. This creates tension between the employers and the ministry workers. C2 explains that one of the obstacles is the difficulty of gaining trust from employers to send their employees to the IDW ministry. This issue was corroborated by C5’s experience, for where his ministry initially witnessed support from the employers, trust was broken after some negative episodes in which IDWs caused problems for the employers after attending the ministry. The mishap in C5’s church might seem like an extreme case, but C1 notes that some employers in Singapore have prejudices against foreign domestic workers. This can prompt them to limit domestic workers’ interactions with others outside the employers’ households, as also demonstrated by the report of the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (Wessels, 2015: 3). On this point, C1 and C7 both raise the concern that an unsympathetic employer can become an obstacle to the ministry.

In sum, IDW mission in churches may be sidelined due to the combination of a narrow understanding of what constitutes mission and a lack of employer support. In this kind of ministry environment, camaraderie in the partnership network seems to help participants to overcome emotional challenges in the ministry. P2 claims:

Some of them shared that [they used to think] they were doing this ministry alone. With the network, they know that there are so many others doing the same ministry. They don’t feel that they are doing the ministry alone. [They realized that] they face similar challenges.  

**Collaboration for improvement**

As Christian workers support one another in the partnership network, they also join their efforts to overcome ministry challenges. One such example of collaboration for improvement, C7 recalls, occurred when a new employment regulation in Singapore led to a decrease in numbers for previously burgeoning IDW ministries. To overcome this setback in ministry, Christian workers in the partnership network came together to brainstorm for a solution. The result was a new approach to ministry that introduced life-skills classes to attract IDWs on their days off. The concept of life-skills classes then evolved over time to include special-interest classes and other activities that
provide a point of connection. These classes provide a soft entry point for Muslim IDWs who would otherwise be reluctant to set foot inside a church – a reality stated by many of the participants (C1, C2, C6, C7 and P3). Even though the mission barrier is lower in Singapore than in Indonesia, as mentioned previously, Muslim IDWs typically still harbour a belief that churches are haram (i.e. forbidden by Islamic law). As a result, when they have the freedom to decide how they will spend their days off, soft entry points such as life-skills classes lower the barrier further by providing a reason for pre-believing IDWs to connect with Christian workers. Both C7 and P3 note that, in the partnership network, Christian workers continue to work together to seek new opportunities to lower barriers for pre-believers.

Another concern raised in the partnership network is the follow-up of returnees. Both C2 and C6 mention the difficulty of maintaining a Christian faith when IDWs return home to an environment that is hostile to Christianity. In this regard, the parachurch organization has offered its connections in Indonesia to follow up on the returnees. However, the vastness of Indonesia and the remoteness of many villages make follow-up a daunting task. For some of the IDWs, as in one case witnessed by C7, the referrals from the parachurch have provided excellent follow-up. However, C2 and C6 find that, for other IDW returnees, connections in Indonesia are limited. Despite the difficulty of ensuring adequate follow-up, it appears that those in the network continue to seek new solutions to help one another in facing this challenge. When C6 encounters other organizations in Indonesia that follow up on the returnees, for example, he shares those resources with others in the network so that they can benefit from his connections. For this ongoing challenge, it appears that the partnership network offers its members the avenue to work towards a better solution together. On the whole, the partnership network provides a forum to seek improvements in ministry through ongoing dialogue.

**Discussion**

The *distinction* between sodality and modality continues to be valid with reference to IDW mission. However, the *structures* of sodality and modality assume a different shape when compared to their functions in traditional mission. On this note, Winter (1974: 123) defines the sodality as ‘missionary endeavors organized out of committed, experienced workers who affiliated themselves as a second decision beyond membership in the first structure [church]’. From Winter’s wording of ‘a second decision beyond membership in the first structure’, it would appear that the label of sodality fittingly describes the network of church workers and parachurch workers joined together by a *common vision*, as depicted in the previous section. When the function of the sodality is found in both the church and the parachurch, its scope begins to cross the traditional distinction between the church as modality and the parachurch as sodality. Particularly in diaspora ministry, this overlap reflects the fluid boundaries between the mission field and the sending church. Thus, the role of the sodality in the present study is better reflected by the partnership network as a whole than by the parachurch alone.

Despite this fluidity of boundaries between the sodality and the modality, some roles remain the same as in traditional mission. The parachurch in the present study
still possesses more knowledge about mission than the churches, as seen in its role in providing training resources to the partnership, as discussed under the theme of *generosity in resources*. According to P1, sensitivity to IDWs’ religious and cultural background can be lacking among church workers, even among the most well intentioned of them. For this reason, the parachurch needs to lead by providing additional training to raise the church workers’ awareness of contextualization issues in Muslim contexts (Little, 2015). It also needs to deal with missiological issues, such as a process-conversion model for Muslim-background believers instead of a crisis-conversion model (see Farah, 2013; Greenlee, 2013; Hibbert, 2015; Teeter, 1990). In ministering to IDWs from a Muslim background, the reality is that it is simplistic to work only with a crisis-conversion model. C6 asserts in this regard that IDWs’ conversions and baptisms can be superficial when the power differential between employers and IDWs causes the latter to acquiesce to the former’s religious preferences. Instead of assessing IDW conversions based on one-time confession or baptism, he advocates that a maturing faith requires discipleship. On this issue, it appears that some sort of process-conversion model is more effective for IDW mission. Therefore, since the functions of sodality are partially fulfilled by church workers in IDW mission, the parachurch needs to equip them with the knowledge for mission so that they can be more effective in their respective ministries.

However, the flexibility of functional boundaries also means that roles can overlap or be redefined. This is seen in the connections made for follow-up of IDW returnees in Indonesia. Both the parachurch and the church can make connections with other parachurch organizations in Indonesia which can provide this resource. As roles begin to overlap, a partnership network seems to be an effective way to share resources across different entities, thereby allowing church-to-church connections in addition to church-parachurch relationships. The increase in links between participants in different organizations facilitates collaborative efforts for best practices and for strategic improvements – two synergisms that are reflected in the themes of *generosity in resources* and *collaboration for improvement*.

Overlaps in roles can similarly occur when parachurch staff or volunteers regularly assist in church-based IDW ministry. This strategy can increase the parachurch’s visibility in the churches, but it is also a partnership that needs to be carefully managed. The overinvolvement of parachurch workers without sufficient buy-in from churches can weaken the partnership. For example, both P1 and P2 describe scenarios when churches closed down IDW ministries because they felt the IDWs and the ministry workers were not associated with the church. This reality indicates that the parachurch should use its resources in mission mobilization for the church as much as in provision of personnel, especially since not all churches view IDW ministry as a form of mission. For this reason, mobilization of the churches should be a vital part of the parachurch’s communication with its partnering churches, as well as with churches outside its immediate circle of influence. Indeed, some of the participants from the churches express that this is an area that the parachurch needs to address. Although diaspora mission functions differently from traditional mission, IDW mission would benefit from Syn’s (2017) recommendation on the use of church-parachurch dialogue to foster effective cooperation.
Good communication for the partnership network is important to ensure the relevance and significance of the parachurch from the churches’ perspective.

Additionally, raising awareness for IDW ministries with mobilization can address issues of missionary care in the churches. While it is helpful for the partnership network to provide a support system, as seen in the theme of camaraderie in partnership, this also highlights the need for better missionary care in some churches. In this regard, the fluid boundaries between the mission field and the sending church pose challenges to Liew’s (2013: 149–152) model of ‘church as family, agency as work’ because the church is as much ‘family’ as ‘work’ for church-based participants in IDW mission. Therefore, when the church’s support for its ministry is uneven, a sense of isolation can be amplified since the delineation between ‘home’ and ‘work’ is ambiguous. It is thus even more important for churches to show support to church-based IDW mission as a part of missionary care. It may be that missionary care in diaspora mission requires more overlap of roles between the church and the parachurch since the boundary of ‘home’ and ‘work’ has been effaced (in contrast to Liew’s model).

The church–parachurch partnership for IDW mission in Singapore is far from perfect. At the same time, it presents a partnership model that is worthy of broader consideration. With the increase in opportunities for diaspora mission, it is important to understand how the fluid boundaries between the mission field and the sending church change the traditional dynamics of church–parachurch partnerships. On this note, traditional structural categories and roles might also need to be redefined to accommodate the distinctiveness of diaspora mission. Even as communication continues to be a vital aspect of good partnership, forums for communication might need to expand into church-to-church links as well as church–parachurch connections. Good communication of all kinds is therefore crucial due to a greater overlap of roles than in most church–parachurch partnerships.

At the same time, this partnership model for IDW ministry appears to be unique in and to Singapore. This island nation’s size would seem to make such a church–parachurch network feasible for a limited number of other kinds of diaspora mission. In some of the Singaporean churches with IDW ministries, there are mission ministries to other diaspora people groups, though none of these are connected to other churches or parachurches in the same way as ministry to IDWs has been. And not only is this kind of partnership absent among other diaspora mission efforts in Singapore; it also appears not to have an identical counterpart in other regions with IDW mission. P1 mentions that IDW mission workers in Hong Kong have expressed a desire for a similar partnership network, but it is unclear as to who would set it up and how it could be done.

**Conclusion**

IDW mission in Singapore offers a fresh perspective on the nature of church–parachurch cooperation in diaspora mission. The four key themes found in the partnership under study are that (1) the Christian workers in both organizational structures share a common vision for mission; (2) the Christian workers practise generosity in resources when they partner
with one another; (3) the Christian workers support one another because of camaraderie in partnership; and (4) the Christian workers exercise collaboration for improvement to overcome ministry challenges. This partnership model provides an important alternative to traditional church–parachurch partnerships in Singapore. It also demonstrates empirically that diaspora mission can often reconfigure the traditional structural categories of modality and sodality as a consequence of greater overlap of roles between them.

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**Notes**

1. This information was obtained by cross-referencing the source regions of the migrants in a World Bank (2017: 21) report with Indonesia’s 2010 census data (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010).

2. This data came from the Department of Statistics Singapore (2015) and is based on the 2015 census.

3. In practice, the term ‘IDW ministry’ is sometimes used in place of ‘IDW mission’ since some churches do not consider their outreach to the IDWs as mission. Thus, this article’s occasional use of the more general term ‘IDW ministry’ reflects this reality.

4. Attendance in IDW ministries decreased due to a new government regulation that required employers to provide a weekly day off, or equivalent compensation, to their foreign domestic workers. According to C7, IDWs used to come to church willingly with their Christian employers since this would be the only time that they could socialize with others outside of their employers’ homes. However, after the regulation for weekly days off was implemented, many IDWs chose to spend their days off elsewhere.

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