

MEGACITY CAMPAIG

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N SHAKES CALCUTTA

An historic evangelism campaign using a massive media buy launched in Calcutta on October 15th. The pastors of over 300 churches are jubilant. "We have never seen the city impacted by an evangelism campaign in such a massive way," say the pastors. Almost 150,000 calls were intercepted by the campaign call center in just a few weeks.

KOLKATA is a city where one can see two opposing pictures of India. In this megalopolis both poverty and extreme wealth, as well as sadness and celebration, come "face to face" and its victims seldom meet.

During a major GCOMM vision casting event for pastors and Christian leaders in Calcutta, pastors noted that it was more likely that Jesus would return sooner than the city's churches reaching 17 million people in the city. The church did not foresee fulfilling the great commission of Jesus in their city by continuing to do ministry the way had done it for years.

In Hebrews 11:1, we are reminded of a simple truth: "if you don't believe it you won't see it." And so, 12 months of believing, preparation, training turned into seeing that which the churches of Calcutta had been praying for.

The Call Center is "Flooded"

The campaign message was seen and heard throughout the city using a comprehensive media package including billboards, prime time radio, television, daily newspapers, ads in the public transport system, etc. There had not been a similar high impact effort to reach millions of people in Calcutta.

In just four weeks, the call center has logged over 140,000 calls coming in from Calcutta as well as from many other cities in the state of West Bengal.

With 103 city-wide, month long campaigns behind us, opening day in Calcutta was hectic with over 10,000 calls logged. People called in to request the specially designed "Power to Change" book consisting of

14 powerful transformation stories including a road map to new life in Jesus.

The sight of 100 phones ringing non-stop was not a sight pastors of the city had previously experienced. Many remained in the call center for hours on end answering calls. One pastor stayed for 48 hours straight answering calls. Coffee breaks were the only interruption. The Holy Spirit was on the move in the city.

The Opposition Awakens

When the Spirit of the Lord moves so does the enemy. We see it in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The RSS, an extremist Hindu

"If only we could hear the rejoicing of heaven's angels as thousands of people in Calcutta repent and come to faith in Jesus..."

group which brought the current fundamentalist Hindu government in New Delhi to power has become a source of deep concern for churches throughout India.

A few weeks before the start of the campaign the RSS had sent a letter to government officials in Delhi complaining about foreign religious groups destroying the Hindu faith by converting people to Christianity and away from Hinduism. "Our faith is in danger of disappearing!" they wrote.

To stem the sway away from the Hindu faith, they suggested forcing people into submission, poisoning and killing Christian leaders and pastors.

Dozens of times every day, the RSS dialed the call center numbers seeking to terrorize the young volunteer force manning the phones.

Despite threats of arrests, killings, poison-

ing there was no disruption. The campaign continued.

A Net Full Of Fish

The media campaign was having a major impact. Secular TV channels in Calcutta carried the stories of transformed lives to tens of millions of viewers in Calcutta and West Bengal, not counting Bangladesh where Bengali is spoken as well.

The result has been a huge net filled with fish.

Jesus told a parable of a fish net saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the sea and gathered fish of every kind (NSV). Then...The fishermen collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away." Matt. 13:47-48.

So it was. The Gospel net was cast into the deep waters of Calcutta. The size of the catch has surprised the pastors!

In the net were all kinds of "fish," the ultra rich, the middle class, blue collar, white collar, the lowly people of the street. There were judges, police officers, doctors, housewives, students, pensioners, railways execs.

One evening, staff from a government office stopped to watch a "Power To Change" TV program just before leaving work. The "unusual" transformation story gripped their hearts and everyone called to order a personal copy of the book "that can change your life."

The Church Comes Alive

One pastor noted, "We have reached people that otherwise be out of reach of the church. They would never find their way to a church. The transformation stories have profoundly touched the souls of men and women."

As pastors started to see and feel the impact of the media campaign throughout the city many dormant congregations were awakened and snapped to attention.

Overnight, there was an increase of partic-



Hindu festivals such as this "Pooja" fill the streets of cities across India. Hundreds of thousands of people who are elderly, younger, the sick and the healthy make their way to Hindu temples to worship hand-made gods.

icipating churches from 230 to 328 churches. Almost a hundred new churches had showed up.

The onslaught of thousands of calls spoke volumes. Pastors witnessed the a previously unseen hunger and thirst for change in the hearts of the people of their city.

The same was true regarding the younger generation. Hundreds of young people from churches in the city showed up at the call center to serve as volunteers after seeing the media, the ads on buses, trains, billboards, newspapers.

The Numbers...

They perceived that this was something very big and they wanted to be a part of it. Their faith had suddenly become relevant and it was the talk of town!

Millions reached? Are the numbers real? According to official statistics published by the largest daily newspapers in Calcutta their readership during the four week media campaign was 12 million.

Newspapers in Calcutta are not sold at news stands. Nor are they a free press. Newspapers must be subscribed to and paid for. They are delivered directly to homes. Readership is strong.

West Bengalis living outside Calcutta were able to follow the campaign via television. When we asked for statistics regarding viewership the TV channels, according to research, maintained that the programs were watched by 22 million people during the month. This was a conservative number according to television executives.

We could see the results. In one instance,

thousands of Muslims from northern Bengal had called in to request their copy of the campaign book.

Calcutta's favorite live talk show host became fascinated in the transformation stories showcased in the media. The host decided to interview the "heros" in the campaign book. Each interview was slated for 30 minutes but the radio host was gripped by what these people had experienced and the sessions repeatedly stretched into 2-hour live shows.

As a result, the radio programs generated thousands of calls and requests for the book. According to radio station listener data, 2 million people listened to the programs each night.

Research into media response shows that though great numbers of people will be impacted by what they have seen or heard,



Worship is performed out of fear so as not to disappoint the gods. Disappointing the gods will bring about disfavor, lack of success in business, punishment, sickness, misfortune. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

only one in one hundred will actually pick up the phone and make the call.

Because of the diversity of languages in the state of West Bengal the "Power to Change" books were made available in Hindi, Bengali, English and Urdu. To date, 120,000 books have been printed. More will likely be needed.

Fishing Trip Number Two

This campaign is reminiscent of yet another spectacular catch of fish.

Luke (5:6) describes what happened when the disciples caught all those fish. Their nets began to break from the large amount of fish.

"Breaking nets" pretty well illustrates what is happening in Calcutta.

John, in his Gospel, writes about yet another fishing trip. The disciples obediently

cast their net on the right side of the boat and could not pull the nets in because they were so full of fish.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said that the fields are ripe unto harvest, but the workers are few. Still today, this seems to be the case.

Although the media contracts have expired, the campaign is a process that will continue long after.

To minimize the loss of fish, follow-up will continue for the next 12 months. GCM Ministries has committed to help the churches during this crucial time of soul caring.

– Modern day evangelism requires the use of modern day media. God has given the Church, all of us, the powerful tools of media to take the Great Commission to completion.

Expect Great Things...

Our Calcutta campaign manager, pastor Mahesh summarized his feelings this way: "It is a great privilege to be involved in this Power to Change Campaign. Because of it, we're leading people from death to life. Expect great things from God and great things will happen."

Angels Rejoice

The scriptures tell us that there is great joy among heaven's angels when one sinner turns to God and repents.

If only we could hear the rejoicing among the angels as thousands of people in Calcutta repent and come to faith in Jesus. Let us rejoice with the angels as well.

THE SCORE: TOUCHED 15 M



ILLION PEOPLE IN 30 DAYS!



From the start, the unprecedented media presence in the city woke millions in Calcutta to the message of God's power to change lives.

As calls from people responding to the campaign flooded the call center, sleepy churches quickly woke up. So did over 1,000 young people who signed up as volunteers at the call center's 100 phones, database entry, and delivery of the campaign book to callers. It was harvest time in Calcutta.

Photos: Giant billboards and outdoor advertising appeared at key intersections, bus stops, metro stations, on trains, buses. Newspapers, radio, television carried stories of changed lives to 15 million Calcuttans.

CALL CENTER CONGESTION—THE HOLY



SPIRIT WAS ON THE MOVE IN THE CITY



Phones were ringing "off the hook" at the call center. The pastors of Calcutta had not seen such massive response from their city in recent history.

It was as Jesus said, a net had been let down into an ocean of people and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. (NSV)

The massive catch of fish had caught the churches by surprise! In the net were fish not previously seen in churches.

Follow-up and discipleship of thousands of callers is expected to take up to 12 months. GCM Ministries has committed to stand with the churches throughout the process.

