

Summary of Church Strengthening Project in El Alto and Bolivia

HARVEST - BOLIVIA

1. Justification

The main problem in the Churches in Bolivia is their ignorance of "their role within Society." The Church in Bolivia has a limited vision of what is the Kingdom of God. It is not discipling its members or its communities, which is resulting in limited growth of the Kingdom of God in Bolivia. Bolivia is a developing country and in many areas there are low levels of community development. All of these things lead to physical, spiritual, social and intellectual poverty, which the Church can and should be doing something about, if it knew what its place within Society was.

2. Background

In 2004 work began with 30 church leaders from the city of El Alto who were trained in Holistic Ministry of the Church; this includes Integral Ministry, Ethical Development (taught through Biblical Principles) and Biblical Worldview¹. This began as a pilot project, which was later established as the Church Strengthening Project based in La Paz. From 2005 to 2009, the number of church leaders involved in this process has risen to more than 250, and is continually growing.

The training in recent years has been well received by leaders of the church of El Alto. The participating leaders have shown a marked change in the understanding of God's vision and plan for their communities and the role of the church in this plan. There has also been observed change in the behaviour of how leaders and their churches are responding to the needs of its community through the implementation of seed projects.² After the initial projects some Churches have become more ambitious seeking to meet the needs within their community, such as projects with children, college dining room and workshops to train mothers to be seamstresses.

This year they are looking to start to work with around 12 new church leaders as well as continuing to walk with those Churches that are in the process of change.

3. General Project Objectives

Implement the model of discipleship of Holistic Ministry in the churches within the city of El Alto, for them to become agents of transformational development in their communities.

4. Specific Objectives

- a. Ensure the Churches are effectively trained to promote Holistic Ministry in their community.
- b. Ensure that church leaders understand biblical worldview and the biblical principles for development, so they can promote Holistic Ministry in their Churches.
- c. Ensure that the Churches create, understand and implement their strategic plans for discipling their Church members and reaching out into the community.
- d. Mobilize the churches to carry out seed projects that are planned and executed by them.
- e. Certify church leaders as trainers able to efficiently disciple others in Holistic Ministry.

5. Results Framework

- Local Churches promote transformational development in their community
- Leaders promote Holistic Ministry in their community
- Trainers are trained to teach in Holistic Ministry within and outside of the community
- Seed Projects executed by the Churches

¹ A worldview or paradigm is the way that a person or culture interprets the world around them and how they react and interact within it. No one worldview is better than another; each has good and bad points. A Biblical worldview looks at what God says in the Bible is good and healthy, and that which any culture should imitate and though it grow

² These are simple projects like cleaning the streets of rubbish, or putting up street signs. Project objectives are 1. Short term for a morning or an afternoon; 2. Funded a 100% by the Church (breaking dependency of perceived need for outside help); 3. Church is serving the community; 4. Church is demonstrating God's love. The hope is that the Church will do two well planned and organised seed project per year.

6. Strategies

Strengthening the pastoral ministry and local leadership:

As well as teaching church leaders Holistic Ministry, the project also teaches them management skills in planning and implementing strategic plans for the next 3 and 4 years, annual work plans and how to organize groups for discipleship.

Strategy for Integral Ministry discipleship / TOTS (training of trainers):

Through small groups and/or ministries that are already established in local Churches, people are disciplined in Holistic Ministry, which are led by pastors and/or church leaders who have been systematically trained.

The experience of the Harvest workers running this project has been that though they have a good reputation in El Alto among the Churches, they are still strangers. So they are training TOTS, people within the Churches who are taught these same themes and can then more effectively share them within the Church and community. The other idea behind TOTS is that the trainers then go and train others and so, greatly multiplying the work of the two Harvest workers. The logic behind this is that teaching the Churches in these themes has produced good results, but better results have been seen when they walk with people and build up personal relationships opening up their eyes to God's plans.

Mobilize the Church into action in its community:

The process starts with implementing the regular seed projects, and then challenging the ministries within the Church to take the initiative to look and see what needs within the community they could meet and create a project for that need.

Making strategic alliances:

One of the ways this projects works is to sign agreements with different denominations at a regional level giving them permission to go in and work with local Churches of that denomination that are interested in the ideas of Holistic Ministry.

Environmental Protection:

Church leaders and members are trained to increase their awareness of and importance of the environment and some simple practises that can help them and the environment. These include: Using their organic waste to feed to their animals or turn into compost, recycling plastic and metal containers, and using the seed projects to clean up the community and educate it about the environment.

7. Methodology of the project

Below is a diagram showing how the project works. Harvest enters the community through their workers or TOTS. In the first year they share the vision of Holistic Ministry with the Church and start the process of discipling them, as well as working with them to carry out a seed project. In the second year they continue the discipling process and get the Church to think about the Economic, Educational and Health needs of the community, creating ministries within the Church and work with them to carry out more seed projects. In the third year the Church is a strengthened model and looking out to the needs within the Church and its community, carrying out seed projects and may be looking to develop longer term projects. The bottom three boxes show some of the topics that are taught to the Churches and the impact they have on the community.

Process of Church Strengthening

“Walking with the Churches to generate a movement of transformation”

