In Peru, 20,000 youth outreach event delivers community service, evangelism support

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The Mission Caleb program, held in Lima February 16 to 26, was followed by more than 5,000 people joining the church through baptism and the formation of several small congregations, called "companies."

Dressed in matching red polo shirts, Adventist young people throughout Lima planted a total of 12,000 trees along highways, constructed 60 housing modules for low-income residents, cleaned parks and donated 1,500 units of blood to five hospitals. They also distributed more than 400,000 copies of The Great Hope, an adapted version of the book The Great Controversy, which was written by the denomination's co-founder Ellen G. White.

In the evenings, youth helped with some 1,000 evangelism meetings, held in churches, auditoriums, parks and garages throughout Lima, a metropolitan area of more than 8 million people.

"It was an eye opener," said Hiskia Missah, associate Youth Ministries director for the Adventist world church, who attended the event. "The youth paid their own way to come from all around Peru and sacrificed their vacation time for the Lord."

Church members in Lima opened their homes for participants to stay during the event, Missah said. Event materials were provided by church administration.

Government officials offered their support to the initiative, from local mayors appearing at service projects to a federal minister and six congressman attending a Mission Caleb rally outside the convention center.

Mission Caleb, originally launched in Brazil, holds projects throughout South America each summer in an effort to reach places that have no Adventist presence.

Though the combination of evangelism and community service aren't new, the denomination is promoting the initiative as an officially suggested option for youth outreach worldwide, according to Gilbert Cangy, Youth Ministries director for the Adventist world church. Mission Caleb was adopted by the Youth Ministries department at last year's world advisory of the denomination's top Youth directors.

"This is a model for young people conducting evangelism," Cangy said. "It's not just direct proclamation, but combining it with service projects is a biblical model."

Future Mission Caleb mass-scale events in South America are scheduled for June and January in Brazil and September in Paraguay.

More information on the Adventist world church's Youth Ministries is available at www.gcyouthministries.org.