

The European Baptist Federation with the generous help of its Mission Partners has developed a mission project (IMP) to facilitate evangelism and the planting of new Baptist churches in Europe and the Middle East. The IMP provides funding for suitably gifted people to work as evangelists and church planters in their own countries.

IMP beginnings...

The project to support indigenous missionaries was launched in April 2002 in Moldova. In January of 2003 the IMP was extended to five other countries of Eastern Europe: Armenia, Belarus, Latvia, Russia and Ukraine. The project has been the response of the EBF to the needs of nations which are open to the Gospel.



Group of indigenous church planters from Moldova

In the beginning of 2004 it was possible to expand the project to the Middle East, and thus - to answer requests from the needy Arab-speaking countries of the Middle East. In 2005 EBF approved several candidates to be missionaries from the following countries: Azerbaijan, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania and Serbia.

And present

Presently there are 40 indigenous missionaries aided by the EBF in their ministry of planting Baptist congregations. They serve in various, both urban and rural localizations, and under different circumstances.

Some of them work in the colds of Russian Siberia above the Polar Circle and others are a part of fast growing Baptist Unions in the mountainous Caucasus region. Some toil in spite of legal obstacles in Belarus, while others represent exceptionally mission-minded Baptist Union of Moldova. Still others take their timely opportunities in discovering new freedoms in Baltic countries recently accepted to the European Union, as well as the Baptist Union of Ukraine, the largest in Europe in respect to figures. Indigenous missionaries are also successfully planting new churches in the disadvantaged Arab-speaking nations.



A church plant in Siberia

Encouraging reports from mission fields inform that young churches double in number every year. The indigenous missionaries are the most effective in the evangelistic ministry among

their people. They achieve a dazzling success because they know their people, culture and language. There are also 20 new applications waiting for fulfillment.

Mission partnerships

The EBF organizes the Project in cooperation with their member Unions. The unions often arrange missionary conferences, which provide excellent opportunities for training and fellowship, and refocus the vision of church planters.



EBF mission partners, Sept. 2004

Good cooperation with Mission Partners is crucial for the EBF church planting project. The full list of partners can be found on web site www.ebf.org/imp

Very encouraging...

It's indeed encouraging to see that the indigenous missionaries are highly motivated and eagerly implement contemporary methods of evangelism, using Bible study guides, tracts, Christian concerts, Jesus film, English language courses, summer camps, sport activities, etc. They utilize present opportunities skillfully, teach biblical doctrines diligently, and form new groups effectively.



Outreach to youth in Latvia

The experience of IMP shows that 2 years may be enough to find people for a church plant but the process of discipling them is much longer and takes minimum 5-7 years. It is reckoned that bringing someone to faith takes only about 20% of the total effort, but the follow-up requires the remaining 80%.

The Baptist Unions' leaders are greatly appreciative because the IMP helps to maintain the quality and regularity of the missionary work.

In spite of obstacles

There are some outside obstacles, like repressive law in Belarus requiring churches to reregister. In Russia great distances between inhabited areas of this vast territory are a natural hindrance to Baptist work. Prevailing poverty and high unemployment hamper evangelistic activities in all post-soviet nations. Occult and secularism play their disturbing role to some extent too.

There are also inner obstacles, like resistance to change. A ghetto syndrome prevails in some churches. Church buildings are not used sufficiently – only two or three times a week. Younger people would like to use traditional church buildings not only for prayer but also for other meetings.

The indigenous missionaries effectively use contemporary opportunities for evangelism and church planting. They endorse a personal approach in evangelism and want to avoid “church jargon”. They have a pioneering spirit and make conscientious efforts.

Church planters need regular training from more experienced pastors and leaders. The ultimate success of new church plants depends a lot on mentoring relationships and implementation of effective models. Therefore established mature churches need to build and develop relationships with new church plants.

Increasing local involvement

An important principle of IMP is that indigenous missionaries are selected by Baptist Unions. The Project is designed for 5 years, with the outside support gradually decreasing, and the local involvement increasing.

IMP has entered the second stage - reductions of the outside support and further growth of the project. The vision is to provide needed support for indigenous missionaries who are involved in the ministry of planting new Baptist churches.

At the same time, support from the local sources should increase proportionately. Eventually the indigenous missionaries/church planters are expected to be fully supported financially by local sources.

The process is not easy, especially in regions stricken by poverty. In spite of that, unions initiate nationwide annual collections of funds dedicated for missions, and also local sponsors are emerging.

Goal of reproducing church planting

From the beginning of the IMP there has been a vision to support indigenous church plants which are able to reproduce. Desired multiplication is possible through the concentration of attention on those missionaries who have a vision of growth and are supported by local churches. This is the vision of regional mission centers that have spiritual influence on their vicinity.

The multiplication mission centers should provide: training of leaders, strategy of growth, appropriate training materials, recommended models of activity and local resources. Their role would be to share the vision of multiplication and facilitate other churches in their regions by equipping them for evangelism, discipleship, leadership and church planting. It seems to be natural that such centers ought to be located where nationwide mission coordinators are.

Multiplication centers should be able to organize church planting courses and create possibilities for new candidates to practice. Urban locations for such centers seem to be recommended because they provide larger nets for evangelism and numerous opportunities to teach. Besides, they can train leaders among students and professionals. Rural locations, however, are not disqualified. The multiplication process should happen naturally.

The goal for reproducing churches is to give birth to daughter churches in the neighboring areas.

Daniel Trusiewicz
EBF Mission Coordinator

To help planting reproducing churches!

To help growing healthy churches!

For the glory of God!

For more information about EBF projects and activities visit the web page - www.ebf.org/imp and you can write to IMP coordinator – imp@ebf.org

Offerings and donations should be sent to:

Account Name - **European Baptist Federation**

Bank Name - **Spar und Kreditbank Evangelisch Freikirchlicher Gemeinden eG, Germany**

BIC - **GENODE51BH2**

Account No - **DE 64 5009 2100 00001717 00**