

Communicating with the missionary you are visiting

Short Term Teams can be a tremendous help and blessing to the missionary and the national church while also building relationships with and support for the mission agency (that may be sponsoring the trip or caring for the missionary on the field). This blessing and help is maximised when there is good communication between the team leader, the personnel on the field and the mission agency.

Check early on in your planning if the missionary and/or the mission agency the missionary you are visiting has procedures in place that you need to follow in preparing your trip. Don't begin to plan without discussing your ideas with them really early on. Questions you might like to ask are:

- Is it appropriate for a team from our church to come and work along side you in ministry for a period of time?

- When, if it is appropriate for the team to visit, would be the most suitable time for you for us to come? (Yes you need to work in with the university holidays in Australia but the needs of the team on the ground also need to be taken into account.)

- What length should the trip be? (You do want to be a blessing not a burden)
- How many people should come on the team? (This might be important to make for ease of transport and accommodation but also because you don't want to overwhelm the small local Christian community or put undue strain on their resources of food or water.)
- What type of people should come? eg. youth, married couples, singles, retirees, skilled workers, gift ministry, mix of the above

- What type of work/ministry can we be involved in? (Do what they need you to do, don't impose a building team on a missionary who is asking for assistance in running a children's holiday program. Listen to their needs and serve them – don't impose your own desires over their needs.)
- Are there any restrictions on who can minister? (In some cultures there may be restrictions on women ministering to men or it may be better for older team members to do bible teaching to some groups.)

- When your team is selected give your field contact a brief synopsis of each team member including age, marital status, skills etc.

- As the time of the trip draws closer firm up the teams schedule with your field contact, including flight times, day's off and activities throughout the trip. **(Hint: make sure you**

schedule in orientation with your field contact when you first arrive, also make sure you have time for team meetings every day, team prayer times and debriefing at the end of the trip with the team and importantly with the missionary before you leave to return home.)

Communicating with national leaders

Short Term Teams can be a tremendous help and blessing to the missionary and national church alike. This blessing and help is assured when there is good communication between the team and the national leadership. Important Attitudes:

As a team you are going as invited guests. You are crossing into another culture. Much will be different. Your role is not to change them, but to be open to learning new things yourself.

- Go with an attitude of a learner
- Be flexible
- Always be gracious, courteous and polite
- Eat what is offered by nationals (Luke 10:8)
- Be aware of cross-cultural considerations, if in doubt ask!
- Pray that God will accomplish his purpose and plans in and thorough the national church and its leadership; pray that your team will be a blessing to them; pray that you will have servant hearts, willing to serve in whatever capacity is necessary
 - Learn and follow the cultural norms about appropriate interpersonal interaction (If it's not culturally appropriate for men and women to touch, it is not okay for you to hug team members in public)
 - Always respect the national leaders – they do know more about their country and context than you do.
 - You may not agree with the restrictions they have on who can minister to whom (e.g. they may believe that women can't teach men) but you need to be subject to their authority and graciously observe their practice
 - Wearing appropriate clothing is a way you bring honor to the Lord Jesus. Many cultures 'dress up' much more for church than we do, if you are leading public ministry make sure you understand if you need to wear a coat and tie; liturgical robes or if you are a woman if wearing a dress is more appropriate than wearing trousers
 - Don't promise to do things upon return to Australia that you are not prepared to follow through on
 - Learn some of their language and use it as much as possible when speaking with people
 - Do your homework before you go so that your teaching and conversation shows some understanding of the local ministry and social context
 - Always be on the lookout for what you can learn about this ministry context that may help you reflect on your own ministry at home – consider the question 'what can these leaders teach me?'