"One Year in Mission" Project, South American Division

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One Year in Mission (OYiM) is a Seventh-day Adventist Church evangelistic endeavor coordinated by the youth ministry department of the General Conference. The goal of this project in the South American Division (SAD) is to promote the participation of Adventist youth in the evangelism of urban centers in eight countries assisted by the SAD. The countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Since 2014, participants of this project have combined their talents, resources, and professional knowledge to meet the needs of the communities through initiatives that combine preaching the gospel with service to others.

Organization

In 1879, two American young men, 16-year-old Harry Fenner and 14-year-old Luther Warren, organized young people from their local church to promote evangelistic work, raise funds for purchasing missionary literature, and promote the temperance cause. By 1897, this movement motivated General Conference leaders to begin the process of organizing a ministry dedicated to serving Adventist youth and their missionary initiatives. At first, this ministry was organized under the responsibility of the Sabbath School department. It became an independent department during a General Conference council in the city of Gland, Switzerland, in 1907. At that time, the department was named the Young People’s Missionary Volunteer Department. M. E. Kern was appointed as its first leader.

In harmony with the developments of the work worldwide, the missionary activities carried out by Adventists youth in South America gained greater emphasis in the early twentieth century. In 1902, the first youth group was formed at
the missionary training school facilities in the city of Gaspar Alto, Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil. This group had the same goals as the Adventist youth societies formed in the United States. Over time, youth ministry became established in the South American region and the participation of young people in evangelism increased significantly. This youth involvement was vital to the expansion of the Adventist Church throughout South America, especially during the early years of the mission in the region.2

In 1915, a young Brazilian named Mateo Leytes, who had studied nursing in the Sanatório de River Plate (River Plate Sanatorium, now Sanatório Adventista del Plata), was sent to serve as a medical missionary in the city of Asunción, the capital of Paraguay. At that time, Adventists were promoting a church planting project. Leytes conducted Bible studies and assisted Pastor Arthur Westphal. Later, young Leytes worked as a head nurse in the Hospital Militar de Assunção (Asuncion Military Hospital). His service in the medical missionary work in that city contributed positively to the origin of the present Sanatório Adventista de Assunção (Asuncion Adventist Sanitarium).3

Stories such as that of Mateo Leytes illustrated the effectiveness of young people in Adventist evangelism. Noting the trend, over the following decades the Church implemented several programs to encourage youth to fulfill their mission.4 For example, during the 1960s the Estudante Missionário (student missionary) program encouraged students from Adventist universities and colleges to spend up to a year in a foreign country where they assisted churches, schools, and other Adventist institutions.5 The program was expanded during the 1970s when the Corpo de Serviço Voluntário Adventista (Youth Department of Missionary Volunteers, now Adventist Volunteer Service or SVA) was organized.6

Through the SVA, young volunteers use their talents, resources, and professional knowledge to meet the needs of the local Adventist community in which they are embedded.7

The first One Year in Mission project occurred in New York City in 2013. Fourteen young people from different world divisions worked together to conduct social programs with the goal of presenting the gospel to the people of New York City for one year. Among the volunteers, the SAD was represented by Liz Motta. The following year, the project was implemented in the South American Division mission field. The stated purpose of the OYiM is “to create a generation of missionaries who dedicate a year of their lives to carry out the order of the Master: Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15).”9

**History**

The first One Year in Mission project in the SAD took place in the city of Montevideo, Uruguay, in 2014. OYiM volunteers arrived in the Uruguayan capital on January 14 of that year. Their mission was to establish two churches and two centers of influence10 in the city.11 In order to accomplish this mission, they conducted programs seeking to meet the needs of the community. At the same time, the young people addressed spiritual issues directly through small groups12 and Bible studies, preparing people for an evangelistic series that would take place shortly after.13

As a result of the work done by those missionaries, more than forty people were baptized in Montevideo. In addition, churches and centers of influence were organized, and Adventurer14 and Pathfinder15 clubs were established.16 Local young people from Montevideo were also motivated to participate in OYiM, following the example of the volunteers who came to work in their city.17 In that same year, the projects were carried out by the SAD in thirteen other cities of South America, which mobilized 150 young missionaries.18

In 2015, twenty-four volunteers were sent to work as missionaries in the city of Rio de Janeiro.19 Subsidized by the SAD, their goal was to establish two centers of influence in the city.20 In May 2015, the centers of influence were inaugurated in the neighborhoods of Campo Grande and Freguesia, North Zone of Rio. Since then, diverse courses have been offered in these centers. In the Campo Grande center, for example, language, healthy cooking, and handicraft courses were available as well as global postural reeducation and pilates sessions. In these centers, ongoing Bible studies reached about 200 people weekly.21 In 2016, the OYiM brought together twenty-two young people in Santiago, the capital of Chile.22 In that city, the missionaries implemented social activities, evangelism, health fairs,23 home visits, and Bible studies, among other activities.24

In view of evangelistic successes OYiM had achieved so far, in 2017 projects were planned for the metropolitan region of Recife in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. That year twenty-two young people were sent to set up centers of influence in neighborhoods without an Adventist presence and to evangelize students of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (Federal University of Pernambuco).25 In one of the initiatives on the Federal University campus, the volunteers set up thematic tents, showcasing the culture of each OYiM volunteer’s home country.26 By the end of the year, the goals were achieved and two centers of influence were established—one in Recife’s Piedade neighborhood and another in the municipality of Olinda.27

Until 2016, One Year in Mission projects were organized and directed by the South American Division. However, beginning in 2017 projects started to be developed by SDA’s constituent union conferences, local conferences, and missions. That year the União Centro-Oeste Brasileira (West Central Brazil Union Mission or UCOB) promoted the
OYIM for the first time with projects in which 165 young people volunteered. Among them were 157 Brazilian volunteers and eight Hispanics—five Paraguayans, two Bolivians, and one Argentine.28

In the UCOB field, the *Missão do Tocantins* (Tocantins Mission or MTo) also held its first OYIM project in 2017. Twenty-five volunteers were sent to live for a year as missionaries on Bananal Island, which is considered the largest river island in the world. The volunteers were divided into three teams that helped the local church by carrying out health campaigns, community service, and Bible studies. In addition, the missionaries offered tutoring classes for English, Spanish, and computer skills for children of the community school. The volunteers were housed in the village of Juscelino Kubitschek on the banks of the Araguaia River from which they visited the surrounding villages. To reach the communities, they used small boats with which they could access even the most remote places.29

The following year, OYIM led by the SAD conducted projects in the city of Santa Cruz de La Sierra, Bolivia, involving twenty young people. The missionaries offered free courses and lectures on topics such as music, health, education, and theology. They promoted their programs through social media, making the services well-known and popular. By August 2018, there were 971 people enrolled in the offered courses. After marketing via a website, 1,820 more people enrolled. In addition, about 3,400 people followed the volunteers’ work through the project’s Facebook page.30

In 2019, Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, was chosen for OYIM projects for its low percentage of Adventists in relation to its total population.31 In fact, the city of Porto Alegre is “known as the least evangelized capital in the country due to the increase of atheism, non-Christian religions and their aspects.” Thus, one of the goals of the group sent to the location was to improve the rates of evangelization. To this end, the missionaries’ initiatives included planting new churches and looking for people interested in studying the Bible. In addition, they assisted the centers of influence already providing assistance to the needy population.32

Other Adventist institutions also became involved in OYIM in 2019. The *Associação Mineira Sul* (South Minas Conference) implemented work in the city of Juiz de Fora in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Under the influence of the work carried out by the group of volunteers, thirteen people were baptized in that location. After completing the project, the young people wrote a book called *Vida de Missionário* (The Missionary Life). In the book, missionary volunteers narrated a little bit of the story of each participant in that OYIM project and described the evangelistic experiences they had during the mission.33 In 2020, the SAD selected Guayaquil, Ecuador. In this Ecuadorian city, nineteen volunteer missionaries carried out projects such as the Christian Summer School for Children. About forty children attended. In addition, the activities carried out by the volunteers included visitations and Bible studies in small groups of local churches.35

Since its beginning, the One Year in Mission project has provided many blessings for people and institutions in the South American territory. Leaders and volunteers have been committed to continue this project and to continue promoting the involvement of new generations to fulfill the Adventist mission. In this sense, one of the goals of the division’s youth ministry leadership, for the coming years, is that all fields of the territory (within Unions, Conferences and Missions) are permanently engaged in the project. To achieve this goal, each pastoral district is encouraged to send at least one candidate to represent it in the annual selection process that defines the project’s participants. This representative, when selected, can be part of the volunteer team and receive training and financial support from their home district.36

Role and Position in the Country/Region

The OYIM project has contributed to the awakening of young people to the missionary vocation and to the growth of evangelistic engagement among them. This can be seen, for example, in the story of Rhayssa Neves, a young woman who served as a missionary in the city of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, Brazil. She considered leaving everything to live a year away from home a waste of time, but her way of thinking changed after participating in the project. In her testimony she declares: “Today, mission to me is to care about my neighbor and serve him.” Misael Carlos, a volunteer in the municipality of Extrema, also in Minas Gerais, had his life transformed amid the missionary experience and shared a new perspective and vision about mission. During the execution of the OYIM, he collaborated in the foundation of a Pathfinder Club and gave guitar lessons. Now, the young man wants to continue his engagement in the mission, working to bring his family closer to Christ.37

Since the early years of the Adventist movement, the Adventist Church has been blessed by the contributions of young people committed to God’s Word. OYIM leaders in the South American Division believe that today’s youth can be an important part of preaching the gospel. The mobilization which has already taken place has sought to fulfill the youth ministry vision—“the advent message to the whole world in my generation.” It is a reminder of the duty and privilege of every young Adventist to proclaim the eternal gospel to the ends of the earth. Through such efforts, new generations of young Seventh-day Adventist missionaries will live up to the legacy of predecessors who kept the torch of the gospel burning, passing it forward.39

Chronology of Directors

**Directors:** Areli Barbosa (2013-2014), Carlos Humberto Campitelli (2015-)

Acosta, Rafael. "Um ano entre os nativos [A Year Among the Natives]." Revista Adventista [Adventist Review], April 2017.


The Pathfinders Club is made up of “boys and girls aged 10 to 15 years old, from different social classes, color, religion. They meet, in general, once a week to learn to develop talents, skills, perceptions and a taste for nature.” These boys and girls “are thrilled with outdoor activities. They like camping, hiking, climbing, exploring the woods and caves. They know how to cook outdoors, making a fire without matches.” Besides, they demonstrate “skill with discipline through drill commands and have their creativity awakened by manual arts. They also fight the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.” “Quem somos” [About Us], Seventh-day Adventist Church [Brazil], accessed on February 4, 2020., http://bit.ly/2FDrqTh.


23. “The Health Fair is a one, two or more days event, open to the public of all ethnicities and beliefs, without cost or profit. It is usually organized in public places such as gymnasiums, schools, parks, squares and malls. The community is invited to participate and receive the benefits of the tests and instructions.” Luiz Fernando Sella and Daniela Tiemi Kanno, Manual da Feira de Saúde [Health Fair Manual] (N. p.: South American Division, 2015), 15.


27. Raphael Acosta, “Um ano entre os nativos [A Year Among the Natives],” Revista Adventista [Adventist Review], April 2017, 27.


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More information about the One Year in Mission project can be found at https://www.adventistas.org/pt/jovens/projeto/um-ano-em-missao/ or on social networks - Facebook and Twitter: @oyimdsa and Instagram: @ oyim.dsa.