



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COMPASSION MINISTRY



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Basu boiled grass for his meals every breakfast, lunch and dinner. His sisters and wife were at risk of contracting life-altering diseases because they weren't taught about safe pregnancy practices and feminine hygiene. The men in his village struggled with depression as floods and other natural disasters kept destroying their houses every time they were rebuilt.

Thankfully, that wasn't the end of Basu and his community's story.

Send Relief was able to launch a compassion ministry hub at a community center that now distributes food rations, teaches women valuable life skills and provides emergency flood supplies through crisis response teams. By establishing a presence in the village, these families now know that they are deeply cared for and have witnessed the love of Christ in action.

The purpose of compassion ministries like this is to share the gospel and meet hurting communities' physical needs through partners, churches and mission teams' discipleship and leadership training.

When disaster strikes, it interrupts families' senses of normalcy and causes them to enter survival mode, making it difficult to plan for the future and re-establish daily routines. Send Relief's emergency relief efforts address this initial panic, but once people are stabilized, we want to help restore their pre-crisis levels of comfort and stability.

Compassion ministries implement sustainable, effective solutions to chronic issues in communities shaken by tragedy. One missionary and community development expert shared, "Compassion ministries are more than just helping people get things to make their lives better. It is much deeper than just throwing money, education or technology at people's problems in hopes that they will accept our solutions. It is participating in their lives as Christ modeled for us in John 1:14."



Discover the Needs in a Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within that community. Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God's guidance.

As you consider the best options, check out some of our other [ministry guides](#) for opportunities that fit your church's giftings and the community's needs.



Building Towards Community Transformation

The primary goal of every compassion ministry should be community transformation.

It is important to have a kingdom focus as you learn to care for your community. Adopting this eternal perspective includes considering how to keep the ministry God-centered and human-driven, how to empower the local church to come alongside you, maintaining a dependency on God's guidance as you grow and ensuring that Christ is made known as you meet the physical needs of those around you.

Especially internationally, your compassion ministry will need to find effective ways to be able to safely come and go in a community—particularly in closed countries—and effectively work with organizations already on the ground and familiar with the culture.

You may want to consider doing your own research on successful organizations around the world. Some valuable resources to consult in this are the books *When Helping Hurts* by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett and *Community Development for Kingdom Impact* by J. Jeffrey Palmer.


Strategically Consider Compassion Ministry Opportunities

As you and your church venture into community development, keep the following questions in mind:

- Is the community development approach suited for your situation and your church's ultimate goals for reaching the identified group?
- What does this community really need or are they interested in further development for their community?
- Have you included church planting or disciple making in your plan?
- Does your team agree on a set methodology for implementing evangelism?
- Is what you are doing helping people both physically and spiritually through an effective approach that will help whether or not they come to faith?

4 Initial Steps to Starting an International Compassion Ministry

- 1. Prayerfully consider who you are as a church or group and what an appropriate level of entry would be.** It's important to reflect on the culture of the neighborhood or region you are going to and what expectations need to be met in their religious preferences, your available resources, etc. Building trust by getting to know community leaders and asking locals to weigh in on the issues that need to be addressed will build respect and respect between you. Determine exactly what you want to accomplish there and when you hope to be finished—you need to have an extra strategy in mind, so the community can keep flourishing once your resources are no longer available.
- 2. Assess which communities you are best suited to enter.** Allow the Holy Spirit, your team leader and team members to help you discern what communities would be the best locations for projects. Gather information on a variety of options so that you have many potential points of entry and access into a region. Evaluate whether the community is in need of relief work or rehabilitation and development, then consider if you are equipped to provide that.
- 3. Prepare your team.** Honor a community's openness or unwillingness to have outside volunteers work or live amongst them—it is their home, not yours. Consider what housing options are available and if they are appropriate for your team's families. Evaluate what skills would be required of team members, i.e. agricultural knowledge, construction skills or teaching abilities. It is important that a team already know or be willing to quickly learn the language and culture of the community in question, and they should be trained beforehand on basic community development strategies.
- 4. Become familiar with assessment tools.** Once you have settled on a community to serve, begin meeting with key leaders in the community and local church as you search to identify specific problems to help solve. Consider using the following tools to help in the process: situational and trend analyses, historical timelines, oral histories, focus group discussions, village walk-throughs and community surveys. Ask local leaders what the most significant events in the community are or have been and focus on what needs you can help meet in the timeline you have established with your team.



We are excited to hear how God works in and through you and your church to meet needs and change lives through community development in compassion ministries. If you have further questions, feel free to email help@sendrelief.org or consult one of our other ministry guides for ideas on how to start small.



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