

## Union Biblical Seminary, India

### A case study of theological college intern programmes

Many Bible colleges in India only train pastors to teach the Bible. They do not necessarily train pastors in pastoral care for church members and in social action in the community. Most theological students do not come from poor families and therefore may not have been directly exposed to poverty issues.

The Union Biblical Seminary wanted to enable students to understand what integral mission is about. To do this it set up a programme to offer students a seven-month placement with a Christian organisation. These placements aim to develop the skills, vision and understanding of the students. The students may find themselves working with people such as commercial sex workers, children who live on the streets, or slum communities. The activities that students carry out may include giving basic education to children who live on the streets, counselling people with HIV and AIDS, and doing basic administration in slum clinics.

#### Aim

To provide theological students with the opportunity to work in poor communities in order to encourage them to adopt an integral mission approach to their future Christian ministry.

#### Steps in the process

1. Between nine and fifteen of the second year students are selected by Seminary staff. The number of students selected is based on the interest and capacity of local Christian organisations who offer placements.
2. Students are then allocated to an organisation with whom they live and work for the next seven months. Students are encouraged to keep a daily journal of their experiences and learning.
3. Every month the students meet together with a mentor for half a day to share their experiences and to reflect on how their placement is shaping or challenging their theological understanding. The sessions are also used to provide further input on the biblical basis for integral mission.
4. At the end of the placement, the students return to the Seminary where they share their learning with the other students through devotions and presentations.

#### Impact

Students involved in the programme have reported changes in their attitudes and thinking. On graduating, many want to motivate their church to engage in integral mission. One student went to work for their placement organisation in a role specially created to encourage churches in Mumbai to carry out integral mission. Another student is actively involved in a network of churches in Mumbai responding to HIV and AIDS. After the placement, the influence of the students on the faculty and other students has also been very positive.

The host organisations have also benefited from the programme. Having volunteers for seven months has enabled them to expand their work and they have benefited from the theological knowledge of the students.

Source: *ROOTS 11: Partnering with the local church*, Tearfund 2007, pages 62-63