

A Brief Report of the Transform World Kerala 2007 November 5-8, 2007, Trivandrum, Kerala, India

Introduction:

The Transform India 2006 in Hyderabad inspired the participants from Kerala to conduct such an event in Kerala. The planning for the event went on for about seven months with considerable prayer efforts. This by-invitation only event saw over 150 transformational leaders from all parts of the state and a few leaders from other states along with the international facilitator. As attested to by their testimonies, almost all participants felt that this was a unique event with active participation by Christians of diverse backgrounds and traditions.

Background:

Kerala is a small state in the southwestern corner of India with rich tradition of Christian heritage. Of a total population of over 30 million people, about 20% claim to belong to the Christian religion. About 1 million Keralites could be considered evangelical/charismatic/pentecostal in faith and practice. The purpose of the TW Kerala event was to assemble not only the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals but others also to discuss ways in which they all can influence their spheres of operation to bring about a transformation in the nation for the glory of God.

A substantial part of the missionaries, medical staff and social workers that are engaged in the transformation efforts in various parts of India are Christians from Kerala. How the Kerala church can continue to be effective participants in the transformation process is a topic of interest to all and was intentionally made a matter of discussion in the conference.

Program:

Fourteen focus groups functioned at this event. They included Children, Church, Discipleship, Education, Healthcare, Leadership, Literature, Market Place, Media, Mission, Prayer, Women, and Youth. A national facilitator was instrumental in having meaningful discussions in five sessions spread over two days and in presenting their findings in plenary sessions. Each group was charged with answering the following questions concerning their subject of discussion: (1) What are the challenges? (2) What are the opportunities? (3) What are the Action Plans? They also presented some prayer points.

The inaugural session held on November 5th evening was presided over by Rt. Rev. I Yesudasan, former bishop and moderator of CSI South Kerala Diocese. He challenged the participants to discern the signs of the time and emphasized the need for transformation that can be brought only through the Gospel. In his address, the international facilitator, Dr. Luis Bush referred to the beautiful backdrop of the platform and commented on the merging of God's streams for the transformation of the world and leading the masses to cross the bridge to enter in to the ocean of God's infinite love. Then he pointed to the map of Kerala and stressed the need of the participants' taking the message of transformation to all the districts of the state.

In addition to the focus group discussions, there were a number of plenary sessions. The speakers and their topics were: Siga Arles (*A Brief History of the Transformation Movement*), C. T. Luis Kutty (*A Nation at Cross Roads—A Challenge to the Church in Kerala*), V. T. Abraham (*Stage Setting: Transformation of Kerala*), Luis Bush (*Vision of Transformation*), Saju John Mathew (*Transformation of India—Role of the Church in Kerala*), Sam C. Samuel (*Christ for ALL*), Tony Samuel (*Research on the People Groups of Kerala*), and James Varghese (*Effective Christian Testimony at Workplaces--A Catalyst for Transformation*). The messages were informative, instructional, and inspirational.

Some of the highlights of the conference were occasional presentations of the transformation message through music and adaptations of traditional Indian art forms presented by the YWAM Arts group from Pune, worship through songs led by the Life Fellowship Choir, screening of transformation videos, and a special time of

individual humbling and prayer before the Lord. On the final day, the conference delegates met as three regional groups and discussed ways in which they can continue as catalysts of transformation in their respective areas.

In the concluding session, Dr. Luis Bush challenged the participants to continue the mission of transformation in their spheres of influence. The national facilitator, Dr. Alexander Philip shared his vision of transformation in the attitudes of people everywhere in India.

Specific Outcomes:

The slogan of the conference came from Revelation 7:9: "...A great multitude, ... from every nation, tribe, people and language ... in front of the Lamb." As bishops, priests, pastors, lay men and women from various traditions and denominations from all parts of Kerala assembled, they all had as a common goal the vision of a great multitude from India before the throne of the Lamb. They left the conference challenged and inspired to effect meaningful transformation in their communities. Some of the expected outcomes are:

1. Unity of Purpose: As leaders came from several denominational backgrounds, there was a greater appreciation for other traditions and theological positions. They came to the conclusion that unified effort is required and possible to bring transformation in the land as all agreed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means of transformation. There was a renewed recognition of the great resources available – women, children and youth.
2. Gathering of multi-talented servant leaders: There was a general feeling that this was a unique gathering. The conference saw a mixing of talents and spiritual gifts, a renewal of vision, development of several new strategies and recognition of God's sovereignty and help in the days ahead. Men and women were encouraged and exhorted to be His *transformational agents* in the state of Kerala and beyond. Almost automatically, each group seemed to have an agenda for ongoing connections and capacity building for the future.
3. Personal Humility and Prayer: The video presentation depicting the transformation of Uganda as a result of humility, unity and prayer challenged the participants to adopt same tools and to invite the presence of God in our state. Almost all the people responded to the call for humbling themselves and fell on their faces and prayed. It was a breakthrough moment for all and the effect will continue.
4. Exponential growth of vision, connections and resources towards the fulfillment of the Great Commission: The topical focus groups and the regional focus groups developed strategies for implementation of the transformation concept and its multiplication in the days and months to come. They are looking for specific guidance from Transform World India Connections to keep the flame burning. The participants in *Transform World Kerala 2007* left with great enthusiasm and resolve to effect meaningful transformation in our state and in the land.

Conclusion:

There were only very few participants who had earlier exposure to Transform World events. As a result they did not know what to expect. Even the leaders who planned the meeting for many months were unsure of the probable outcomes. But without exception, every one was touched, transformed and challenged in this conference. There is a new momentum to cause transformation in the land through education, medical care, youth activities, children's ministry, equipment of women and working in missions and discipleship beyond the barriers of denominations and churches. The co-operation of many people of all walks under the leadership of Mr. Varghese Philip, Conference Facilitator and General co-ordinators Rev. Sam Varghese and Dr. James George contributed to the success of this effort.

(Prepared by C.T. Luiskutty)