

*Holistic Church
Planting and
Community
Transformation
Among
Mexico City's
Urban Poor*

“Creating Holistic Churches and Transforming Communities Among the Urban Poor”



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Our Dream

Domestic violence, poverty, systemic injustice and spiritual emptiness cripple the God-given potential of hundreds of thousands of families living in Mexico City Slums. Their plight cries out to heaven. God has heard their cry and he is extending a call to participate with him to expand his Kingdom of Justice and Peace among them. Through this ministry partnership He has assembled us to serve Him among Mexico City’s urban poor through holistic church planting and community transformation. We’re united in a belief that the injustice, poverty and spiritual emptiness in urban slums are such that we can’t be satisfied with impacting just a few lives. We dream of communities where men take responsibility to care for their families, where women are respected and can live a dignified life, where children can safely play in the streets and where young people have opportunities to realize their God-given potential. We dream of communities where vibrant churches work alongside government and non-governmental entities in the development of their communities. We dream that the seeds of holistic community transformation sown in Mexico City may bear fruit far beyond that city.



Background: Mexico City

- A city of 25 million inhabitants
- Political, cultural and economic center of Mexican Republic
- Comprises slightly over 1/5th of the Mexico's total population
- Boasts Latin America's largest University, the UNAM, with over 300,000 students



The Need

- 50% of the population live below the poverty line
- Roughly 9 million are slum-dwellers who live in squalid housing in desperate economic conditions often without secure land tenure and insufficient income
- Rate of violence has substantially increased since 1995 after the Peso Financial Crisis, increasing livelihood insecurity
- Roughly 40% of Mexico City's working-age inhabitants are employed in the informal sector, lacking job stability
- Over half of the city's population is under the age of 20 and many young people are turning their backs on the Catholic Church, which leaves them in a spiritual void.
- A Survey on Domestic Violence by the Mexico City-based National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information Technology reveals that intimidation, assaults and emotional and sexual abuse occur in at least one third of the homes in the Mexico City metropolitan area. Physical abuse is the third-largest cause of health problems and early death. In slums, violence is reported in 60 percent of households, according to the World Health Organization.

- Compared to 8% nation-wide, only about 3% of Mexico City's population is actively involved in one of the 2,300 or so evangelical congregations. There are 1,000 or so neighborhoods without an evangelical congregation.
- According to Operation World (2000) "Christian ministry to slum dwellers in MC is fraught with difficulty and challenge. Few are prepared to commit themselves to it".
- A number of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have attracted new believers, and planted new churches among the urban poor. They are doing a wonderful work at transforming individuals. Unfortunately many of them lack a holistic urban theology that would compel them to address structural and social issues.

Our Project

Our Vision

The vision of this ministry is to see thousands of individuals, families and entire slum communities in Mexico City and beyond holistically transformed by the power of God.



Our Mission

1. We facilitate and encourage a holistic church planting movement of vital reproducing house-churches that transform lives and communities among the urban poor of Mexico City.
2. We engage in community transformation initiatives through community organizing, community development and the establishment of local Community Based Organizations so that urban poor communities can help themselves
3. We build bridges and mutually enriching partnerships between wealthy Christians/churches and Christians/ churches among

the urban poor and help establish movements of disciples among the educated elite and middle class, who have a biblical theology of justice, economics and society.

4. We raise cross-cultural workers from Mexico City to help establish his Kingdom of Justice and Peace among the urban poor of other cities around the Globe.”

Our Target Communities

While the church opens its door to welcome all people of every class and ethnic group, the primary target communities that fit within this vision include:

1. Urban poor living in squatter communities
2. Working class poor living in low-income facilities.
3. Specialized categories of urban poor, such as street children, prostitutes, drug addicts, the disabled and prisoners
4. Professionals and business people



Our Key Strategies

We believe that local churches with a vision for community transformation are the key to bring about long-term, sustainable change. Our primary strategies include:

- We live incarnationally in the community and focus on relational ministry.
- We develop leaders who have a holistic urban theology and can mobilize and multiply churches and transformational community development among the urban poor.
- We develop strategies, resources and systems to equip church planters and community organizers/developers among the urban poor.
- We create models of church planting and community transformation that can be reproduced and multiplied by national church planting teams among the urban poor

Supportive Strategies:

1. Community Organizing & Advocacy
2. Small Business & Micro Credit Development
3. Public Health Campaigns
4. Youth & Children Ministries & Community Arts
5. Family Ministries & Counseling
6. Transformation & Deliverance Ministries
7. City Networking & Urban Consultations

Our Goals

Even though one can never predict the future and God’s doings the following results may serve as benchmarks:

After 5 years:

Conducted holistic church planting trainings and accompanied new church planters in starting and maturing at least 10 house-church-based congregations to serve as models for holistic urban ministry:

Results of Supportive Strategies:

- Community organizing begun to benefit 1000s of local residents through improved infrastructures (i.e. basic water, drainage, garbage removal etc.)
- Integral children and youth ministry in place to develop hundreds of young people into agents of transformation
- Family counseling & holistic health care promotion begun to prevent domestic violence in hundreds of families and reduce preventable diseases for 1000s of children and youth
- Entrepreneurship training, micro-enterprise and savings & loans programs established in partnership with other organization, increasing the salaries of hundreds of families



After 10 years:

At least 50 house-church-based congregations planted

- Training systems to equip church planters and community organizers/developers among urban poor in place so many more holistic urban poor churches and ministry projects can be planted
- Contribute to the Latin missions movement by equipping at least 20 Mexican missionaries and sending them to establish similar holistic ministries in other countries

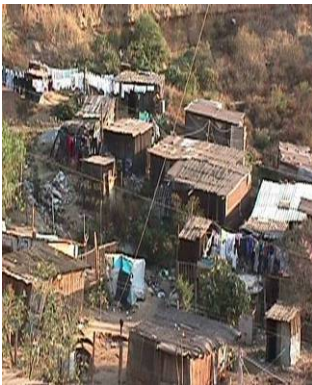
Results of Supportive Strategies:

Advocacy Networks/Alliances of Christian pastors, NGO leaders, lawyers, business people, media representatives, educators and government officials established

- for theological reflection, prayer and visioning
- to address land right-issues and pressure municipal governments to undertake infrastructure development & slum-upgrading projects
- for anti-corruption & good governance programs
- to apply for slum upgrading grants from international financing agencies

After 15 years:

Self-sustaining holistic urban poor church planting movement established that reaches beyond Mexico City



Results of Supportive Strategies

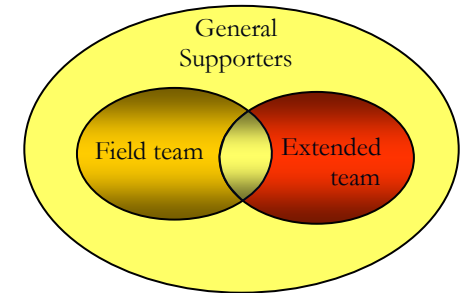
- Movement of holistic disciples among educated elites growing whose kingdom-vision impacts their work-sphere
- Slum upgrading projects move from pilot-level to city-district and national levels

Our Identity

Mexico City Partners team members covenant to serve together as a united team committed to the vision, mission, and values stated in this agreement. Dedicated to a Kingdom perspective we also remain open to the addition of other evangelical partners from Mexico and other countries who share a common commitment to the team's vision, mission, and core values.

Our Team Structure

Our team structure is composed of field-level team members and extended team members:



Roles of *field-level team members* include:

- Evangelists & Disciplemakers
- Leadership Trainers & Theological Educators
- Children & Youth Workers & Community Artists
- Community Organizers & Public Health Professionals
- Micro-Enterprise & Small Business Developers
- Deliverance Ministry Program Directors & Counselors
- Administrators & Financial Accountants

Extended team members are crucial to the ability of the team to fulfill its mission. They share our purpose, mission and values to assist in the creation and development of holistic churches among Mexico City's urban poor. While not moving to Mexico City they want to make a difference among the urban poor and feel called to contribute to the success of this ministry in an extended capacity.

- Prayer Supporters & Coordinators
- Spiritual Guides & Theological Advisors
- Kingdom entrepreneurs/business people (to generate revenue and participate in possible business ventures)
- Networkers
- Professional Partners

Our Core Values

1. Christ-centered: The reign of God in our lives and the indwelling of His Spirit are the heart and soul of all that we do. We are to humbly submit to the Lordship of Christ through joyful obedience and seek in all things to glorify him. Christ's ministry and suffering challenge us to die to ourselves and lay our lives in God's hands.
2. God-dependent: We hold true that mission springs from God's initiative, is guided by God's Spirit and is accomplished through God's power. Therefore, we covenant to humbly hold each other accountable to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit rather than working out of our own strength; to discover what *God* is doing and joining him. We expect much from God, which is why we attempt much. We ask him to do something so supernatural that it could only be explained by the fact that he had done it.
3. Word-centered: While Christ is God's ultimate Word to us, the Bible is the authoritative guide for our lives and work. We gain counsel, vision, encouragement, challenge and exhortation from it. We direct new believers to find the same there, since it must be God's word that is authoritative for the new believers and the emerging church, not the wisdom of missionaries or the local church authorities.
4. Prayer-rooted: We believe that prayer and intercession are the lifeblood of our personal and corporate life with God. We pray because our vision exceeds our abilities. Prayer is the deepest cry of rebellion against the way things are, a demonstration of true yearning for things to change. Action and contemplation need to be in a balance, as power in ministry only comes through prayer. We will practice humility before God and submission to his will through all forms of prayer, including fasting which we consider an aspect of spiritual warfare.
5. Holistic-minded: The spiritual, physical and social dimensions of life are linked and intimately woven into a dynamic whole. Yet, they are not



- identical or equal in significance and meaning. Individuals who are transformed inwardly in the spiritual realm will authenticate this in their character, outward behavior and social relationships. Service given to assist the physical and social needs of others is compelled by our love for others as whole persons. This should enhance and not detract from the reality that spiritual transformation is needed to see lasting and Christ-honoring transformation of individuals and communities.
6. Church-based: We believe that God has ordained the local church as a primary means of building his kingdom and that healthy local churches with a vision for community transformation are the key to bring about long-term, sustainable change in urban slums. Therefore, we do not want to simply establish good programs, engage in community development or do evangelism as an end in itself. Our goal is rather a Holistic Church Planting Movement, where healthy churches rapidly reproduce themselves planting other churches to transform their communities.
 7. Evangelism-focused: To turn to God, people need to hear and understand his plan of salvation. We actively proclaim the Gospel through personal evangelism, mass evangelism and relational ministry and work so they reinforce and contribute to one another. We focus on identifying "persons of peace", who can become catalysts to reach their social networks with the Gospel message. It is essential that we oversow, for to reap abundantly we need to sow abundantly. Just as nature requires a tree to drop thousands of seeds to produce a single sapling, so it is with evangelism.
 8. Transformational Discipleship: The purpose of the Gospel and the Spirit is not simply to win a convert, or change a person's religious affiliation, but to transform them by the renewing of their values, lifestyles, hearts and minds in accordance with God's will. The Gospel is about a process of discipleship that brings deliverance from past bondages of darkness, and liberates people to live victoriously in the Kingdom of light under the Lordship of Christ. We must lower the bar of how we do church, raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple of Christ and thus we will raise the standard of what church truly is.
 9. Relationally-founded: The church is the community of God. We express our faith and reflect God's character through our relationships together as a reconciled community of believers. Mutually embracing

relationships are the gift out of which we operate. Church without strong and deep relationships is a social club, not the body of Christ. Church that neglects the commandment of reconciliation and doesn't bridge gaps between rich and poor, "Jew and Greek", man and woman, falls short of God's vision for the Church.

10. Seeking Balance: Establishing balance in our lives between ministry, family, friends and self will allow us to live joyful lives. We intentionally establish times of relaxation, "get-away" and reflection, recognizing that achieving balance is a life-long process. Self-care is crucial to our ability to contribute to our mission, it is crucial to help us avoid burn-out and it is crucial to protect us from spiritual attacks.
11. Mutual Transformation: Our involvement in holistic church planting and development seeks the continuous transformation of all - including missionaries, participating organizations/churches, extended team members and donors. We want to remain open to learn and be taught by those we serve.
12. Purpose-driven: All we do needs to reflect the overall purpose of our mission. We won't engage in any ministry just for its own sake or because it seems a good cause. Our outreach and in-reach will be guided by strategic thinking with a view towards long-term impact and effectiveness in bringing about tangible change for the advancement of the kingdom.
13. Team-run: We will minister together in teams. These teams will be characterized by love through one-mindedness, servant leadership, complementary spiritual gifts, and a supportive and enabling atmosphere. Decision-making will be done in prayer and by consensus as much as possible. Modeling a team approach will create a precedent for local churches and organizations to collaborate to build God's kingdom.
14. Seeking Identification: While accepting our identity and uniqueness as foreigners or outsiders to a slum community, we seek to adapt ourselves to an appropriate level of identification with both the cultural and economic realities of the communities in which we serve. Appropriate identification is that which enables close relationships and allows for effective modeling that can be reproduced by members in the community.

15. Developing Leaders with a movement-perspective: Developing effective leaders, church planters and community organizers/developers is the key to establishing a movement that is fully owned by the local Church. Systems need to be in place to identify, disciple, train, mature and release leaders. While not excluding professional ministers, we energetically de-emphasize the distinction between clergy and laity, since we believe that lay leaders must be leading the way.

16. Fostering Self-Sustainability: As missionaries and development workers, we understand that our role is to pass on the vision, passion, and skills to local brothers and sisters with whom we serve. We start with the end in mind, which is why we seek to share responsibility from the beginning with those whom we are leading. Our approach is to model church planting and community development, assist local people to do it themselves, watch them reproduce it and finally step away from the work. We avoid creating unhealthy dependencies with ourselves or outside sources of funding and assistance, since this would undermine the scalability of our work.

17. Focusing on Holistic Transformational Development: Since we believe that God's gracious nature compels him to continuously transform the whole world (people and systems) our goal is not to simply impact individuals, but to enter and transform definable communities in urban centers. We will work and pray for changes that affect the social, economic, educational, political, spiritual and religious climate of the communities we serve in. Where necessary we will support civil society movements that advance justice and the cause of the poor. We are intentional about listening to the concerns and needs of peoples' themselves, rather than offering our preconceived solutions.

18. Kingdom-oriented: We are dedicated to a Kingdom perspective that remains open to the addition of other Christian partners who hold dear a similar vision, mission and core values. We are committed not to build our individual kingdom under the control of foreign missions. We actively seek collaboration and partnerships with other leaders and the greater body of Christ to create synergies and unity for the sake of building God's kingdom and transforming our cities.

