

## EMPHASIS ON EQUIPPING THE LOCAL CHURCH

In the new model of ministry, following the refocus of Harvest's vision in 1985, church leaders in the developing world began to receive training from the Harvest staff in how to lead their congregations to use their own resources to share Christ's love in both word and deed with their neighbors. Churches that had previously depended on financial support from other countries to do outreach and service projects were amazed to see what God accomplished through their small efforts. People's attitudes toward Christians and toward the churches changed, new relationships were formed, and communities took notice as they observed Christ's love in action.



With this new emphasis on the local church, we adjusted our partnership strategy:

- Initial seminars in developing settings would no longer offer partnerships. Instead, seminars would train and equip local believers to minister in their own communities.
- Partnerships with U.S. churches would not be introduced until *after* a trained local church had already begun to minister to its community's physical and spiritual needs.

Churches in developing areas, it was reasoned, can be effective ministers in their communities without outside resources. If and when they start a partnership, it should be healthy and mutual, not dependent on U.S. resources.

By 1987, our emphasis on the local church had further evolved:

- Our focus became *exclusively on the local church*. Even weak local churches, we reasoned, are the principal instruments God uses to proclaim and model His intentions for communities. We began to devote ourselves to strengthen local churches' capacities to minister to their own communities.
- We began to *train local church leaders, who could train their congregations*. We proceeded with the development of biblical studies on the Kingdom of God, the church, discipleship, being a servant, principles of godly leadership, and methods of community development. This effort represented a long-term commitment to curriculum design—and an exciting new thrust. We purposed to make it possible for church leaders to train their own members to carry out balanced biblically wholistic ministry—to the whole of people's needs including spiritual, physical, social, and wisdom as listed in Luke 2:52.

Beginning in 1987, our field staffs contributed training materials and ideas, translated, adapted for local cultures, and specialized in grassroots local-church training, while the U.S. team compiled the lessons and offered encouragement and intensive seminars.

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