

Spirituality and Mission Project

I. Executive Summary

This report summarizes the actions executed and the goals met by Joining Hands Peru in the project entitled “Spirituality and Mission.” The project was conceived in order to develop a space of shared spirituality that would bring to life the work in our network in Peru.

The project was completed in 2007 thanks to the accompaniment of Highland Park Presbyterian Church.

This project draws from a need to awaken interest and commitment of leaders of social, ecclesial, and government organisms about the motivations that unite our ecumenical encounters. The project also highlights our responsibility to respond to the challenge defending life, and keeping it in harmony with the universe and its Creator.

As a result there were meetings scheduled called “Sojourns of Reflection” in six different cities in Peru where our associate institutions work in projects related to the care for God’s creation.

These regions presented on topics that drew from the local cases of environmental degradation and asked the local communities to reflect these cases to form concrete commitments to slowing trends of contamination.

Furthermore, the project helped to allow 10 young representatives from associate institutions of Joining Hands Peru to present on Peru’s environmental problems in an international conference with Joining Hands Bolivia in the city of Potosí, Bolivia a historical place of mining degradation in Latin America.

The participants in this project recognized appropriate ways to start this work and to awaken the responsibility of citizens in churches. We had great success in this first year of reflection and awakening of the conscience to propose better actions and practices related to the environment.

II. Evaluation of the Results

Local leaders and new individuals are now becoming involved in environmental concerns and there is a new commitment from local authorities that, together with the Church, are now opting to defend the environment.

There was 93% direct and indirect participation and execution by associate organizations in the “Sojourns of Reflection.”

There was **open dialog** by participants of different denominations and non-believers about how make new agreements and to expand personal depth, solidarity, and

community commitment, exercising tolerance in spite of hegemonic discourses in government and religious politics.

A new conscience was generated on our responsibility as believers to be instruments of peace, and to avoid conflict, environmental and human degradation, and the exploitation of the people and the environment. Also there is a need to correctly face the big challenges that make up the modern world and the economic currents that are so strong.

There was also the opportunity to meet with people of other churches and to try to learn from them in practical ways about living in communion and to appreciate our diversity.

There direct commitments established that change habits, on a personal and institution level, to live in harmony with and care for our environment.

For specific reference we could share that:

The East and North outskirts of Lima, **churches committed to sharing information and adopting practices to the care for the city** (hygiene, use of excrements, and interchanging information with other institutions).

In Huancavelica, **a team of professionals of different areas and institutions was formed to promote better agricultural soil practices and water use.** Also information was shared with other institutions and advocacy plans were made on environmental themes.

In Huancayo more than 20 religious leaders from different backgrounds and youth members **committed to teach communities that surround the city and to promote alternatives to care the glaciers on mountaintops, a source of water for the city.**

In La Oroya, organizations of the civil society, defenders of the environment and the health of the population of La Oroya, with the participation of church leaders **committed to fighting for the implementation of means to reduce contamination of the air, soil and water.** La Oroya has been named one of the ten most contaminated places on earth by the Blacksmith institute of New York.

In Huacho, agrarian **producers and a local university agreed to better the production of fruits and to promote the care for the environment in the city, through actions of education and advocacy with our associate organization in that city.**



Origin of Participants Pie Graph (Institutions, Social Org., Churches)

The associate organizations of Joining Hands Peru (organizers of the events) were strengthened in leadership, autonomy and capacity of building of leaders and organizations in their area.

As a result of this experience a booklet has been produced that summarizes the experiences of the Sojourns of Reflection.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

Each of the participant organizations has come up with their own conclusions that are relevant to their region. From the team standpoint of accompaniment we should mention some general recommendations that serve to help and guide our work in the future.

A. Conclusions

The Sojourns of Reflection received the commitment of associate organizations and formed other alliances with groups of solidarity and strengthened the work of our networks.

Also, it has allowed the accompaniment team to recognize the dynamics of action and social links between our networks, contributing to the integration of the associates of the Joining Hands Peru.

It motivated and committed the participants in social actions directly related to the environment, human rights and economic development from a responsible point of view.

A monumental campaign about the harmful effects of contamination and the lack natural resources has taken off. It has also shown the importance of transparency in everyday life for a long period of time, and the need to get the work out through the media.

There were also proposals developed for educating the population in the care for the environment, ethical values, and transparency through which the current situation of Peru is looked at. Suggestions for strengthening the values against contamination

B. Recommendations

As people of faith, we are committed to deepening our identity, looking at Christ as the model, giving testimony to our faith in life and rediscovering the role that we are responsible for in this time of environmental crisis.

This project should be repeated with practical actions that permit organizations to give public demonstrations of their initiative to care for the environment.

It is also necessary to focus for an action based on the formula: Think. Act. Solve. Looking at the problem and giving continuity to the motivation that the local organizations have had. Let's think, act, and solve together so that the future will be written by all of us.

Work of emerging organizations can be strengthened in different ways. This would open up a new space for dialog with them.

It is important to reaffirm, and be contagious with our experiences, then need to be mutually respectful and show solidarity founding ourselves on dignity humanity, and our rights and responsibilities.