

Adventist Church to establish work in three new countries

Mission Committee vote also reveals trend -- projects now funded more by local regions

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Ansel Oliver/ANN



Mike Ryan, Adventist Mission Committee chair and world church vice president, said last week the denomination will establish work in three previously un-entered territories. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

The Seventh-day Adventist Church will establish outreach programs in three countries where the denomination previously had no established work.

The Adventist Mission Committee last week approved \$1.9 million in matching funds from the Adventist Church's world headquarters for local

mission projects totaling \$7.9 million. The action included work in three new countries. Committee members, however, declined to name the countries because of political sensitivity.

The Adventist Church currently operates in 203 of the 232 countries recognized by the United Nations. In some countries it's difficult to establish work, church leaders said, while in other countries it's illegal to operate a Christian church.

The committee's plan is to establish a community center in an urban area of these three countries. The centers will offer health programs, literacy and computer classes, family life programs, counseling for women, youth recreation, an Internet café and a bookstore.

"We're wanting to meet the needs of those communities," said Mike Ryan, committee chair and a world church vice president.

Last week's approval of the next round of monthly budget proposals for mission projects also highlights a trend: local areas are increasingly contributing a higher percentage of funds to their regional mission projects.

The church's world headquarters now contributes about 25 percent of funds to local mission projects, down from as high as a 90 percent contribution rate when the committee was established in 1990.

"That's a very healthy change," Ryan said. "This creates more local ownership for projects locally."

Still, the percentage varies widely. The matching rate is as high as 80 percent in some regions, such as Northern Asia, and lower in others -- as little as 10 percent for projects in the Americas.

The mission committee approves about \$20 million of matching funds from the world headquarters each year. Projects are designed to increase outreach in areas with little Adventist work. Since 1990, the committee has offered matching funds totaling more than \$100 million, Ryan said.

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