

**International Task Force
Panama SDOP team meeting
November 29, 2018**

The International Task Force convened at 2:45 p.m. EST with Susan greetings to all participants.

Present: Susan Dobkins (Chairperson), Karen Brown, Teresa Bidart (staff), Alonzo Johnson(staff).
(these was the team to traveled to Panama on November 26 to November 30)

The team met to make a summary and discuss how this visit went and what were the accomplishments and challenges.

Susan expressed that she was glad of all contacts that have been made and all the meetings that this team has participated in the last 4 days. Karen asked the group to prepare a presentation (slide show) with picture and details of this visit to be shown at the January face to face National meeting.

Alonzo mentioned that still in the center his boss is not convinced that Panama was a correct choice. Susan asked the staff to send her and the rest of the International Task Force members the minutes where the International Task Force and the National Committee approved to select Panama as a focus country. Susan is willing to travel to Louisville to have a conversation with Sara and explained why the selection was made. Teresa stated that she had this conversation with Sara months ago and explained her, the Task Force decision based on poverty levels, easy access to the USA, an area that does not currently have a large flow of mission dollars going in, an under-served region, among other reasons.

Alonzo stated that he had a conversation with Rebecca about the strategic followed to pick up the focus country and may the National Committee need to review it.

Karen stated that the selection of a focus country needs to happen beyond the National Committee. She proposed to involve the Presbyteries. She also wondered why the focus country work was limited to 6 years.

Teresa explained that the document that the International Task Force approved back in 2006 explained why the 6 years period was established.

Alonzo stated that SDOP needs to frame the work in Panama. One of the Presbyterian center priorities is to focus the work on poverty issues. People may think that Panama is a prosperous economy country and this team visits has proved otherwise. He also mentioned that Christian Iosso, Coordinator of the ACSWAP in the building is working in a document about Panama and he will ask him to share with him and the SDOP National Committee.

Alonzo mentioned that a Central America initiative can be developed by the International Task Force, based in the work in Belize, Panama, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Susan asked Alonzo to write down his idea about this and present it in January during the National meeting in Albuquerque.

Karen asked Teresa how she contacted the different groups that the team has met during this visit and the driver. Teresa explained that a friend recommended a Sociologist, Xiomara Rodriguez, who has a large experience with community and grassroot groups in Panama. She contacted her and has been working with her to identify these groups for quite some time. Teresa sent them the SDOP website information and they have exchanged flyers and information regarding all these parties. Xiomara recommended the driver too.

Karen stated that this team has met with very good community groups and that this kind of reach out followed by Teresa in this trip to Panama was very successful. She recommended that the National Committee members can do the same in the states.

Susan shared with the group that during this trip to Panama she has divided the translation work with Teresa and it has been very hard for her. Even when she is willing to do it, it limits her capacity as International Task Force Chairperson during the conversation with the community groups and partners. The team decided to discuss this in the future and analyze the possibility to hire an in-country interpreter.

Susan will work in a summary document of this trip to be shared with the entire committee. She will send a draft to this team by December 21 to ask for comments/input. Teresa will be on vacation but will get back with the group when she returns from her vacation trip.

Karen will follow up with Phil and brief him on the trip. Susan will follow up with Rebecca (including asking the question about sharing issues regarding Belize fisherfolks cooperative complaints with the national committee).

The International Task Force Chairperson needs to report to the National Committee zoom call in December 6, the approval of the grants of CE-MUJER and Presbyterian Church of Rwanda for \$25,00 each, and the \$3,000 Technical assistance grant to Seine Bight Village Council in Belize. Also, she will offer highlights of this Panama trip.

The team discussed the schedule for future meetings in Panama. Teresa stated that in the past the International Task Force planned two visits in a year to the focus country. Mainly in the beginning of the year, in February, and in the summer or fall. Staff was asked to make a recommendation and present it in the January meeting.

The team decided to ask for the International Task Force members approval to extend an invitation to a zoom call to the following groups visited this week: CEMP, Center of Panamanian Women, and the Seamstress women, Crafts "Art and Beauty", who are potential partners. During this zoom call the Task Force will encourage the groups to complete the international application and submit it to review it and be able to do a site visit during the next trip.

Staff was asked to check if the visits done to these two groups can be considered site visit.

Teresa was asked to check with Xiomara Rodriguez if traveling during the Presidential election period is not a safety issue for the group. Panama Presidential election will be in May 2019.

The Zoom call meeting adjourned at 4: 40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Teresa Bidart