

EBM/MASA and its Partner Unions in Latin America

1. The partnership and its history

Our partnerships with the five Latin American countries Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba and Peru did not come into being through theoretical planning, but each has its individual story and characteristics, its own personal fingerprint as it were. If we want to assess the character of the partnerships correctly, it is not unimportant to take these “fingerprints” into consideration.

Argentina

The first contacts go back to the year 1969. At that time, a year of evangelization was called out in all of America, the *Campañas de las Américas*. Alberto Ziegler of the *German Association of Argentina* (later: *Asociación Germano Argentina*) invited the pastor and evangelist Horst Borkowski to evangelize in cooperation with the German-speaking Argentinean churches. These evangelizations and the resultant contacts opened a common perspective on the missionary possibilities, for which only the necessary funds were lacking. For many years, the mission among the South American Indians (Toba, Mapuche) and the children’s home Esperanza were the first priorities in our cooperation with the national *Convención Evangélica Bautista Argentina*. Only in the last few years has the emphasis shifted back onto the German association, which supports and runs the children’s home in Alem, the Bible School in Oberá and quite a few other missionary projects.

Bolivia

Our cooperation with the *Unión Bautista Boliviana* began in 1992, when the then mission Secretary Fidel Cueto invited our former MASA coordinator in Argentina, Norberto Clarke. The invitation was to visit the *Zona Bolívar*, one of the poorest regions of the Bolivian Andes. This journey, on which the president and general secretary of the Bolivian association joined me, convinced us so much of the necessity to support this missionary project, that it turned out to be the beginning of a very close partnership. Later this partnership was enlarged to include other projects like the children’s home in La Paz and missionary work on the islands in Lake Titicaca.

Brazil

The first contacts here also go back to 1969, the year of the *Campanhas das Américas*, when Horst Borkowski had been invited as a German evangelist by the former German association of Brazil, now known as *Convenção Batista Pioneira do Sul do Brasil*. The evangelistic journey through many German-speaking churches and in particular the commitment on behalf of the *Children’s Home Liebich* were the basis for a close partnership, which was later enlarged to include other projects. Additional social projects like the children’s home in Cotia and the day-care centre in Diadema as well as missionary projects – like the missionary work among the Pomeranians- have also been included.

Cuba

We had already been asked several times to commit ourselves to work in Cuba. The former mission secretary of the Spanish Union, Jorge Pastor, was the one who gave the last impetus for this work, when he was talking about his contacts with Cuba. In 1998, Hans Guderian, Jorge Pastor and myself traveled to Cuba to sound things out. This journey led to a project-oriented partnership with the Western association, the *Convención Bautista de Cuba Occidental* with its office in Havana, and with the Eastern association, the *Convención Bautista de Cuba Oriental* with its office in Santiago de Cuba, as well.

Peru

The contact with the Peruvian partner association, the *Bautista Convención Evangélica del Perú*, came about indirectly. In 1980, MASA sent me as a theological teacher to the interdenominational *Seminario Evangélico de Lima*. Through work in the churches and the beginning project-oriented partnerships (Aguaruna, Quechua) a closer cooperation developed, which still exists today and which is concentrated in the region of Apurímac.

2. Working together as partners – an overview

The following overview shows the most important projects that have been carried out in the last 30 years:

Countries	Mission work among the Latin American Indians	Other areas of missionary work	Children's homes	Aid for disaster victims	Bible schools
Argentina	Toba/ <i>Chaco</i> Mapuche/ <i>Patagonia</i> Quechua/ <i>Santiago del Estero</i> Guaranís/ <i>Misiones</i> Wichí/ <i>El Impenetrable</i>	Cities near the Rio Uruguay/ Corrientes Impenetrable Alto Uruguay /Misiones	Esperanza Mendoza Alem	Alto Verde (flooding) Rio Bermejo (flooding) San Juan (earthquake)	Oberá Lote Diez CEFOLÍ
Brazil	Nhambiquara / <i>Mato Grosso</i>	Pomeranians in Espírito Santo Missionary projects in Curitiba and Blumenau	Cotia Ijuí Moreno Rio d'Ouro Diadema	Rio Uruguay (flooding)	Ijuí
Bolivia	Quechua/ <i>Zona Bolívar</i> North Potosí <i>Valley of the Inquisivi river</i> Aymara/ <i>Lake Titicaca</i>		La Paz		
Cuba		Isla de la Juventud (Youth Island, Western Cuba)			Training of lay missionaries (Eastern Cuba)
Peru	Aguaruna/ <i>Marañón</i> Quechua/ <i>Abancay</i> <i>Ayacucho</i> <i>Cuzco</i>			Piura (flooding due to <i>El Niño</i>) Lima, Ayacucho, Abancay (help for the victims of the terror organization " <i>Shining Path</i> ")	Bible school Lima Chiriáco Abancay

All these projects have been the result of agreement on objectives and cooperation of the two partners.

3. Guidelines on the basis of partnership

When MASA began its activities, it did not start from scratch. A long history of Baptist mission already existed in each of these countries. Neither did it start with a clearly outlined concept. It became involved by using the doors, which our Latin American partners found open. The expression “Open Door” was used for projects that were understood to be God’s special challenge, and which also had the prospect of getting support in Germany. It was a great challenge for Horst Borkowski, for example, when farmer Heinrich Liebich from Ijuí/ Brazil asked him on his deathbed to do something for the children to whom he had given a home on his farm. Something similar happened when he visited the Toba in the Argentinean Chaco in the same year. He was deeply moved by the needs these South American Indians had in every area of life.

These two projects had a missionary as well as a social aspect. The Salvation Army’s old motto “Soup, Soul and Salvation” was brought to life again. This served as a general guideline to all our projects. Regarding missionary projects, those among the Indian population were given priority. The motto “*Bring the gospel to those who do not have the chance to hear it*” describes the situation of the Indians best, who had been neglected for such a long time. Social projects naturally concentrated on the children’s homes as a means to help at least some of the millions of needy children. These children’s homes were meant for abandoned children and orphans as an expression of love in Jesus Christ’s name. The German motto “*A place in the sun for your child in the shadow*” included the physical as well as the spiritual aspect. This social help was of course not exclusively given to children, but to others as well, especially to the Indians: “*Bread from the Indians’ land, blessing from God’s hand*“, or “*Bread for Indians in need*”.

These few guidelines helped to select projects as well as to determine the strategy and purpose of our missionary activities. In time our partner unions have come to respect this attitude as *Filosofía de MASA* (MASA’s philosophy) and to appreciate it as a valuable contribution towards their own missionary and social outreach. Later on other aspects have become important, such as the support of bible schools for Indians and other ethnic groups. These have contributed to the strengthening of missionary structures, especially in those areas where MASA has been active.

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