

Overview of Tearfund partners mobilising churches in difficult contexts

Village Workers Project, Think and Do, Egypt

This project involves the training and placing of approximately 200 lay workers in villages where there is no church or the church is lacking a priest. In many of these villages, there are local nominal Christian communities, whose faith is at risk due to a complete lack of Christian education or fellowship. Village workers engage in integral mission through promoting both church-related activities and community development activities.

The church-related activities include running Sunday Schools, youth meetings, women's meetings, leading cell groups, running or helping to run the main church meetings, home visits and meetings in homes. The community development activities include the setting up, training and on-going support of village development committees as well as the local promotion of different Christian social projects including: improving housing, improving water and sanitation, medical ministry, a "Granny project" (regular care of needy elderly people), and recommending people for vocational training courses.

This project takes its workers from a cross section of evangelical churches in Egypt. The village workers receive church-related training from a Christian college and receive community development training through a local NGO.

Communities are beginning to see spiritual and physical transformation as a result of this work.

Dire Baptist Church, Mali

The small town of Diré in Mali has experienced desertification over the last few decades. A local Baptist church has taken action to fight the encroaching desert and ensure that some of the land remains cultivated. The church, with just 15 members, calls this the 'Good SEED' project. The ten-hectare plot of land is shared between eight local people who grow rice, millet, melons and vegetables.



In addition to enabling people to feed their families, the church hopes that the project will complement its evangelism by showing local people what Christians are really like. The Project Coordinator says, 'We are happy to share this land with other people because we love them... People believe false things about us... If they can work alongside us in the fields they find out what we are really like and what we really believe.' One community member commented, 'I am not yet a Christian myself, but my impression is that they are very good people, and what they teach is true.' (Source: ROOTS 11 p14)

Whole gospel for the whole person project, EPCE, Egypt

This project is very similar to the village workers project though only run by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (EPCE). This denomination is the largest protestant church in Egypt and has about half of all protestant congregations. The project, which is at an early stage, involves the training and placing of lay leaders to fill some of the 123 vacant minister positions in EPCE churches. The six-month training programme is considerably shorter than the 4-year training required of a qualified minister and thus allows the mobilisation of enthusiastic young people to advance the mission and ministry of the church. The training focuses on promoting the 'whole gospel' (evangelism and community development). The lay ministers will help to promote an outward-facing church and will link their communities to various national development programmes run by the EPCE church, including its literacy project, reproductive health project and small and medium enterprise project.

Source: Guy Calvert-Lee, Tearfund