

What is Community Health Evangelism (CHE)?

By Terry Dalrymple

The purpose of Community Health Evangelism (CHE) work is not just breaking poverty or planting churches, though both of those things are accomplished through our Community Health Evangelism (CHE) programs. The real goal of our work is a transformation in lives and communities that is as deep as the human heart, and as broad as the whole range of the human experience in the world God made. We want Jesus to be recognized as Lord over all creation, and our development activities to reflect the depth and breadth of the kingdom of God. We are asking God to work in us and through us to transform beliefs and change behavior so that his peace, justice, compassion, and righteousness are reflected in the life of the communities we serve.

CHE seamlessly integrates evangelism, discipleship, and church planting with community health and development. The ministry is wholistic, seeking to obey everything that Jesus commanded and addressing the whole need of individuals and communities. The success of a CHE program can be measured by the following transformational indicators. *These are the outcomes that we consistently see in mature CHE programs around the world:*

1. **Shared vision:** The community sees a better future and has hope that it can be achieved.
2. **Leadership:** Godly Christian leaders are positioned and equipped to lead the community toward the accomplishment of its vision.
3. **Ownership:** People are taking responsibility for their own health and well being.
4. **Cooperation:** People are united and working together for the common good.
5. **Volunteers:** Significant numbers of people are taking initiative and acting sacrificially to meet the legitimate needs of others.
6. **Dignity:** People have recovered their identity as made in the image of God and their vocation as stewards of creation. Instead of being controlled or victimized by their environment, they are stewards of it.
7. **Learning, Skill, and Resources:** People are equipped to identify needs and resources, put together a plan, and mobilize volunteers to accomplish their vision. People are continually reflecting on what is happening in order to learn how to be more effective.
8. **Christian Community and Witness:** Believers are meeting together for fellowship, prayer, Bible study and worship, and are sharing Christ with their neighbors in word and deed.

Once the above outcomes are achieved, communities begin to change. Health improves, infant mortality decreases, agriculture becomes more productive, jobs are created, water systems, roads, schools and clinics are built, and churches are established or strengthened. All of this is achieved at the initiative of the people. Peace, justice, compassion, and righteousness are witnessed in the community and God is glorified.

CHE is implemented in a series of Steps:

Step 1: Casting a Vision for Wholistic Ministry in a Country or an Area

CHE Coordinators do vision seminars with leaders from churches, missions, faith based organizations, and governments. Alliances are formed, plans made, workers recruited and funding secured.

Step 2: Equipping the CHE Team

CHE Coordinators train a team of three or four national Christians, equipping them to implement Community Health Evangelism programs in multiple communities. CHE Coordinators visit the teams they train periodically and continue to mentor and coach the teams through the course of the development process.

Step 3: Community Awareness and Organization

The CHE team works with leaders in the community to raise awareness of need and opportunity, and to unite the community with a common vision for a better quality of life. The community elects representatives to serve on a development committee.

Step 4: Training and Mobilizing Volunteers

The CHE team trains the development committee and equips these elected representatives to manage the development process in their village. Volunteers are recruited from the community and trained by the CHE team to visit homes sharing God's Word while meeting felt needs. These volunteers may teach about immunization and then escort the families to a clinic to get their children immunized, or teach about good nutrition and help the families dig kitchen gardens, or teach about the importance of clean water and help families with ways to sanitize their drinking water. An infrastructure of relationships is established through which information can flow. Changes are introduced one topic at a time.

Step 5: Capacity Building and Church Planting

The CHE team continues to mentor and coach the committee, assisting them in a continual process of identifying problems, researching solutions, finding resources, making plans, recruiting volunteers, and evaluating results. Self help groups are formed for livelihood, economic, and agricultural development. People who come to Christ are disciplined in new life groups and churches are established with a vision and plan for wholistic ministry. Church and community work together for wholistic development and the church is recognized as a transforming agent in its community.

Step 6: Multiplication

The CHE team moves to another community to repeat the process in nearby communities. The CHE team multiplies itself by equipping selected committee members and volunteers as trainers. These volunteers join with a member of the original CHE team in reaching out to a neighboring community.