

# DEBORAH MINISTRY

## Developing grass root level leaders to minister among the women in Northern India

Dr. Annie Abraham\*\*

Tokyo 2010 was an eye opener to the hundreds of delegates who were gathered from 73 countries. It was encouraging to see that the global church has picked up momentum in order to fulfil the Great Commission in our own generation. So much is happening all over the world. At the same time it was challenging to know about the magnitude of the remaining task. I was blessed to be a part of this gathering of “birds of different feathers” but flying to the same destination.

I had the privilege of presenting a short paper, namely “Women in Ministry: Our experience, Opportunities and Challenges in Northern India” in a work shop conducted by Mrs. Barbara Winter and Mary Hupp.

I would like to share with the readers how the Lord is using simple women to fulfil the Great commission in our part of the globe. For more than two decades, as a team we have been engaged in training women at a grass root level in order to disciple women in unreached areas, under the banner of Deborah Ministry (DBM), which is an integral part of a larger Umbrella, called Operation Agape; a pioneer church planting movement.

### Our Vision:

To see that every woman in North India gets an opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ in her own heart language.

### Our Mission:

To train women at grass root level from different ethnolinguistic communities by giving them Short, Simple and Practical training.

- **Short:** because the leaders, being women with family responsibilities, are unable to attend long periods of training.
- **Simple:** because most of the target group are oral learners (primary or secondary)
- **Practical:** because the leaders have to reproduce what they learn to the women of their own communities in their heart language

## Selection of leaders

We select matured believing women from different communities and geographical areas. We prefer women who are married and settled in an area, so that we can cover the region in a systematic method.

## Training Strategy

### INITIAL TRAINING

**Initial training:** As most of the selected women are not well rooted and grounded in the word of God. We give an initial intensive training for 3-5 days. The basic Bible truths are taught along with practical lessons. The idea is to make them strong in the Lord as well as to cast the vision. Workshops are conducted whereby they learn how to craft a Bible story and narrate it in their own style.

### ON-GOING TRAINING

**On going training:** The leaders start the ministry in their communities and come back every month for a day or two( depending upon the situation )to a Master Trainer( MT). They receive further training and learn new stories. This is also a time of fellowship and mentoring.

### ORALITY TRAINING

**Orality training:** Special training is given to those who can not ( or will not) read. We use audio visual aids, skits, small group discussions etc.

## Field Ministry

Each Deborah leader (D1) is trained to do four types of ministries : -

- 1) **Weekly prayer cell :** This is done usually in the leader's house. The D1 invites her neighbours, friends and relatives to her house or another believer's house and have a time of story telling and prayers. Many women respond as they can identify themselves with the character in the story.
- 2) **Prayer and prayer walk :** The leaders identify a needy area (especially an area where there is no Christian work going on) and do prayer walk along with another believer. They also have a weekly intercessory meeting along with other believers.
- 3) **Visiting other women :** The D1 leaders visit women of their neighbourhood, contacts those who are sick etc. and share the gospel and pray for them.

#### 4) **Children Ministry :**

**\*\*Weekly clubs:** The nearby children gather together on a weekly basis to the leader's house or any other believer's house ( not a church). Children learn Bible stories and songs. Several people who do not come to church send their children to the clubs.

**\*\* Free tuition:** Some of our leaders offer free tuition to school going children , helping them with the school work. Here children learn to pray and hear the gospel

**\*\* Non formal school:** There are several children who do not go to school. D1 leaders gather them in small groups either in their houses or church and teach them for 2-3 hours. This gives a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel with the children as well as with the parents. One such Non formal school has evolved into a high school, giving quality education to hundreds of poor children.

## Accountability

Every D1 submits a monthly report to her Master Trainer (MT)  
We have State Coordinators( SC) who takes care of several Master trainers( MT). Each MT is responsible for 2 or more D1 leader. The D1 leaders keep a track of the next level ( D2).  
The MTs and SCs meet frequently to discuss the developments.



### Master Trainers

They train, equip and supervise the next level leaders in their respective states/Regions.



### Deborah 1

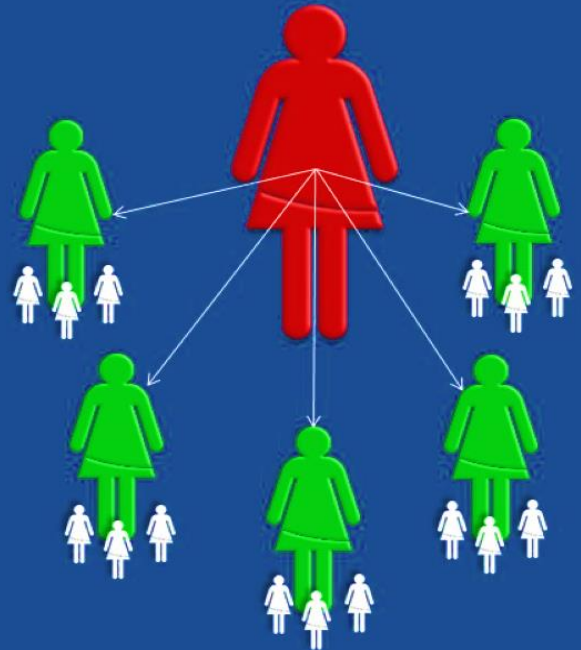
Local, grass root level leaders who

1. run a weekly women cells
2. Prayer walk
3. Weekly Children's Ministry
4. Intercessory Prayer



### Deborah 2

Volunteers who help D1 leaders



## EVALUATION

The personal lives as well as ministry of the D1 leaders are periodically assessed by the MTs. and necessary steps taken to mentor & help them

## Success stories

Sunita (name changed) was a teenager from a Non Christian community in Haryana. (This is one of the least reached states). She had weakness of her left hand from birth. Someone guided her to a church for prayer. The pastor shared about Jesus and prayed for her healing. As she attended the church regularly, she grew in her faith and accepted Christ as her savior and was baptized. Her hand started functioning better. Later, under pressure from her parents she married a non Christian man. But soon he also became a believer. They have two girls. Sunita was taken into the Deborah training by the state coordinator whose church she was attending. Soon she emerged as a good leader and started a weekly prayer cell for her neighbors. The Lord added many to her group. Many of the women brought their husbands and children to her meetings as there was no other church/ Christian ministry in the nearby area. Her 2 teenaged girls conducted children clubs.

Sunita requested her coordinator (SC) and her husband (pastor) to take care of the Sunday gathering. Soon people were baptized and added to the kingdom of God.

As more and more people attended the church, her coordinator and her husband shifted to her area and settled in a small house. They built a church hall on top of their house and many people in the locality ( where there was no Christian earlier) are being blessed. Sunita is mentoring her daughters to become good Deborah leaders.

## Challenges

- Many of the D1 leaders are staying in remote areas where there is no regular transport facilities. So it is not easy for them to attend the monthly training in the training centre which is far away.
- As most of our leaders are married, very often, family responsibilities restrict their time of ministry.
- Some of them have no support/ cooperation from other family members. Hence they can not be as effective as they should be.
- In many communities, women are not allowed to go out of their family circle.
- In spite of all these limitations, we are amazed to see the results. We have experienced the power of God working through these humble women. Like Deborah of Old Testament time, the Lord is using these simple women to deliver several others from the hands of the enemy, leading them from darkness to the marvellous light in the kingdom of God.

## Lessons learned

- Women are best reached by women
- With the support of the church as well as their family members, they can be very successful
- Short, simple and practical training will help them to develop as effective leaders.
- Even oral learners can become effective leaders if they are trained in Oral methods.

## Recommendations

- In order to fulfil the Great Commission in our generation, we have to train more and more women.
- The church should identify and train women leaders at grass root level.
- There should be a paradigm shift in the mode of training. Each community has to adopt its own styles in communicating the gospel.
- Women should be supported and encouraged by their family members and churches, so that they can be effective leaders, reaching out to the women in the unreached areas.

*Awake, Awake, Deborah!*  
*Awake, Awake, Utter a song!*  
*Jugdes 5:12*

**\*\* About the Author:** Dr. Annie Abraham is the director of Deborah Ministry, based in Ludhiana, Punjab, Northern India