Adventist Church, PAHO formalize collaboration with memo of understanding

Posted: 26 Jul 2011 09:00 PM PDT

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The request came during a ceremony in which top officials from the church and the Pan American Health Organization signed a memorandum of understanding that formalizes collaboration of implementing health projects throughout the Americas.

The memorandum outlines shared goals of improving promotion of health, strengthening disease prevention and control strategies at the local level, and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

The move follows several years of church leaders seeking to increase the global denomination's health outreach, as well as PAHO's goal of strengthening faith-based partnerships for more effective health awareness and education in local communities. The Adventist Church has historically emphasized healthful practices as part of living a life of Christian faith and service.

"It will be a great privilege for us to cooperate in whatever way we can according to our abilities and our use of health applications that will truly help the quality of life improve for many thousands of people," said Ted Wilson, president of the Adventist world church.

PAHO Director Dr. Mirta Roses Periago also addressed the small press conference in the executive conference room at the Adventist Church's world headquarters, saying, "I think this kind of formal agreement will really make an impact."

Periago said the organization has informally partnered for decades with local Adventist organizations, including the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in member countries, nursing schools and church member health volunteers.

Part of the UN system, PAHO is the regional arm of the World Health Organization and serves 35 countries in the western hemisphere.

Adventist health leaders said yesterday's ceremony demonstrates that the church is committed to work with agencies of health outside the church for the good of the community.

"I hope the church and its members will rally to this call and will work with both PAHO and local governments," said Dr. Allan Handysides, Health Ministries director for the Adventist world church. "If so, I think it will see our church take its place in the public health sphere. We'll be doing a service for our communities and receive recognition for doing so."