

Are you thinking about taking responsibility for sending a team or volunteer on short-term mission?

The following are questions designed for Church leaders and/or Agency planners to help think through the implications of sending a short-term mission team overseas and planning a response.

The aim of this document is to help think through the practical implications of leading a short-term mission trip and so should be read alongside the Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission - www.globalconnections.co.uk/thecode. As with the code, this document is based on the assumption that the partners in a short-term mission programme are:

- Participant(s)
- Senders (church and/or agency)
- Hosts (church, individual and/or agency)

THINKING

- Is it necessary to be involved in short-term mission independently or are there partner organisations you should link with either for the full trip or different elements of the programme and/or planning?
- Have you thought through your Biblical understanding of short-term mission and can you respond to questions from church leaders and the Christian general public on this?
- Why go?
 - MOTIVATION - Who approached who about doing this trip and why? What is your motivation in sending and what is your understanding of the motivation of the participants and hosts?
 - EXPECTATIONS - Who is expected to benefit and how? What will you do if your expectations are not met?
 - MONEY – who funds what and how? What are the implications for the relationship with the hosts and sustainability for the ministry? Are you creating dependency?
- What do you plan to achieve through this trip? What do you want to get out of the experience – for the participant, sender and host?
- Who is sending the team? How does the sending church leadership feel about the trip? Is there any one person or group who will oversee the planning if it is for a church-based team? Who will support participants before, during and after, financially, spiritually and emotionally?
- Where are you planning to send people and when? Who decides on the timing – the sender or the host in terms of the time of year and the arrival and departure of flights?
- How does the trip fit within the long-term vision of the sender and the host? How will the experience be rooted in the communal life of the local church in both contexts?

ORGANISING

- Have you talked with your host about ...
 - How does your host see the relationship with you? Is there a sense that this is two-way?
 - Is there clarity on who is responsible to do what in organising for the individual's or team's visit? Is there mutual agreement about when different elements of the organisation will be completed by?
 - What are their expectations of the individual/team?
 - What previous experiences they have had with individuals and/or teams?
 - What is their understanding of common terms, different concepts of authority and issues of gender roles?
 - Who is putting together the programme? How much free time and rest time is being planned?
- Who should go? Take a look at the paper 'recruitment for short-term mission programmes'; at www.globalconnections.co.uk/stmpapers
 - Do you have clearly defined selection criteria?

- Has your publicity for the trip given clear and concise information: Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- Have you thought through the necessary skills needed?
- Do you know the issues and implications related to the health, fitness and age of participants in terms of insurance and legal implications?
- If you are sending a team, do you expect everyone to be a Christian?
- How are you planning to interview prospective volunteers?
- What about the practical details?
 - If you are going overseas, who is responsible for providing travel health advice and medical clearance? For specialists in overseas healthcare, contact Interhealth in London – www.interhealth.org.uk - or Healthlink360 in Edinburgh. [HealthLink360 is an agency formed from the merger of Edinburgh International Health Centre - www.eihc.org - and Medserve - www.medeserve.org.]
 - Who organises what? Visas, flights
 - Will you use a travel agent?
- What about child protection?
 - Have you had CRB checks? Go to www.globalconnections.co.uk/standards
 - Are you aware of current law on child protection? If you are going overseas, have you looked at the guidelines on child protection in an overseas context? Take a look at www.globalconnections.co.uk/standards
 - Have you considered the implications of sending under 18s and/or under 16s
- Who is leading the team? How is the leader/leadership team selected and prepared?
- What are the essential components for orientation? Will there be systematic training before going into the host's context? Will there be cross-cultural training once the individual or team has arrived in the host's context? See section 2.7 of the code - www.globalconnections.co.uk/thecode
- What if it all goes wrong? Take a look at the 'Security Preparation Handbook' at www.globalconnections.co.uk/stmpapers
 - Have you done a risk assessment?
 - If you are going overseas, have you taken political advice on the state of country – www.fco.gov.uk
 - Do you have lists of everyone's next of kin?
 - Do you have an emergency plan?
 - If you are sending a team, will you use one insurance company or many? Who will contact lots of insurance companies if something goes wrong?

DOING

- How are you going to help the participant grow spiritually during the experience?
- Are those you are sending willing to accept that some things are not 'their' role to change?
- How will the individual/team communicate back home? Do you need to plan the frequency and nature of this communication?
- If the individual/team is going into a context where another language is spoken, how will they communicate there?
- Are there mechanisms for helping participants think through the appropriateness of their behaviour in that context?
- What happens if plan A doesn't work out and participants feel their expectations are not met?
- How are difficult team relationships going to be handled?
- Who takes ultimate responsibility for the team – the hosts or the team leader?
- What happens when someone gets sick or needs medical help?
- How will money matters be handled?
- Will there be ongoing debriefing to help participants learn from mistakes and grow through their experience?

RETURNING

- How are participants being prepared for returning home?
- What debriefing will be provided, when and by whom? Consider coming to the Short-Term Mission Forum on debriefing in October 2007 - www.globalconnections.co.uk/STF07.

Alternatively, InterHealth (info@interhealth.org.uk) or HealthLink360 (admin@eihc.org) both offer confidential personal review on return from overseas.

- What procedures are there for referring participants for ongoing counselling after the event, if required?
- How will participants be linked to further opportunities or training if this experience has led them to a longer-term calling to mission? Consider looking at the Christian Vocations website for more information - <http://christianvocations.org/>
- How will the participant's home church be prepared for receiving the individual or team back?
- What mechanisms are there for gathering feedback from all the partners, including the hosts?

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