



FMMW
FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS
VISA

Team Leader Guidebook

VISA

VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE ABROAD

©2025

Version 1.2

Free Methodist World Missions | VISA

5235 Decatur Blvd.

Indianapolis, IN 46241

Mailing Address

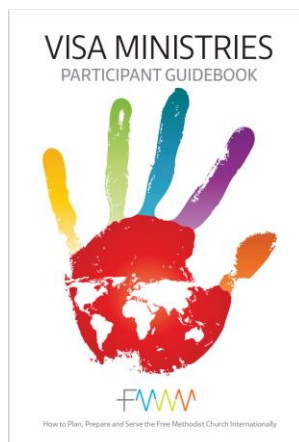
PO Box 51710

Indianapolis, IN 46251

Email: go@fmcusa.org

Website: FMWM.org

This guidebook is designed to be a resource for team leaders participating in ministry with Free Methodist World Missions. It may be reproduced without permission when used for this purpose. For other purposes, contact Free Methodist World Missions to explore possibilities.



A softbound **VISA Ministries Participant Guidebook**, which includes a 2-week devotional journal and reflection pages for team members after returning home, is available while supplies last.



Hello, and thank you so much for your interest in coordinating or leading a VISA team! We are truly grateful for the incredible gift of time, talent, and resources that your team is generously offering to Free Methodist World Missions. We are privileged to partner with you on this exciting journey.

We've put together this guidebook with the utmost care to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of what it means to uphold the highest standards in short-term missions. Our experts in tax law, risk management, and liability issues have thoroughly reviewed it, ensuring you have the most accurate information about the ins and outs of short-term missions.

Whether participating on a VISA team is a new experience for you or some of your team members, we're here to make the process as smooth as possible. If you're curious about the available opportunities, our dedicated staff can connect you to Free Methodist ministry based on your team's skills, ministry interests, or other preferences. We recognize that things might feel a bit overwhelming at first, but please know you're not alone in this! This guidebook is designed to be your companion, and VISA staff are ready and eager to assist you in any way we can.

It's worth mentioning that VISA staff have helped approximately 20,000 individuals in serving the Free Methodist Church internationally since 1964, and we are genuinely excited about the prospect of assisting you on this meaningful journey. We look forward to working together and making your experience with Free Methodist World Missions a rewarding and fulfilling one!

Thanks for Serving!

Debra L. Miller

Free Methodist World Missions | VISA (Volunteer Ministries)

Table of Contents

Terms of Use	1
Thanks for Serving	2
Part 1 – INTRODUCTION	7
Volunteering with Free Methodist World Missions	7
Volunteer Service Defined	8
VISA Teams	9
VISA Fast Assignments	9
VISA Voyagers Assignments	9
The Importance of Working Together	9
The Role of VISA Staff	10
PART 2 - CHECKLIST AND STANDARDS	11
Basic Checklist for VISA Team Leaders	11
Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions	13
PART 3 - VITAL INFORMATION FOR ORGANIZATIONS SENDING TEAMS	15
The Importance of Team Member Selection	15
Traveling with Minors	16
Minimizing Liability	17
Financial Considerations	17
Charitable Contributions	18
Team Members are not a Qualifying Charity for Tax Deductions	18
Official Board Approval	18
Providing Training	19
Dealing with Safety, Security, and Emergencies	19
Free Methodist World Missions – Policy on RANSOM	21
Procedure for Ministry Cancellation	21
Green Light	21
Yellow Light	22
Red Light	23

PART 4 – INFORMATION FOR TEAM LEADERS	24
Comprehensive Team Leader Checklist	25
What to Expect if You're a Team Leader?	28
Travel Health Insurance – Information for Team Leaders	29
In Case of an Emergency	31
An Overview of What to Expect.....	31
If an Emergency Occurs.....	32
Designate an Advocate.....	32
For Illness or Injury Involving Ongoing Medical Treatment	33
Evacuation	33
What if the Emergency Isn't All That Serious?	34
Suggestions to Avoid Getting Caught in a Bind	34
Non-Medical Crisis Management.....	34
Filing a Claim	35
Recommended Resources.....	35
PART 5 - TEAM ORIENTATION.....	37
Training and Orientation Guidelines	37
Training and Orientation Topics	38
Topics to Discuss with Your Receiving Host	40
Team Covenant	40
Sample Team Covenants.....	42
Personal Covenant	44
Team Building Strategy	46
Eight Unique Traits that Separate "Teams" from "Groups"	46
Part 6 PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR TEAM MEMBERS.....	49
Team Member Checklist.....	49
Safety and Security.....	51
Travel Health Insurance – Information for Team Members.....	52
In The Event of an Emergency.....	53
Background Checks	57

Packing Tips.....	57
Baggage Information	59
Guidelines for a Positive Cross-Cultural Experience	60
Good Relationships Aren't Automatic.....	62
Six Tips for Building Harmony with Co-Workers on the Field.....	62
Unwanted Baggage	63
Developing and Writing Your Testimony	64
Tips for Speaking and Preaching Using a Translator	66
PART 7 – FUNDRAISING GUIDE	68
Guiding Values	68
Donations	69
Support Letters	70
Sample Support Letter.....	71
Event Efforts	72
Saving	73
Earning	74
PART 8 – SPIRITUAL PREPARATION	76
Expectations	76
Realistic Plans for Short-Term Mission	76
The Life-Changing Possibilities of Short-Term Missions.....	78
Shape Up For Mission:	79
Learners, Servants, and Storytellers	84
PART 9 – RE-ENTRY	86
Ready for Anything.....	86
Transforming a Trip	88
Turning a Negative Trip into a Positive Memory	88
Extending Your Trip.....	89
Six Disciplines to Make the Benefits of a Short-Term Experience Last for the Whole of Your Life.....	89
The Partnership Challenge	90

The Best Short-Term Mission Trips Have Strong Links With National Churches	90
PART 10 – SAMPLE FORMS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR TEAM.....	93
SAMPLE Team Member Application.....	94
Sample Interview Questions for team Members	96
Sample Team Member Reference Form	98
Sample Missions Trip Health and Emergency Form.....	100

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS:

FM = Free Methodist

FMC = Free Methodist Church

FMCUSA = Free Methodist Church USA

FMWM = Free Methodist World Missions, *the missions agency of the FMCUSA*

STM = **Short-Term Missions**

Sponsoring organization = the sending church, conference, college or university

VISA = Volunteers In Service Abroad, *the name used by FMWM to categorize volunteer ministry*

VISA Staff = Free Methodist World Missions staff who work with volunteers

Photo credit:

ShareFaith Media Stock Photos – cover and page 1
 Photo by [Glenn Carstens-Peters](#) on Unsplash – page 11
 Photo by [Ian Schneider](#) on Unsplash – page 15
 Photo by [Markus Spiske](#) on Unsplash – page 25
 Photo by [Parabol | The Agile Meeting Toolbox](#) on Unsplash –page 37
 Photo by [Dylan Gillis](#) on Unsplash – page 49
 Photo by [Alexander Grey](#) on Unsplash – page 68
 Photo by [Adrianna Geo](#) on Unsplash – page 76
 Photo by [Hannah Busing](#) on Unsplash – page 86
 Photo by [Viktor Bystrov](#) on Unsplash – page 93



PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

VOLUNTEERING WITH FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

In the 1960s and early 70s, a wave of volunteerism swept through American culture. In response to this cultural shift, the idea of sending volunteers to help with international Free Methodist missions was birthed in 1964 and coined as VISA (Volunteers In Service Abroad). While volunteering may not seem revolutionary by today's standards, it sparked a significant shift in thinking about missions within the evangelical community.

Previously, missionary service was primarily viewed as the domain of professionals such as seminary professors, pastors, doctors, nurses, and teachers. With the advent of short-term missions, for the first time in history, people from all walks of life were getting passports and traveling to places they would never have considered going (not even for vacation). The notion that people from any walk of life could be missionaries at home or abroad, irrespective of commitment length or traditional credentials, challenged established norms. Consequently, academics began questioning the wisdom of amateurs engaging in God's work, which prompted reevaluating what truly defines a missionary.

By the late 1980s, Christian publishers were routinely printing "how to" books on short-term missions, which made sense given the ease of travel and ability to fundraise ministry expenses. During this season, it wasn't uncommon for some churches to provide their youth with an international mission experience every 2 to 4 years. In 2006, missions researcher and author Roger Peterson reported that the US church sent over 2.2 million guests to engage in missions. Thirty percent went to Mexico, 30% engaged in domestic ministry somewhere in the US, and 40% went elsewhere in the world. The estimated cost for these mission endeavors totaled over 2 billion US dollars. Consequently, academics began questioning whether God's Kingdom received a decent return on investment.

With so much short-term missions activity happening (the Free Methodist Church included), it's no surprise that by the mid-2000s, books on short-term missions began focusing on the harm caused by short-term missions even though the intent of those serving was good. While these books had merit, one of the unique blessings of serving under the auspices of the Free Methodist Church was the checks and balances in place so that ministry initiatives were at the invitation of the national church and not necessarily *imposed on the national church*. While not perfect, FMWM has maintained high standards for short-term missions and avoided many problems that could have otherwise tarnished long-term ministry objectives and initiatives.

More recently, the question pondered in missions literature is, "Who is a missionary?" The question no longer resides in the context of short-term vs. long-term service or the missionaries' credentials. Instead, the focus has shifted to where the missionaries originate from and where they dedicate their service. In the 19th and 20th centuries, missionaries were most likely from Europe or North America. This is no longer the situation due to global migration trends and an increasing number of non-Western missionaries.

As you serve the worldwide Free Methodist Church today, you'll likely work with a US, International, or Affiliate missionary or a national leader. Whatever term is used these days to identify a missionary, we're for it if it expresses obedience to God and telling others about His plan for salvation. And we're glad you're for it, too, or you wouldn't be reading this guidebook.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE DEFINED

VISA (Volunteers In Service Abroad) is the avenue to connect volunteers from the United States with Free Methodist ministry worldwide. The focus for all assignments contributes to the ongoing development of international Free Methodist ministry.

VISA operates as a collaborative initiative involving the sponsoring organization, typically a local church (though occasionally a conference or a Free Methodist college or university), the individuals and teams embarking on the mission, and the receiving missionaries and nationals. Each VISA assignment is characterized by a clearly outlined ministry purpose and a structured accountability framework.

People can be involved as a volunteer in the following ways:

VISA TEAMS

Free Methodist churches, conferences, colleges, and universities can sponsor VISA teams. These teams contribute support through various avenues, such as construction projects, English and sports camps, VBS children's ministry, prayer journeys, medical initiatives, and more. The experience is typically 10 to 15 days, with team members volunteering their time and resources to participate. The sponsoring organization raises funds beforehand to cover the costs of essential ministry materials, ensuring everything is prepared before the team's arrival.

VISA FAST ASSIGNMENTS

VISA Fast Track assignments cater to adults and families seeking to contribute to Free Methodist ministry for weeks or months. The application process is expedited when missionaries or national leaders are already acquainted with volunteers and have a specific ministry project in mind for them. In cases where individuals are unknown, there is a qualifying process before matching individuals with suitable ministry assignments.

VISA VOYAGERS ASSIGNMENTS

VISA Voyager assignments are for adults and families desiring to serve between six months and two years. After completing an application and referencing process, volunteers are matched with opportunities according to their interests and ministry needs.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER

When it comes to getting involved in cross-cultural ministry, we've noticed that people with an entrepreneurial spirit often take the lead. They get an idea, and it gains momentum as they run with it. FMWM values these energetic self-starters because they make team ministry happen; on the other hand, there would be chaos if everyone engaging in Free Methodist missions created their own processes and there were no checks and balances. It wastes time, energy, and money to reinvent existing systems, and it can create confusion within the national church when people send themselves and there aren't clear lines of authority.

We're genuinely excited to collaborate with Free Methodists across the USA as they engage with us in Free Methodist international ministry! Our primary aim is to encourage and support the sponsoring organization's enthusiasm and initiative rather than hinder it. That's why we are sharing our best practices on sending well-prepared teams, drawing from the valuable lessons learned through the experiences of teams and individuals who have generously shared their insights.

THE ROLE OF VISA STAFF

The Free Methodist Church USA does not have a monopoly on international ministry. However, if people want to connect with the ever-growing opportunities within FMWM, we have systems and staff to help the sponsoring organization orchestrate a well-designed ministry that benefits everyone involved (i.e., the people in the pew, donors, nationals, etc.).

VISA staff understand that mission logistics are more an art than a science. What works perfectly in one location might need a tweak in another. The absence of issues one year doesn't guarantee a trouble-free mission trip the next. VISA staff have years of international experience on the sending and receiving side of missions and can be a terrific resource when the best-laid plans encounter unexpected challenges.

When sponsoring organizations partner with FMWM and send a VISA team, they can be sure the ministry is not only wanted by the national church but also aligned with long-term strategies. They can also rest assured that VISA staff will never ask a team to do something “because it’s always been done that way.” Instead, VISA staff are empowered to stay current with best practices, remove unnecessary barriers and streamline paperwork. Every aspect of team processing, including background checks and travel health insurance, is for the good of the sponsoring organization, the team member, FMWM, and the national church.

While we typically like to focus on what we do, sometimes what we refrain from doing is equally significant. This is the case with VISA staff when it comes to team projects. VISA staff will never take over and dictate team experiences. Team experiences are best left in the hands of team leaders and the designated contact person in the host country.

If you’re reading this and your organization doesn’t yet have a ministry project, VISA staff can help connect you. After your team is linked with a ministry, most project planning details will be shared by a contact person in the host country. For a seamless experience, include VISA staff in your email communications (**go@fmcusa.org**) – it's like having an extra set of eyes watching out for your best interests.



Hyperlinks are embedded throughout this publication to connect you to supporting text.



PART 2 - CHECKLIST AND STANDARDS

BASIC CHECKLIST FOR VISA TEAM LEADERS

☐ **Pick a project.**

If you don't have a particular ministry or country in mind, VISA staff will help guide you. If you've already contacted a missionary or national leader about a project, we'd be grateful for the heads-up so we can serve you more efficiently.



Once VISA staff know about your team, they will inform the appropriate people so behind-the-scenes details are handled.

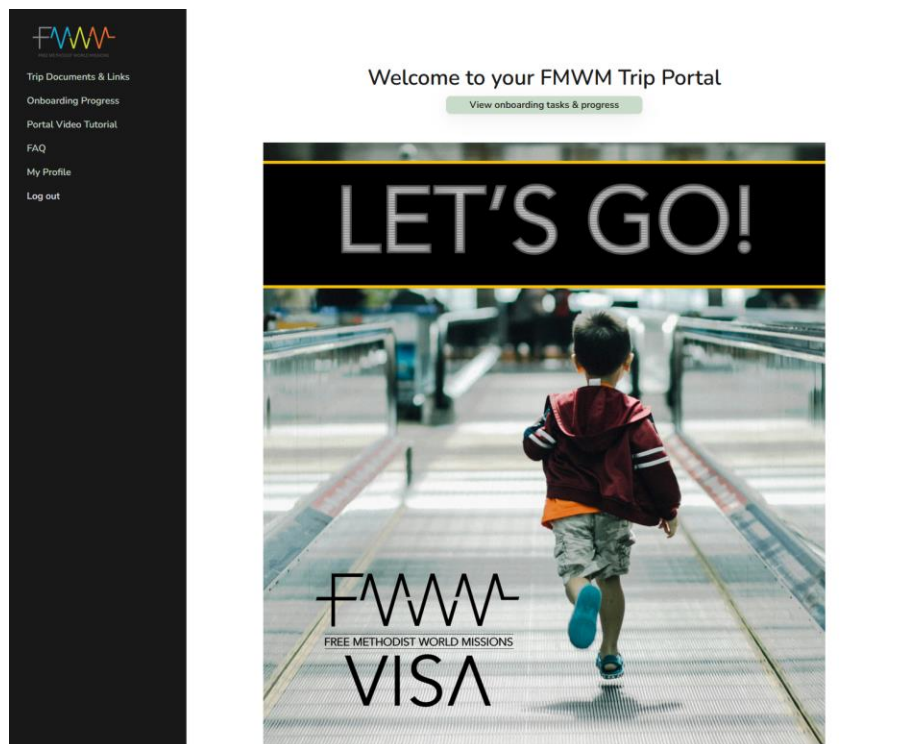
☐ **Familiarize yourself with the 7 Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions**

- ❑ **Screen team members.** Keep records of the screening process.
- ❑ **Obtain official church board approval** for the team leader, each team member, and the team budget.

Board approval:

- Ensures the church is sanctioning the ministry and helps avoid unintentional conflicts with other ministries or church-wide goals.
 - Provides financial transparency for charitable contributions.
 - Enhances collaboration. The board often includes experienced leaders who can provide valuable advice or guidance.
 - Helps mitigate liability when the board reviews potential risks, travel safety, insurance coverage, or reputational concerns.
 - Demonstrates ministry legitimacy with the congregation.
- ❑ **Email the VISA office (go@fmcusa.org) with the email addresses of your team members.** VISA staff will invite your team members to use a web-based portal to register and care for essential FMWM “paperwork.”

Example Portal Homepage



- ❑ **Review information on fundraising and calculate expenses.** VISA staff and/or your field coordinator will help you.

- ❑ **Enlist prayer support.**
- ❑ **Provide a thorough orientation** for team members.
- ❑ About two weeks before departure **remind team members to review their portal and download their Travel Health Insurance Enrollment card and accompanying memo.** Since travel insurance is non-refundable, VISA staff have found it best to sign people up 2 to 3 weeks prior to their departure.
- ❑ Make plans so that at least **one person on the team sets their phone up for international coverage (beyond wifi).**

Why?

- Wifi isn't always reliable in some locations.
- The cost of international service maybe cheaper if set up prior to leaving home on a global plan.
- Having a phone for emergency use can be priceless.
- **Whats App, Signal and other similar apps that use wifi do not allow businesses to have accounts.** Having a way to call an airline, a hotel, the police, the assistance company associated with your travel health plan *or order pizza*, could come in very handy.

- ❑ **Plan for follow-up and debriefing** when your team returns from the field.

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

The following **7 Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions** can be found at <https://missionexcellence.global/7-standards/>. When these seven standards are implemented, it demonstrates that the sponsoring organization values the professional nature of missions and the need for competence.

1. **God-Centeredness** An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom and is expressed through our:
 - Purpose — Centering on God's glory and his ends throughout our entire STM process
 - Lives — Sound biblical doctrine, persistent prayer, and godliness in our thoughts, words, and deeds
 - Methods — Wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate methods that bear spiritual fruit

2. **Empowering Partnerships** An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, ongoing relationships between sending and receiving partners and is expressed by:
 - The primary focus is on the people who will receive our team and the mission activity provided
 - Plans that benefit all participants
 - Mutual trust and accountability
3. **Mutual Design** An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants and is expressed by:
 - On-field methods and activities aligned with the long-term strategies of the partnership
 - Our team's ability to implement their part of the plan
 - The receiving hosts' ability to implement their part of the plan
4. **Comprehensive Administration** An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants and is expressed by:
 - Truthfulness in promotion, finances, and reporting results
 - Appropriate risk management
 - Quality program delivery and support logistics
5. **Qualified Leadership** An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants and is expressed by:
 - Character — Spiritually mature servant leadership
 - Skills — Prepared, competent, organized, and accountable leadership
 - Values — Empowering and equipping leadership
6. **Appropriate Training** An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach and is expressed by:
 - Biblical, appropriate, and timely training
 - Ongoing training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
 - Qualified trainers
7. **Thorough Follow-Through** An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing, and appropriate follow-through for all participants and is expressed by:
 - Comprehensive debriefing of all participants (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
 - Thoughtful and appropriate follow-through for goer-guests
 - On-field and post-field evaluation among sending and receiving partners



PART 3 - VITAL INFORMATION FOR ORGANIZATIONS SENDING TEAMS

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM MEMBER SELECTION

One of the wisest things the sponsoring organization can do is to select team members carefully. The sponsoring organization needs to be very clear about the purpose of the ministry team and thoroughly think through the qualifications necessary for participation. Team members need to exhibit a certain level of maturity to participate. It is advisable to create a written record of the selection efforts. This documentation serves as a means for the sponsoring organization to demonstrate the steps taken in the selection process in the event of a dispute.

CLAIMS AGAINST CHURCHES

“Increasingly, the courts are allowing claims against churches on the basis of negligent selection, supervision, and retention as a basis for liability. This means that even if the church would not otherwise have been liable for the illegal or harmful conduct of one of its agents, negligence in its selection or supervision of the person will make the church liable on that basis.”

~ D. Kasper, “Legal and Liability Issues,” The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994).

Whether the participants are employees of the sponsoring organization or volunteers, they are agents of the sponsoring organization, making the sponsoring organization responsible for their conduct. It may not be comfortable to turn someone away, but dealing with it "at home" is better than dealing with it after an international incident.

Since the sponsoring organization is responsible for the conduct of its volunteers, it's imperative that it provides adequate training and supervision so that volunteers do not cause spiritual, physical, or emotional harm to each other or those they serve. See [sample screening forms](#).

TRAVELING WITH MINORS

If there are plans to include minors on a team not specifically set up as a youth team, talk with VISA staff. In some cases, traveling with minors can be difficult, particularly when trying to leave a foreign country. It's also possible the national church and field mission may not be equipped to deal with minors. Factors to remember when considering taking minors include the type of ministry project, charitable contribution laws, housing logistics, health and safety issues, and immigration regulations.

In situations where there has been divorce or separation, written permission from both parents of a minor is essential, along with a copy of any separation or divorce decree. If only one parent is accompanying the child, we also recommend carrying written permission from the absent parent. Out of concern for the safety and welfare of minors, FMWM reserves the right to question the advisability of minors traveling without a parent or legal guardian. The sponsoring organization is responsible for the conduct of its volunteers. It should provide adequate training and supervision so that volunteers do not cause spiritual, physical, or emotional harm to each other or those they serve.

MINIMIZING LIABILITY

The sponsoring organization should be sensitive to its legal obligations to avoid reasonable risk of harm to its employees and the volunteers participating on a VISA team. This applies when choosing a country of ministry, the ages of the participants, and the type of work involved.

The sponsoring organization should review its insurance policy as it relates to its liability. Their general liability policy may not cover overseas events, but **the travel insurance team members get when registering through VISA provides 1 million dollars of general liability coverage.**

Free Methodist World Missions' legal counsel recommends informing team members about potential risks associated with travel and team participation. Common risks may include illness, injury, theft, kidnapping, and accidental death. When evaluating these risks, it is essential to consider the nature of the work, the individual's overall health, and the political stability of the destination country.

DOCUMENTING INFORMED CONSENT

One of the simplest ways for the sponsoring organization to cover its bases and document that team members are aware of the risks associated with international travel is to have team members review travel advisory reports, such as [Travel.State.gov](https://travel.state.gov) > International Travel > Learn About Your Destination and then acknowledge in writing that they've read it with a statement something like this: ***I confirm that I have reviewed the Travel.State.gov website and read the information about my team's ministry country. By signing below, I acknowledge and accept all risks associated with travel to, from, and within [name of country].*** Keep a copy of the team member's signatures for church records.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

VISA team ministry is a volunteer ministry, meaning that FMWM does not pay people to volunteer their services. Each sponsoring organization may have its own way of determining the individual team members' expenses and what expenses the organization will cover.

It's typical for team members to be responsible for their portion of the ministry expenses. This includes international transportation costs, food, lodging, travel insurance, immunizations, and travel documents. In-country costs vary depending on location. Some sponsoring organizations ask that team members contribute to the cost of ministry, while other organizations cover ministry expenses out of their budget or a special fund.

Regardless of what team members are asked to contribute, the sponsoring organization assumes responsibility for covering ministry costs. Fundraising for a team project allows the entire organization to get behind the project and take ownership of it. A construction project generally requires a minimum of US \$5,000, which provides for ongoing work at the ministry site. Other projects' costs vary, but US \$5,000 is a reasonable estimate.

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

For the sponsoring organization to provide legitimacy for charitable contribution receipts, they must approve a budget reflecting the amount necessary for the VISA team project. It is important to make the budget as accurate as possible. Monies in excess of the approved budget can, by law, be used at the discretion of the sponsoring organization and cannot be refunded to individual contributors. Your field contact can help determine the amounts needed to complete the budget.

TEAM MEMBERS ARE NOT A QUALIFYING CHARITY FOR TAX DEDUCTIONS

The IRS will only honor charitable contributions if they are explicitly given to a recognized charity for their ministry. The receiving charity must be free to use the money as it sees fit. **Contributions given to individuals are not tax deductible.** However, the tax deduction will be preserved if a participant in a program is required to raise funds as part of their *participation in the program* (as opposed to raising funds to cover the cost of their trip). It's a fine line of distinction, but it's critical to understand the IRS's viewpoint. Please consult an accounting professional if you have further questions.

OFFICIAL BOARD APPROVAL

When sending a VISA team, following the applicable laws and standards defining charitable work is essential. Tax-exempt status can be lost if the proper procedures aren't followed. This is why it's essential to include an item in the sponsoring organization's official board minutes reflecting formal approval of the VISA team project, naming the team members, and specifying the project budget amount.

Obtaining formal approval might not be as straightforward as the sample motion below suggests. In some cases, the project may be generally accepted even before team members are identified or the budget is fully determined. It's still important to cover the bases with board approval for the team members and for the budget.

SAMPLE MOTION INDICATING BOARD APPROVAL

“The (church/conference) hereby approves sending a VISA team consisting of (name) as team leader and (names of individuals) to minister in (country) and help with (type of ministry). This project has been sanctioned by FMWM. We also approve the establishment of a VISA team Ministry Project Fund, which can be funded by voluntary gifts from donors and applied to the VISA team Project Budget of \$(amount of budget).”

Free Methodist schools should follow their organizational policies related to getting approval from the institution.

PROVIDING TRAINING

Adequately training team members and coordinating details for overseas ministry typically requires a minimum of 6-9 months. The more informed your team is, the less likely they will encounter frustration with travel delays, work situations, living conditions, and cultural differences. Realistic expectations are crucial. Each team member should cultivate a servant's heart, being open and prepared to learn from their experience abroad.

Training and orientation can begin when team members are identified, screened, and committed to the project. You'll most likely begin with informational and organizational meetings, but formalized team training and ministry-focused orientation should be conducted weekly during the six weeks prior to departure. If you have team members geographically dispersed, consider utilizing virtual platforms like Zoom, Teams, or Google Meetings, or organize a one- or two-day training event.

Click for more information on [Team Orientation](#).

DEALING WITH SAFETY, SECURITY, AND EMERGENCIES

People want their mission experience to be as safe as a trip to the mall, but newspaper headlines tell us there are *no safe places*. Unfortunately, we live in an ever-increasing world of violence, with kidnappings, bombings, and assaults becoming a growing concern. When teams serve through VISA, they benefit from FMWMs' collective wisdom related to safety, security, and emergency issues. FMWM subscribes to security bulletins for up-to-date travel information and places significant trust in the advice of missionaries and national church leaders, particularly when assessing the feasibility of sending teams amidst emerging political troubles.

Anyone participating in ministry with FMWM is asked to use common sense as it relates to travel. They should be current with world events and familiar with US State Department travel warnings associated with their host country. They should also be alert to potential danger once they reach their destination and exercise caution in what they say about political affairs and established religions in their host country. It's also advisable that they have an up-to-date will before traveling.

If extenuating circumstances warrant FMWM to cancel any VISA ministry, we respectfully ask for compliance. FMWM and the receiving field will not assume any responsibility or liability if team members disregard the cancellation. While we know team members may understandably feel frustrated, especially since changes in travel plans are a personal expense, FMWM prioritizes the safety of team members over the cost of airline tickets and any associated inconvenience.

See also FMWM's procedure **for ministry cancellation**.

In discussing safety, it may come across that canceling ministry is common, but only a couple of teams have ever been canceled by FMWM for safety reasons in the past 60 years. Should cancellation become necessary, VISA staff will seek an alternative ministry site for the team if desired.

Participating on a VISA team is entirely voluntary, and team members should never feel pressured or obligated to serve if they change their minds. For those desiring financial protection in case of trip cancellation or interruption due to unforeseen reasons, obtaining trip cancellation insurance from a vendor of their choice is encouraged. To get the maximum value from the plan, trip cancellation policies typically must be purchased within 3 to 7 days of paying the first trip deposit or if no deposit is required when buying airline tickets.

OPTIONAL TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

If team members are interested in trip cancellation insurance, VISA staff may be able to provide an option that can be packaged with FMWMs travel health coverage.

While trip cancellation insurance is optional, travel health insurance is not. **All persons engaging with FMWM must obtain travel health insurance from FMWM, which is obtained as part of the VISA team registration process, and carry it for the full duration of their ministry.**

FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS – POLICY ON RANSOM

FMWM follows a policy of not making concessions to individuals or groups that take American citizens hostage and will not pay ransom. Paying ransom can have legal implications, and it may violate U.S. law. Additionally, it is generally discouraged due to the potential negative consequences, such as further endangering the individual or encouraging more kidnappings.

In the unfortunate event of a kidnapping, FMWM will seek the help of outside experts to help navigate such a crisis and will take the initiative in setting up a Crisis Management Team.

VIRTUAL KIDNAPPINGS

Note that there is a new threat to mission organizations, churches and volunteers called virtual kidnappings. For more information, Brotherhood Mutual has provided a helpful resource on their [website](#).

PROCEDURE FOR MINISTRY CANCELLATION

We've created greenlight, yellowlight, and redlight guidelines to help make an informed decision about whether to travel. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to VISA staff. We're here for you!



Green Light: Go – Take normal security precautions

- The in-country missionaries say it is safe to travel to the host country.
- No NEW State Department travel warnings contraindicating travel have been posted online. For USA travel warnings, see [Travel.State.Gov](#).
- No news media reports indicate health and safety risks or anti-American sentiment in the host country, although there may be reports in neighboring countries.

Anyone traveling for international ministry should register with the US State Department [STEP program](#) before arrival. STEP is an acronym for

Smart Travel Enrollment Program and is a free enrollment service to connect them with the local Consulate or US Embassy.



Yellow Light: Proceed with a High Degree of Caution (avoid non-essential travel)

- The in-country missionaries say it is safe to travel to the host country.
- NEW State Department travel warnings contraindicating travel have been posted on the Internet. For comparison purposes, check to see what Canada and the United Kingdom say in their travel advice.
 - USA: [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov).
 - CANADA: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
 - UNITED KINGDOM: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad>

News media reports indicate increased health and safety risks, an escalation of violence, or anti-American demonstrations in neighboring countries and/or the host country.

- Further information is needed. Check with appropriate government officials concerning travel warnings.
- Check the above Internet sites for travel warnings.
- Call the State Department.
- Call your homeland's embassy in the host country.
- Call the host country's embassy in your homeland.
- Check with your State Senator or State Representative.
- Check with FMWM/VISA staff.

If you choose to travel when conditions are in a "yellow light" status, you are required to create an evacuation plan. This plan must be discussed with and approved by FMWM. The missionaries or national leaders in the host country will help you develop and finalize your evacuation plan.

Evacuation Plan Details: (This list is not exhaustive)

- Chain of command: missionary, national host, team leader, and alternate team leader (in case others become unable to lead)
- Where to meet if separated
- The phone number and address of the appropriate embassy (or consulate office) given to every team member, along with telephone numbers of in-country contacts who could assist if needed

- How to keep a low profile
- What to say and what not to say if questioned by national authorities
- Airline names and phone numbers to arrange early return transportation if needed
- Extra cash for emergency
- The point person at home who is responsible for passing on the team's communications
- Register with the **US State Department [STEP program](#)** before arrival.

VISA missionaries are expected to follow the same evacuation procedures as FMWM missionaries.



Red Light: DO NOT TRAVEL

- The in-country missionaries say it is NOT safe.
- NEW State Department travel warnings contraindicating travel may have been posted online.
 - USA: [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov).
 - CANADA: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
 - UNITED KINGDOM: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad>
- The host country's US, Canadian, or UK Embassies advise avoiding all travel.
- News media reports indicate an escalation of health and safety risks, violence and/or anti-North American demonstrations in the host country in the area where the ministry will occur.



PART 4 – INFORMATION FOR TEAM LEADERS

See also the **Basic Checklist for VISA Team Leaders.**

COMPREHENSIVE TEAM LEADER CHECKLIST

Entry Point 1

YOU DON'T HAVE A PROJECT AND YOU'RE INTERESTED IN PUTTING TOGETHER A TEAM

Done	To Do
	Read/skim through this guidebook. Share the guidebook with your pastor, missions committee, or missions coordinator. Seek their counsel as to how things should unfold in your situation. Consider these things: How to advertise the team opportunity, team member selection, age consideration, deadlines, fundraising, safety concerns, liability, and type and timing of ministry.
	Work with VISA staff to be matched to a project.
	Check with the VISA staff to see if VISA Team Leader Training will be offered at a time you can attend.
	Work with VISA staff and the field contact to determine a team budget for your project.
	Refer to the <u>Basic Checklist for Team Leaders</u> . VISA staff do not need to see a copy of the minutes when an official board from your church has approved the team members and budget, but don't neglect this step as the benefits to your church are significant.
	<u>Skip to Entry Point 3.</u>

Entry Point 2

YOU'VE BEEN MATCHED TO A PROJECT AND HAVE YOUR TEAM

Done	To Do
	Read/skim through this guidebook.

	Check with the VISA staff to see if VISA Team Leader Training will be offered at a time you can attend.
	Refer to the <u>Basic Checklist for Team Leaders</u> . Sometimes, Team Leaders surface before the sponsoring organization knows what is developing. Review this list and make sure all the bases are covered.
	Work with VISA staff and the field contact to determine the team budget for your project.
	Continue to Entry Point 3.

Entry Point 3

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Done	To Do
	Narrow down the available dates for your team ministry and confirm your plans with VISA staff and the field contact person.
	Help raise interest in your church for the team ministry.
	Order any necessary team training materials. Review the <u>list of recommended resources</u> .
	Begin <u>team orientation</u> . Typically, a thorough orientation requires 8-12 meetings before departure. Be sure to discuss expectations with the team.
	Work with the field contact person to plan logistics. Copy VISA staff (<u>go@fmcusa.org</u>) with communication with the field.
	Determine what travel documents are necessary and provide instruction for team members on where to get the forms, how to complete them, and when they need this step completed.

	Make sure team members are aware of the necessary <u>vaccinations</u> . Some vaccinations require a series of injections over several months. Plan ahead.
	Team members should be made aware of the risks of travel. Ensure all team members review and read the information on recommended websites such as Travel.State.Gov .
	Work with the team to identify a team chaplain and develop a plan of <u>spiritual preparedness</u> . Team members should be prepared to give their testimony or clearly share in 3 minutes a relevant lesson the Lord has taught them.
	Have team members complete the <u>Health and Emergency Information Form</u> and keep these in a file to take with you. Consider having the form should be notarized. (Optional)
	If a team member <u>does not have stateside health insurance</u> , have them connect with VISA staff (go@fmcusa.org) for assistance. VISA staff can help research options from insurance companies that sell products to missionary sending agencies.
	Work with your pastor(s) to schedule a commissioning service for the team prior to departure.
	Have team members write a <u>Team or Personal Covenant</u> and sign,
	Send project money to the field if requested. Clarify when they need the money and how they want to receive it. It is not unusual for the field to request that more than 1/2 be sent to FMWM in Indianapolis <u>at least</u> 30 days prior to departure. Funds are transferred to the field mission for advance material purchases in such cases. The field may request that the balance be brought with you <u>in cash</u> .

	Make sure a prayer support strategy for the team is in full force. Three to four weeks before departure, verify the details related to the commissioning service with your pastor.
	Go over packing lists with team members.
	Work out transportation details to and from the airport.
	Confirm travel dates with VISA Ministries and the field.
	Ensure that passports, visas, and airline tickets are all in order and the documents are in your or a team member's possession. Carry passports, tickets, and money separately.
	About 2 -3 weeks before departure, VISA staff will sign your team up for insurance. Team members will see the information in their portal. About 7 days before departure they'll also get an email with their enrollment number and an insurance memo.
	Schedule a time of team debriefing on return, ideally within 2 weeks of return.



Team leaders, feel free to call or email any time in the process!

VISA staff will provide you with as much guidance as needed.

WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU'RE A TEAM LEADER?

We've all heard the adage, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right!" As a team leader, there might be times you find yourself thinking, "If it's worth doing . . . it's worth doing. Right?" This will be especially true when trying to pull all the loose

ends together. Getting quick and concrete answers to questions may not happen. In fact, there are probably as many variables to your questions as there are miles to your mission destination. The biggest thing to remember is that things will work out! You're not in this alone. VISA staff have worked with hundreds of team leaders and will help you, too. More importantly, God knows your concerns, and He still works miracles. Here are some of the most important things you need in preparation.

Support: As a team leader, it is vital to have the support and backing of your sponsoring organization. Don't take their financial backing and prayer support for granted. Keep them informed as prayer requests arise and as God answers them.

Unity: As a team leader, it is important to establish team "togetherness." This may not be easy if your team consists of people from different churches or wide age ranges. Nevertheless, an attitude of unity and cohesiveness is essential and will leave a positive impression on the nationals with whom you're going to serve. Consider hosting online meetings if gathering in person isn't feasible.

Research: One way to develop interest within the sponsoring organization and among the team is to have team members research information on your mission country. It will help satisfy their curiosity and promote unity as they share information.

Questions: Don't worry if you don't have the answers to *all* team questions. Some aspects of mission trips are a step of faith. But for the questions that really do need answers, either VISA staff or the field mission contact person will be able to help you. When emailing missionaries or national leaders, remember that they have other responsibilities besides coordinating your team and may be unable to answer your questions immediately. Allow some time between emails, and if you feel you're still not getting through, let VISA staff help.

Organization: As a team leader, you don't have to *do* everything; you just need to *pull it all together*. A good team leader needs organizational skills along with people skills. If organization isn't your forte, begin by making a list of everything that needs to get done and mark your calendar accordingly. The comprehensive **checklist** will be especially helpful. If you have team members who are good at organizing, delegate responsibilities and follow up as needed to ensure details are being covered in a timely manner.

TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE – INFORMATION FOR TEAM LEADERS

Because we care about our volunteers, FMWM has given considerable attention to ensuring you are in good hands in an emergency. **Great care has been taken to select the best travel health insurance policy for you while also taking care of liability concerns for FMWM and the sponsoring organization (church, conference, or school).** FMWM provides travel health insurance

through an independent international insurance agency specializing in insurance services for missionaries, and it is specifically designed for VISA volunteers.

All persons engaging with FMWM are required to obtain travel health insurance from FMWM and carry it for the full duration of their ministry.

Please note that this travel health insurance differs from the typical travel insurance you can easily purchase online. Claims are funded through a trust, and those processing claims have more freedom to give approval in situations of ambiguity than some travel health insurance policies that routinely deny claims on technicalities.

A typical travel health insurance plan excludes pre-existing medical conditions if not purchased within 7 to 14 days of paying a trip deposit (or in lieu of a deposit when getting airline tickets). Free Methodist World Missions' plan provides \$10,000 in primary medical expense benefits which does not exclude pre-existing conditions even when signed up at the last minute.



Should a team member happen to obtain travel health insurance on their own, they will still need to carry the travel health insurance required by FMWM. The primary reasons are:

#1

One million dollars of liability coverage is included in the plan provided by FMWM. This protects the Free Methodist Church USA, your sponsoring organization, and your host.

#2

It makes things easier for the people hosting the team. Should they need to intervene in an emergency, it cuts down on the chaos when they can get logistics support for everyone with one phone call. They can also enlist the help of VISA staff.

Team members are signed up for insurance by VISA staff, after they've completed the "onboarding" items in their portal. Their enrollment ID card will be uploaded to the portal by VISA staff about 2 to 3 weeks before departure. They will also get an email copy about 7 days before they leave as well a memo explaining what the plan covers and how to utilize it. They can save this in their phones for quick reference or find it in their portal on the "trip documents" page.

In the event of an emergency, refer to the memo and call **IMG Global Response**, the emergency assistance company associated with the insurance plan. IMG Global Response is located in the United Kingdom and they have staff in many other

countries so expect to hear English but with a non-U.S. accent. While we've had both minor and more serious situations occur during VISA service, if, in the unlikely event that you perceive the assistance company to be less responsive than expected, feel free to reach out to VISA staff. They know the lead IMG Response Team members and will directly advocate for you.

Although the travel health insurance plan is comprehensive, it's designed to complement existing health insurance plans and is not a major medical policy.

FMWM advocates for team members to have health insurance coverage in the United States in the event that they may require continued hospitalization upon their return home. If you have team members without US health insurance, have them connect with VISA staff as there may be short-term coverage available that they can research for them.

Travel Health Insurance rates vary based on age. For further questions about the plan or for pricing, contact VISA staff.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT TO EXPECT

IMG Global Response (the insurance assistance company) has staff available 24 hours a day to give guidance and help locate medical facilities, physicians, hospitals, and dentists. They also assist travelers in danger of being arrested as the result of any non-criminal action by helping them find English-speaking attorneys and help those who need to replace lost or stolen documents, such as passports, or personal items, such as luggage.

Contacting IMG Global Response is different from calling 911 for an ambulance, and they do not offer medical advice. Instead, their role involves collecting information and operating within the guidelines of the insurance policy to identify suitable medical facilities, physicians, hospitals, or dentists for your emergency situation.

IMG Global Response personnel are trained to ask key questions. If possible, be prepared to provide the travel health insurance enrollment number, the injured or ill person's name, date of birth, and present medical condition. Also, provide your contact information where you (the caller) can be reached, as well as the contact information for a secondary backup. If a hospital is involved, provide the name, phone number, and address of the hospital, the name and contact information of the attending physician, etc.

If you need additional help, don't hesitate to alert VISA staff, as they can readily provide IMG Global Response with enrollment, birthdate, and passport

information if you do not have this information handy.

In addition to IMG Global Response working behind the scenes, your hosts will provide as much on-the-ground assistance as possible.

IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS



Initiate medical care locally and expediently.

DO NOT DELAY EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER INSURANCE COVERAGE. These issues can be sorted out once the sick or injured person has been safely cared for.

Note that US health insurance cards (including travel health insurance enrollment ID cards) aren't generally recognized outside of the US, and cash payment is expected at the time of treatment.

For larger expenses, IMG Global Response will try to make arrangements with healthcare providers to avoid a cash deposit before obtaining treatment; however, the situation in some locations may make it necessary to withdraw money personally. Missionaries and national hosts will do what they can regarding banking issues. If they float a loan, be sure to reimburse them before leaving the country.

DESIGNATE AN ADVOCATE

Should a team member become sick or injured, follow the guidance of IMG Global Response. Depending on the situation, if a sick or injured person is admitted to a hospital, it may be best to designate a person (an advocate) to stay at their bedside, in shifts if necessary, until they are well or evacuated.

Advocates can help by connecting with medical personnel and taking notes on administered treatments. They can help keep IMG Global Response and others informed as appropriate.

Hospitals in some parts of the world may not follow the same standards for care that people are accustomed to in the US. If you're in a location where hospitals and clinics routinely reuse disposable needles and invasive equipment, advocates can help by inspecting all invasive equipment to verify it is sterile and not reused. If necessary, advocates can offer to pay a little extra for new invasive equipment.

When feasible, advocates can help by collecting documents necessary for reimbursement. Ideally, this includes getting the diagnosis in "legible" writing from the health care professionals. When collecting receipts, it's helpful to itemize

the hospital charges (medications, x-rays, etc.) separately from the physician's charges. If arranging payment at the time of discharge, be sure to get a receipt, especially if the payment is made in cash.

FOR ILLNESS OR INJURY INVOLVING ONGOING MEDICAL TREATMENT

For illness or injury involving ongoing medical treatment, the IMG Global Response team includes medical professionals who regularly contact the attending physician overseas to ensure an appropriate treatment plan. Their caseworkers will contact family members to provide updates and answer questions.

Because health information is protected, IMG Global Response isn't able to share information beyond what the "patient" authorizes, but IMG Global Response will do their best to lower the stress of concerned family/team members while abiding by legal parameters. When advisable, VISA staff will also enlist prayer support utilizing the Free Methodist Missions Hotline. This email messaging network reaches over 1,000 people worldwide.

EVACUATION

If evacuation is deemed necessary, IMG Global Response will move the individual to the most suitable location for required care. This may not necessarily be the US, and if it is, it may not be the individual's hometown.

For instance, a few years ago, a VISA team member experienced a neck injury in Latin America and was airlifted to Miami, Florida, despite residing several states away. In Miami, they received exceptional care from the country's top specialist in spinal injuries similar to theirs. The team member underwent successful reconstructive bone surgery and fortunately survived without paralysis. Although initially disappointed about not being evacuated to their home state, the team member soon recognized that the assistance company had made the optimal decision for their care.

Many medical emergencies do not require evacuation, but when they do, it takes time to coordinate transfers from one hospital to the next and more time when moving from one country to another. When IMG Global Response deems evacuation necessary, they handle all land and air transportation arrangements, including passage on a commercial plane or chartered air ambulance, with in-flight medical personnel, equipment, and supplies. They also handle all family arrangements, immigration, and customs details.

When the sick or injured person is deemed fit to return home, IMG Global Response will coordinate all the details to bring them back, including land or flight arrangements, special documents, and medical escorts if needed.

TRAVEL FOR NON-LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS MUST BE PREAPPROVED to be reimbursed. If a team member gets injured or sick for any reason and decides to change their ticket and return early, the insurance company won't likely pick up the tab if IMG Global Response wasn't consulted to get authorization.

If you or a team member becomes ill or injured during your trip and IMG Global Response makes the arrangements for relocation, compliance is mandatory. This doesn't mean there can't be some respectful questioning while ironing out the details. However, staying in the host country could potentially negate the evacuation benefit and put an unintended strain on your hosts.

WHAT IF THE EMERGENCY ISN'T ALL THAT SERIOUS?

Use your best judgment, but don't hesitate to notify IMG Global response of your medical illness or injury, even if you don't consider it a major problem while on your trip. For any medical emergency, IMG Global Response must be called in order to receive benefits.

By keeping IMG Global Response in the loop, if your illness or injury lingers after your return home and you encounter additional medical bills, a case number will already be assigned to you and will aid in filing a claim.

If you go to the doctor while on your trip, obtain a dated diagnostic statement and the physician's signature. For reimbursement purposes, it's always best to have some written proof that you sought medical treatment overseas first.

SUGGESTIONS TO AVOID GETTING CAUGHT IN A BIND

- **CARRY A MAJOR CREDIT CARD** - Most hospitals outside of North America require cash payment upfront before admitting anyone. It's wise to carry a personal major credit card or debit card, which can be used to get a cash advance in an emergency. Many credit card companies will put a hold on cards used outside of your country of residence. To avoid delays in credit, let your credit card company know of your travel plans before you leave home.
- Ensure at least one person from your team has a cell phone capable of making international calls or text messages. Many cell phone carriers have global plans that can be purchased by the day or month and provide discounted calls, data, and text messages. **WhatsApp and Signal won't work to call IMG Global Response.**

NON-MEDICAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the event of a non-medical emergency, IMG Global Response will connect you

to CRISIS24. Typically, there is no additional charge for this service except in extreme-risk countries. The list changes occasionally, but the following countries are consistently exempt: Afghanistan, Chad, Haiti, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan.

FILING A CLAIM

To file a claim for out-of-pocket medical expenses or baggage/personal effects loss or damage, contact the claims office at 317-927-6851. [Although this is a US number](#), the team is based in the United Kingdom. Office hours are Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (UK time), excluding UK bank holidays. Alternatively, you can email them at ihclaims@imglobal.com

Please provide the following information:

- Your Participant ID (Enrollment number)
- The name of the person making the claim
- A brief note of the circumstances (to get the correct claim form)
- Your up-to-date contact details

The claim form provides a list of required documents; it's advisable to provide as much as possible to avoid delays in processing. Once received, the team will assess the claim and contact you within ten working days for any additional information or to provide their final decision.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Favorite VISA staff references are marked with a star. ★

- ★ **Cross-cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility** by Duane Elmer ©2006, IVP Books. Great book with practical advice for serving other cultures with sensitivity and humility. 200 + pages.
- ★ **Foreign to Familiar** by Sarah Lanier © 2000, McDougal Press. Fun and helpful, gives great insight into crossing cultures more effectively. Classifies cultures as to "hot" or "cold" climates. (128 page paperback).

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert © 2012. Provides principles and guidelines for effective and holistic ministry to the poor, focusing on a community's assets instead of its weaknesses.

Culture Shock-Country Name

"**Culture Shock!**" country guides are easy-to-read, accurate, and entertaining crash courses in local customs and etiquette. Other travel books on the specific country you are going to can be very helpful

- ★ **CIA World Fact Book** <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/> Details on 267 countries. Very handy for orientation.

★ **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Travel Well by Dr. Christine Aroney-Sine © 2005 World Vision. Practical information geared for teams dealing with emotional, spiritual and physical health. The information on how to treat common illnesses is very helpful.

★ **Travel Advisories**

USA: Travel.State.Gov.

CANADA: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

UNITED KINGDOM: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad>

Smart Travel Enrollment System <https://Step.State.Gov>

Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right! Robert Priest Editor © 2008 W. Carey Library. Excellent book exploring international partnerships, specialized ministries such as medical missions, legal and financial liabilities and the impact of Short-Term Missions on participants.

Mack and Leeann's Guide to Short-term Missions by J. Mack and Leeann Stiles © 2000 IVP. Good advice from seasoned leaders about team ministry.

Short-term Missions Workbook, From Missions Tourist to Global Citizens by Tim Dearborn © 2003 IVP. Asks great questions and provokes us toward maturity in our thinking, motives and philosophy of missions.

Maximum Impact, Short-term Missions by Peterson, Aeschliman and Sneed © 2008 A little technical, but still very helpful.

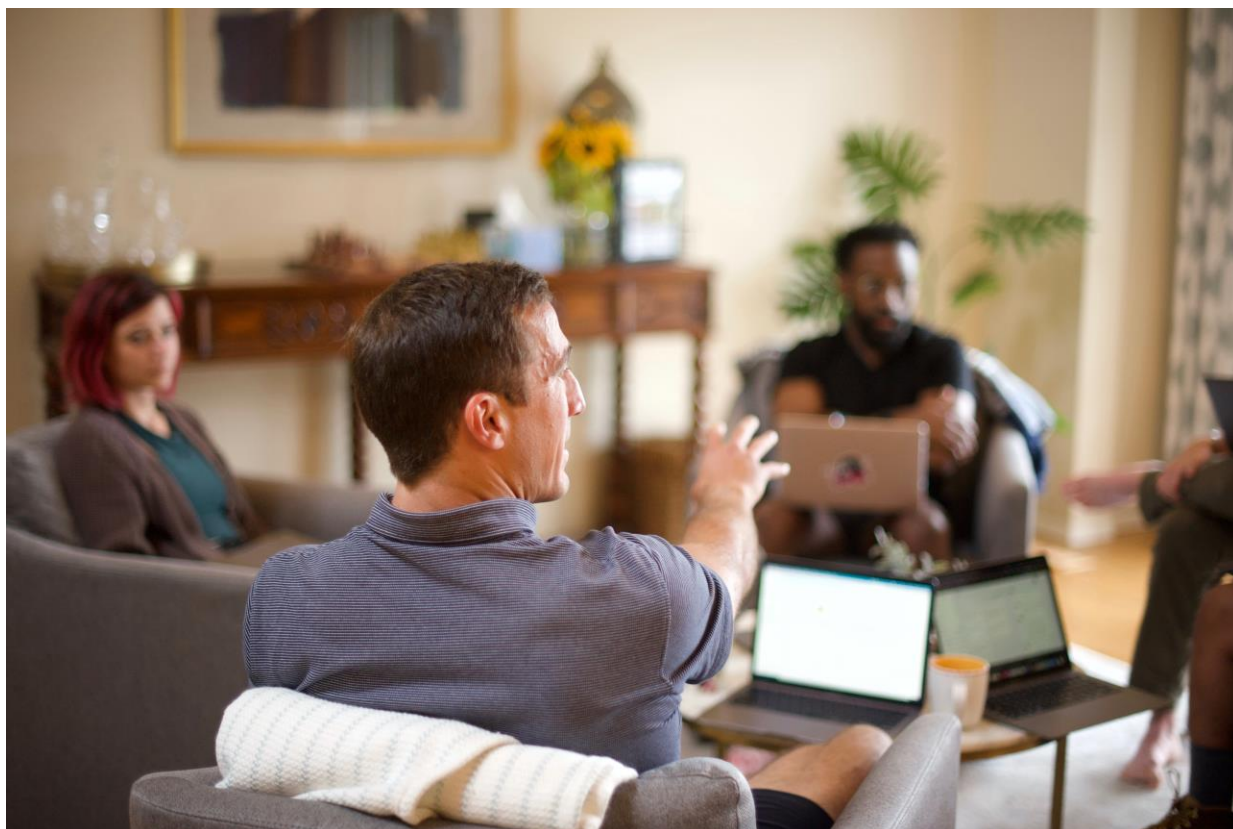
Before You Pack Your Bag, Prepare Your Heart by Cindy Judge © 2005. Short-Term Mission preparation Guide with 12 Bible Studies plus a trip journal.

★ **Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence** by David Livermore © 2012 Baker Books. Helps Christians understand the changing face of Christianity and how that affects short-term missions.

Re-Entry by Peter Jordan © 2013 YWAM Publishing. Good book to help handle the crucial transition from a missions trip to life at home.

★ **The 3D Gospel by Jayson Georges** © 2014 Tim&275 Press Very practical information explaining the world's three primary culture types and how the Gospel addresses guilt, shame, and fear. 80 pages

★ **Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible** by Randolph Richards and Brandon J. Obrien © 2012. The book sheds light on how better self-awareness and understanding of cultural differences in language, time, and social mores allow us to see the Bible in fresh and unexpected ways. 240 pages.



PART 5 - TEAM ORIENTATION

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION GUIDELINES

To effectively train and organize a VISA team, you should begin 6-9 months before departure. The goal of team training and orientation is to equip members for effective ministry and foster a global perspective. Well-prepared teams are key to ensuring a dynamic VISA trip. Utilize this time when hearts are receptive, and minds are open, allowing God to use training and ministry time to transform team members' lives.

Training and orientation can begin as soon as team members are identified, screened, and committed to the project. Initial meetings will likely cover basic information and logistics, but ministry-focused orientation should be addressed weekly during the six weeks leading up to departure. Recognize that the last six weeks can be stressful, so be extra mindful to end the meeting on time. If team members stay for fellowship following the meetings, ensure they know it's voluntary.

Encourage team members to maintain a folder for handouts. Plan discussions for team meetings in advance and stay focused on the agenda. It's preferable for team

members to leave wanting more rather than feeling frustrated because of wasted time. Allocate time for discussions, but prevent any one person from monopolizing it. If responsibilities are delegated, follow up accordingly to make sure all the details are in order before the next meeting.

In your team meetings, you'll typically address these key questions upfront: What are the living conditions like? What kind of food will we eat? Where will we stay? What should we wear/pack? When will we shop? Team members often get fixated on these questions, especially what to pack. Be cautious not to let these inquiries dominate meeting time, pushing aside other crucial topics related to team orientation and prayer.

If you haven't led a team or traveled abroad, connecting with individuals who have visited the host country can significantly ease concerns. Consider checking if there are people from the host country in your community, possibly through local schools with international students. A good starting point is to invite them to one of your team meetings to share insights about their country, its history, daily life, and their experiences leaving their homeland. Ask them to teach the team a few basic courtesy words in the host country's language. Most importantly, nurture this friendship after you get back. In all the enthusiasm for going overseas, it would be a tragedy to lose sight of the people from other cultures whom God has placed in your own backyard.

When planning your training schedule, be sure to incorporate a debriefing session within two to three weeks of your team's return home. This session can also serve as a reunion, allowing members to share photos, reconnect with those who shared their experiences, and discuss the lessons the Lord has taught them since returning home.

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION TOPICS

Use the list below as suggestions of what your team should cover during the preparation training:

- **Team purpose:** Become "World Christians," learn to view the world as God sees it, develop a servant's heart, and use this experience to grow
- **Teamwork/unity:** understanding the body of Christ, relationships, servant-learners
- **Spiritual preparation:** Bible study, devotions, prayer
- **Definitions:** define the terms National, Cross-Cultural, Missionary
- **Team expectations:** discuss the Personal Covenant Form or write a Team Covenant

- **Information about the country and people:** history, Free Methodist ministry, cultural influences, cultural etiquette ("Do's and Don'ts," currency, photographs, shopping, giving to the poor)
- **Language lessons and songs:** a few courtesy phrases will go a long way
- **Team activities on the field:** work/ministry site, devotions, church services
- **Cost:** team expense, project funds, personal expenses
- **Travel documents:** passport, visa, immigration cards, insurance, emergency phone numbers
- **Prescriptions & immunizations:** requirements and recommendations
- **Health & hygiene:** food, water, personal sanitation, sun/heat protection
- **Living accommodations:** type, quality, location, sleeping gear
- **Food:** cook for yourselves or have it provided
- **Packing:** checked luggage weight and carry-on limit. Discuss necessities (flashlight, water bottle, work gloves, medications, soap, towel, toilet paper, and sanitation conditions), dress guidelines for men and women, make-up, jewelry, availability of laundry, etc.
- **Arrival:** immigration, customs
- **Debriefing:** discuss the events of the trip, how God worked, and what the next step might be in team members' lives

Apart from the mentioned topics, VISA staff suggest delving into articles from the Short Term Missions Handbook, with selected articles scattered throughout this manual. To save time, consider having team members read these articles independently.

Although an older book (usually only available as used), **The Essential Guide to the Short-Term Mission Trip** by David C. Forward provides a wealth of information related to these topics. See the **Resource List** for more ideas. VISA staff are always on the lookout for helpful materials. If you develop or discover something valuable, please let VISA staff know!

TOPICS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR RECEIVING HOST

Each team and country is unique, but upon arrival in the host country, there are specific questions the team may have that weren't addressed earlier. If these questions go unanswered, they could lead to misunderstandings or frustrations. It's advisable to address them upfront.

Plan a time with the national host or missionary as near to arrival as possible to address questions such as:

- The missionary's or national's work and ministry
- Information about the project and the people involved
- Housing logistics
- Electricity – precautions or conservation guidelines
- Water – precautions or conservation guidelines
- Precautions on food and beverages
- Transportation logistics – *As a general rule, VISA team members should not drive!*
- Security issues – for oneself and one's belongings, provisions for travel documents
- Tropical sun precautions – hats, long sleeves, sunscreen
- What to do if a team member gets lost or separated from the group
- Money exchange – when and where
- Sanitation issues – toilets, toilet paper
- Photography concerns
- Gestures or phrases to avoid
- Last-minute precautions about dress
- Provisions for team meetings and/or team devotions
- Communication – calling or emailing home
- Shopping and sightseeing – when and where

TEAM COVENANT

Consider creating a Team Covenant or a Personal Covenant as part of your trip preparation. It's a great way to foster team unity and encourage individuals to reflect on the significance of their actions and ministry. Once completed, each team member signs the covenant.

Rationale

- Creates a commitment by all members

- Sets objectives and goals that the team holds in common
- Establishes specific action steps to accomplish those objectives
- Clarifies expectations
- Provides for evaluation and accountability
- Typical covenants involve a commitment to:
 - Personal devotions
 - Team meetings
 - Journal writing
 - Affirming one another
 - Holding each other accountable
 - Support-raising
 - Mission training
 - Prayer

Objectives

- State what you intend to do
- Provide points of accountability
- Be specific enough that you can evaluate whether your team is carrying them out

Components

1. **Team relationship with senders, goers and receivers.** How will we relate to and represent God, the Free Methodist denomination, our local church, and our home country? Each other? The missionaries and nationals?
2. **Team vision.** Why does the team exist? Why do you want to be part of this ministry?
3. **Team goals.** How do we function? What traits characterize our team?
4. **Team structure.** How will we do our task? How will we relate to each other?
5. **Evaluation and accountability.** How will we assess our work? How will we correct our members?

Suggestion

Avoid copying another team's covenant. Engage in the effort of crafting one that suits your group. The process is nearly as crucial as the resulting document in this type of task. Regularly review the covenant so that everyone is aware of the expectations. Consider incorporating it into a commissioning service at your church. Bring the covenant on the trip and use it as a reminder to stay focused on your goals.

SAMPLE TEAM COVENANTS

Below are examples of covenants created by teams led by VISA staff. Note the covenants are not written for perfection but as an expression of the team's desire for unity and what they want to accomplish.

IMPACT Ecuador Team Covenant (youth team)

1. Accountability: attitude, everyone keeping everyone in check, not getting frustrated when nothing seems to be happening.
2. Debriefing: have time to share about the day and set aside time to talk.
3. Personal devotions: goal is to try to do them have a partner ask if you've done them for the day.
4. Everyone tries something new: talk about it at the end & find out what new thing they tried.
5. Be courteous to people who are serving us while in Ecuador: hotel staff, missionaries, and pastors.
6. Keep things orderly: make sure your mess doesn't hinder others, and let others know if they're in the way. Everyone should have their own space.
7. Be on time for team stuff.
8. No: venting to partners, gossiping, whining, or complaining.
9. Respect: whoever is leading, whoever is speaking, property that doesn't belong to us, team members' quiet time.
10. Build appropriate non-romantic relationships with team members and Ecuadorians.
11. Conflicts: be willing to talk, listen, and take the issue to God.
12. Commit to being open to God's will for our lives.
13. Try to stay in touch after the trip. Keep other members in prayer both during and after the trip.
14. NO quitting!

Ten Commandments of the IMPACT Nigeria Team (youth team)

1. As a servant of Jesus Christ and a representative of the Free Methodist Church, I covenant to model Jesus Christ and share what He has done in my life.
2. In order to be spiritually prepared, I will have daily prayer and devotions to discover God's will.
3. I commit to being a servant and will reflect a selfless attitude. (Phil 2:1-11)
4. As a leader, I will pray each morning for the team; as a student, I will pray each morning for the leaders.

5. As a leader, I will mentor the students under my care; as a student, I will uphold the leaders' decisions even if I don't agree with them.
6. As I step out of my comfort zone, I commit to being flexible and to finding security in the knowledge that God is in control.
7. As a guest in Nigeria, I will honor the missionary's property, agenda & family and seek to understand the Nigerian culture.
8. I realize that I am part of a team and that my actions affect the cohesiveness of the team. To promote team unity, I will attend every group meeting.
9. I will build appropriate non-romantic relationships with team members and Nigerians.
10. I will recognize each team member's contributions and encourage them to fulfill their unique roles in the team while holding them accountable to their full potential.

IMPACT Manila Team Covenant (youth team)

We, the IMPACT Manila Team, as representatives of Christ, the Free Methodist Church, the United States of America and ourselves, covenant together to...

1. Make prayer **THE** priority.
2. Have a Christ-like attitude in every situation by being a learner, servant and storyteller, and by portraying the Fruit of the Spirit.
3. Respect leaders, team members and Filipinos by refraining from shaming others, sarcasm, unkind speech and romance.
4. Hold each other accountable through daily team meetings for spiritual disciplines, worship, attitude checks and conflict resolution. Conflict resolution will follow the Biblical pattern of:
 - Offender-offended
 - Leaders

By signing below, I hereby covenant with my teammates and with God to adhere to the above this 23rd day of July.

PERSONAL COVENANT

Understanding and abiding by the guidelines outlined in the Personal Covenant below are crucial for guests of the Free Methodist Church overseas. While signing this covenant has been required of visitors in some areas of the world, it's not been universally required. It's included here as it describes the implied expectations for guests from hosts worldwide.

In signing below, I recognize that my visit is a small part of the larger picture of what the Free Methodist Church is trying to achieve. As a guest desiring not to interfere with ongoing ministry, I accept the following conditions and agree to:

- Acknowledge that my host country may not have all the conveniences I am used to.
- Strive to be flexible and adjust my desires for the sake of others and ministry.
- Approach this trip with the mindset that I am here to understand the host culture, not to impose my viewpoint or way of doing things.
- Acknowledge that there are various ways to achieve the same goal, and recognize that my way may not be the best.
- Use respectful language, refrain from profanity, and avoid insensitive humor and argumentative behavior.
- Abstain from derogatory comments about my hosts, their customs, food, manners, or ideas.
- Acknowledge the authority of the Team Leader, missionaries, and national host in all decisions and abide by their decisions without grumbling, meddling, or complaining.
- Be supportive and adaptable, as plans may change.
- Commit to not being overly demanding, offending, or causing embarrassment for the local mission host, and strive to contribute to their long-term goals.
- Take care so that my behavior accurately reflects Jesus.

- Respect how Sundays are observed by the national hosts, even if it restricts activities like shopping or sightseeing.
- Respect different worship styles, even if they are not my preference.
- Be mindful of (and avoid) interactions that could be perceived as romantic, even if that is not the intent.
- Abstain from tobacco, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, and prohibited activities while on this ministry trip.
- Follow the clothing standards of the host Free Methodist Church, even if I find them too restrictive.
- Respect the wishes of the team leader/missionary/national host regarding safety. Accordingly, I agree not to go anywhere without obtaining prior clearance, understanding that this may limit my freedoms.
- Avoid exerting undue pressure on merchants during bargaining for purchases in shops and marketplaces, ensuring fair returns on their products.
- Seek guidance from the missionary/national host when moved by compassion or kindness to give gifts (cash, tools, personal items, or things brought from home). Clear any gift-giving beforehand with the missionary/national host to ensure good motives align with national customs and do not hinder the best interests of the national church.

I understand that repeated, willful neglect of this covenant is considered unsatisfactory since it jeopardizes the ministry of the Free Methodist Church. If asked to leave because of compromising this covenant, I will return home immediately at my own expense.

Signed _____ Date _____

TEAM BUILDING STRATEGY

EIGHT UNIQUE TRAITS THAT SEPARATE "TEAMS" FROM "GROUPS"

By: Rich Hurst

Imagine yourself mingling with several friends. You're a group. Now imagine yourself in a line with these friends. You form a chain by grabbing hold of the person in front and sitting down on the knees of the person behind. Now you're a team. This is a good way to visualize the difference between groups and teams. Groups and teams have different characteristics. The following traits are unique to teams.

1. Teams are interdependent. They have personal and team goals. Members of a team see themselves as interdependent on each other to achieve both sets of goals. Members of a group see themselves as dependent on the group. It's a crucial difference. On a short-term team project, someone got hurt. We all took time out to get this person to a hospital. One man griped about it. "Let's get back to the job," he said. "This is really slowing us up." We had come to put up a building, and he wanted to get it done. He saw himself there for the purpose of task. He didn't understand we were really there for relationship. When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, they healed and performed miracles. "Even the evil powers were under our authority," they told Jesus when they came back. "I know," Jesus said, "but don't rejoice in that. Rejoice instead that your names are written in the book of life." Rejoice that you are in relationship with God and others.

2. Teams have a sense of ownership. People support the things they help create. They have a sense of ownership, they'll support a cause and be committed to its goals. Group members tend to focus on themselves because they aren't involved in the planning. I understood this clearly after I went with a group to paint a seminary in France. One member of the group focused her attention on seeing the Eiffel Tower. It consumed her thinking, and when she realized we weren't going—she went off on her own. She was gone for two days, and we thought we had lost her. This person wasn't involved in the planning for the trip. Her goals were different from the rest of ours. Teams allow each person in them to have ownership by being part of the planning. A team creates a dream together then makes it a reality.

3. Teams allow members to exercise their gifts. Team members contribute to the success of their venture by using their own unique gifts. Group members are simply told what to do and the best way to do it. Team members sit down together to figure out how to use their skills and gifts to accomplish the task.

I'll never forget a trip to Mexico. Three of us – a research scientist, a university professor, and a pastor – were taken into a building. A man showed us a roof. "See that roof?" he asked. We nodded. "It's falling down." We nodded. "See those beams over there?" We nodded. "Somebody donated them. We're going to take them and

put them up to shore the roof." We nodded. They were big heavy beams, impossible to lift. With this, the man turned around and walked out.

About lunchtime, he came back. "So what did you do this morning?" he asked. We told him we'd found some rope we thought might help get the job done. He said, "Good," and took us to lunch. When he brought us back to the building, we thought he would finally show us how to get those beams up to the roof. Instead, he wished us well, told us he'd see us at dinner, and walked away.

It took us a day and a half to put the first beam up, but by the time we were done, we were putting up a beam in two hours. When we had finished, the man came to see our work. "That's great," he said. "I didn't really know how this job was going to get done."

4. Teams operate in an atmosphere of trust. Members are encouraged to share ideas, feelings, and disagreements. The best way to encourage trust is to schedule regular meetings where everyone sits down and talks about what's going on. When you're part of a team, you don't have to stuff anything down. You can talk about feelings, ideas, how to do things better.

In groups, everything is done by assumption. Nobody understands the other people's motives because nobody talks. You have to guess at what others are thinking and feeling.

5. Teams encourage open and honest communication. In groups, people are afraid to say what's on their minds because of how others might react. Team rules help promote honest and open communication. Four good rules are no gossiping, no whining, no sexual innuendos, and attendance at all team meetings. This means there's a set time to talk and the conversation is open, constructive, and inclusive.

6. Team members are encouraged to learn on the job. In groups, the jobs are given out to the experts. In teams, the jobs are chosen according to individual interests and dreams. For example, one woman on a team had always wanted to be a sign painter. When we needed some signs, she told us about her desire. We didn't ask her if she would be good at it, we just told her to go ahead and make signs. The results were wonderful, but even if it hadn't looked so professional, we had freed her to follow a dream and to learn as she went along.

7. Teams understand and expect conflict. In groups, people do whatever it takes to get along. Teams build places for temporary insanity. In a team, it's safe to be yourself. For example, on a leadership retreat in the mountains, a guy lost it completely. He went nuts. The team just sat there and listened to him rave. Two days later, he came back and said, "I don't think I've ever apologized for something in a church setting before, but I went crazy the other day. And you all just sat and listened. You didn't treat me differently afterward, either. I'm sorry I went off like that." There should always be room for storms and hurricanes in our relationships. Teams are a safe place for conflict.

8. Team members participate in decision-making. This doesn't mean there isn't a leader. There's a first among equals, but the emphasis is always on the equals. Jesus knew how to take the lead, but He emphasized the equality among His team. Once as the leader of a short-term mission trip, I found we couldn't stay where we had planned. I could have made a decision about where to go, but instead, I gathered my team to decide together. People would have followed me in the first case, but there would have been grumbling and things left unsaid.

The Example of Geese in Flight

We can learn a lot from nature about what it means to be a team. When geese fly in formation, they travel seventy percent faster than when they fly alone. They share leadership. When the one in front gets tired, he rotates back into the wing, and another flies forward to take his place. Geese honk from behind to urge those in front to keep up their speed. And geese keep company with the fallen. If a sick or weak goose drops out of the formation, others join him to take care of him and protect him until he can go on. God put a sense of teamwork in the very nature of geese. He's placed it in our new spiritual natures, too. Let's learn to be a team and watch God make good on His promise. It's nothing less than abundant life – full and free.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*



PART 6 PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR TEAM MEMBERS

TEAM MEMBER CHECKLIST

AS SOON AS YOU ARE ACCEPTED ON THE TEAM

- ☐ Work with your church to help raise awareness for prayer and financial support for your team's ministry.
- ☐ Enlist prayer support from at least ten individuals who will commit to praying for you now and until you return. As you learn more about the ministry project, share this information with your prayer partners and provide specific suggestions on how they can pray. Pray for yourself and all involved in the trip and preparation.
- ☐ Ensure you have the necessary travel documents. Confirm that your passport remains valid for at least six months beyond your return date, as certain countries may deny entry to individuals with passports expiring within six months of entry.

- ☐ Begin thinking about how you can share your testimony or a recent lesson the Lord has taught you. Your story must be clear, easy to translate, and around 3 minutes long. When you get to your ministry destination, be prepared to share your story at a moment's notice. See **Testimony Tips** for more information.
- ☐ Consult your local physician. Make arrangements for any required vaccinations and recommended medications. Pack any prescription medications in your carry-on. Take a few extra days' worth of medication in case something happens to your medication or your return is delayed.
- ☐ Attend team orientation, training sessions, and program practices. Orientation is a time to get acquainted with other team members, learn about the culture in which you will work, and make plans for ministry.
- ☐ Pay any trip deposits per your team leader's instructions.
- ☐ Complete the paperwork in the portal provided by the VISA office. Your Team Leader will provide the due date.
- ☐ Make a packing list. Items to include should be covered in a team meeting.
- ☐ If you are staying in homes, find an *appropriate* host(ess) gift and other appropriate gifts. Your team leader should give suggestions.
- ☐ If you intend to donate used clothing, books, or other items, it's crucial to first consult with your team leader to determine what is deemed appropriate. If your leader is uncertain, they can seek guidance from their field contact. After confirming the appropriateness of the giveaway items, be aware that you might be requested to leave the items with the missionary or national leader for distribution. While it may be disappointing not to hand off the items personally, this practice can prevent complications for those continuing the ministry in the community after your departure.
- ☐ If your team plans to share about your ministry during a worship service upon your return, collaborate with your team leader to plan the presentation. Ensure sufficient time between your return and the event to create a concise and high-quality presentation. Emphasize what God is accomplishing and how lives are being transformed. Aim to leave the audience intrigued and wanting to learn more.
- ☐ Send thank-you notes to your prayer partners and financial supporters.
- ☐ Attend team debriefing meetings.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

FMWM deeply cares about your safety and well-being. We encourage you to approach travel with common sense, gathering as much information as possible to make informed decisions leading up to your departure.

As a team member, you need to be aware of the risks associated with your team's ministry. In general, risks could include sickness, injury, robbery, kidnapping, and accidental death. Risks are also influenced by the type of work to be done, your general health condition, your host country's political stability, and world events.

One avenue for assessing country concerns is to review travel advisory reports provided by the US government at [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov).

Because travel reports are influenced by politics, it doesn't hurt to see what other countries (i.e., Canada and the UK) are saying as well.

- CANADA: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- UNITED KINGDOM: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad>)

FMWM has **guidelines** designed to help answer the question, "To travel or not to travel?" In the unlikely event that travel is considered ill-advised by FMWM, we kindly ask for your understanding and respect for this decision. Please refrain from making alternative arrangements that may bypass FMWM safety measures and the preferences of our national church leaders. Your safety, as well as the safety of your hosts, is our priority!

Before you travel, it's a good idea to:

- ☐ Memorize your passport number.
- ☐ Take a picture of your passport ID pages and visa (if required) and save it on your phone for easy reference. If you're not traveling with your phone or other electronic device, carry a photocopy of this information with you.
- ☐ **Register with the US State Department [STEP program](#).** STEP is an acronym for Smart Travel Enrollment Program and is a free enrollment service to connect you with the local Consulate or US Embassy.
- ☐ Have up-to-date immunizations.
- ☐ Check with your cell phone carrier to review your options for international calling. Many cell phone carriers have global plans that can be purchased by the day or month and provide discounted calls, data, and text messages.

- Although dependent on wifi, Facebook Messenger and apps like WhatsApp or Signal provide free international calling and texting with others using this service. Note WhatsApp or Signal can not call businesses. Facebook Messenger has limitations as well.
- ❑ Carry a major credit card - Many credit card companies will put a hold on cards used outside of your country of residence. To avoid delays in credit, let your credit card company know of your travel plans before you leave home.
 - Most hospitals outside of North America require cash payment upfront before admitting anyone.
- ❑ Carry travel health insurance. (There is a specific plan required for VISA Team members).
- ❑ Carry the memo explaining how to utilize your travel health insurance on your phone, or take a paper copy with you.

TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE – INFORMATION FOR TEAM MEMBERS

PLEASE NOTE: You'll be signed up for FMWM endorsed travel health insurance when you serve on a VISA team and complete the “onboarding” items in your portal. Sign up usually occurs 2-3 weeks before departure. Your insurance ID card will be in your portal with your “trip documents” along with a memo explaining how to utilize your coverage. The cost is minimal for the coverage provided.

EVERYONE CARRIES THE SAME TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN



Should you happen to obtain travel health insurance on your own, you will still need to carry the travel health insurance required by FMWM. The primary reasons are:

#1

One million dollars of liability coverage is included in the plan provided by FMWM. This protects the Free Methodist Church USA, your sponsoring organization, and your hosts.

#2

It makes things easier for the people hosting the team. Should they need to intervene in an emergency, it cuts down on the chaos when they can get logistics support for everyone with one phone call. They can also enlist the help of VISA staff.

Travel health insurance supplements existing US health insurance coverage.

If you don't have US health insurance, it may complicate things in the event you require continued medical care upon your return home. Contact the VISA office if this is your situation as there may be short-term coverage available that they can research for you.



VISA staff can also help with trip cancellation coverage.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

CARRY YOUR ENROLLMENT NUMBER WITH YOU

Your team leader will work with VISA staff to enroll you for travel health insurance. Once signed up, your team leader will get your team's enrollment number on a memo explaining what the insurance covers and how to utilize it. Your team leader will share that with you. Take the information with you on your phone or carry a paper copy.

In an emergency, refer to the memo and call **IMG Global Response**, the emergency assistance company associated with the insurance plan. IMG Global Response is located in the United Kingdom and they have staff in many other countries so expect to hear English but with a non-U.S. accent.

Contacting IMG Global Response is different from calling 911 for an ambulance, and they do not offer medical advice. Instead, their role involves collecting information and operating within the guidelines of the insurance policy to identify suitable medical facilities, physicians, hospitals, or dentists for your emergency situation.

IMG Global Response has staff available 24 hours a day to help navigate medical emergencies. They also assist travelers in danger of being arrested as the result of any non-criminal action by helping them find English-speaking attorneys and help those who need to replace lost or stolen documents, such as passports, or personal items, such as luggage.

IMG Global Response personnel are trained to ask key questions. If possible, be prepared to provide the travel health insurance enrollment number, the injured or ill person's name, date of birth, and present medical condition. Also, provide your contact information where you (the caller) can be reached and the contact information for a secondary backup. If a hospital is involved, provide the name, phone number, and address of the hospital, the name and contact information of the attending physician, etc.

If you need additional help, don't hesitate to alert VISA staff, as they can readily provide IMG Global Response with enrollment, birthdate, and passport information if you do not have this information handy.

In addition to IMG Global Response working behind the scenes, your hosts will provide as much on-the-ground assistance as possible.

DO NOT DELAY EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER INSURANCE COVERAGE

In the event of an emergency, initiate medical care locally and expediently. Do not delay emergency medical care because of concern over insurance coverage. These issues can be sorted out once the sick or injured person has been safely cared for.

Note that US health insurance cards (including travel health insurance enrollment ID cards) aren't generally recognized outside of the US, and cash payment is expected at the time of treatment.

For larger expenses, IMG Global Response will try to make arrangements with healthcare providers to avoid a cash deposit before obtaining treatment; however, the situation in some locations may make it necessary to withdraw money personally. Missionaries and national hosts will do what they can regarding banking issues. If they float a loan, be sure to reimburse them before leaving the country.

ADVOCATES

Should you or a team member become sick or injured, follow the guidance of IMG Global Response. Depending on the situation, if a sick or injured person is admitted to a hospital, it may be best to designate a person (an advocate) to stay at their bedside, in shifts if necessary, until they are well or evacuated.

Advocates can help by connecting with medical personnel and taking notes on administered treatments. They can help keep IMG Global Response and others informed as appropriate.

Hospitals in some parts of the world may not follow the same standards for care that people are accustomed to in the US. If you're in a location where hospitals and clinics routinely reuse disposable needles and invasive equipment, advocates can help by inspecting all invasive equipment to verify it is sterile and not reused. If necessary, advocates can offer to pay a little extra for new invasive equipment.

When feasible, advocates can help by collecting documents necessary for reimbursement. Ideally, this includes getting the diagnosis in "legible" writing from the health care professionals. When collecting receipts, it's helpful to itemize the hospital charges (medications, x-rays, etc.) separately from the physician's charges. If arranging payment at the time of discharge, be sure to get a receipt, especially if the payment is made in cash.

For illness or injury involving ongoing medical treatment, the IMG Global Response team includes medical professionals who regularly contact the attending physician overseas to ensure an appropriate treatment plan. IMG Global Response caseworkers will contact family members to provide updates and answer questions.

Because health information is protected, IMG Global Response isn't able to share information beyond what the "patient" authorizes, but IMG Global Response will do their best to lower the stress of concerned family/team members while abiding by legal parameters. When advisable, VISA staff will also enlist prayer support utilizing the Free Methodist Missions Hotline. This email messaging network reaches over 1,000 people worldwide.

EVACUATION

If evacuation is deemed necessary, IMG Global Response will move the individual to the most suitable location for required care. This may not necessarily be the US; if it is, it may not be the individual's hometown.

For instance, a few years ago, a VISA team member experienced a neck injury in Latin America and was airlifted to Miami, Florida, despite residing several states away. In Miami, they received exceptional care from the country's top specialist in spinal injuries similar to theirs. The team member underwent successful reconstructive bone surgery and fortunately survived without paralysis. Although initially disappointed about not being evacuated to their home state, the team member soon recognized that the assistance company had made the optimal decision for their care.

Many medical emergencies do not require evacuation, but when they do, it takes time to coordinate transfers from one hospital to the next and more time when moving from one country to another. When IMG Global Response deems evacuation necessary, they handle all land and air transportation arrangements, including passage on a commercial plane or chartered air ambulance, with in-flight medical personnel, equipment, and supplies. They also handle all family arrangements, immigration, and customs details.

When the sick or injured person is deemed fit to return home, IMG Global Response will coordinate all the details to bring them back, including land or flight arrangements, special documents, and medical escorts if needed.

TRAVEL FOR NON-LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS MUST BE PREAPPROVED to be reimbursed. If you get injured or sick for any reason and decide to change your ticket and return early, the insurance company won't likely pick up the tab if you didn't consult with IMG Global Response first and get authorization.

If you become ill or injured during your trip and IMG Global Response makes the arrangements for relocation, compliance is mandatory. This doesn't mean there

can't be some respectful questioning while ironing out the details, but staying in your host country could potentially negate the evacuation benefit and put an unintended strain on your hosts. No matter how much you love your hosts and despite promises they might make to take care of you, you may be unaware of underlying cultural differences influencing your host's kind words.

WHAT IF THE EMERGENCY ISN'T ALL THAT SERIOUS?

Use your best judgment, but don't hesitate to notify IMG Global response of your medical illness or injury, even if you don't consider it a major problem while on your trip. For any medical emergency, IMG Global Response must be called in order to receive benefits.

By keeping IMG Global Response in the loop, if your illness or injury lingers after your return home and you encounter additional medical bills, a case number will already be assigned to you and will aid in filing a claim.

If you go to the doctor while on your trip, obtain a dated diagnostic statement and the physician's signature. For reimbursement purposes, it's always best to have some written proof that you sought medical treatment overseas first.

NON-MEDICAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the event of a non-medical emergency, IMG Global Response will connect you to CRISIS24. Typically, there is no additional charge for this service except in extreme-risk countries. The list changes occasionally, but the following countries are consistently exempt: Afghanistan, Chad, Haiti, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan.

FILING A CLAIM

To file a claim for out-of-pocket medical expenses or baggage/personal effects loss or damage, contact the claims office at 317-927-6851. *Although this is a US* number, the team is based in the United Kingdom. Office hours are Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (UK time), excluding UK bank holidays. Alternatively, you can email them at ihclaims@imglobal.com

Please provide the following information:

- Your Participant ID (Enrollment number)
- Your name or the name of the person making the claim
- A brief note of the circumstances for the claim (to assist in getting the correct claim form)
- Your up-to-date contact details or those of the person making the claim

The claim form provides a list of required documents; it's advisable to provide as much detail as possible to avoid delays in processing. Once your claim form is

received, the team will assess the claim and contact you within ten working days for any additional information or to provide their final decision.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

For risk management purposes, the Free Methodist Church USA has mandated that anyone over the age of 18 serving under the auspices of FMWM have a background check administered through a third party and that the results be monitored by VISA staff. Background checks are good for three years.

FMWM/VISA staff use a web-based company called Protect My Ministry (PMM). The link for the PMM background check will be available through the team portal. Team members will use the links provided to complete the background checks online.

VISA staff cannot access the private information you submit to PMM during screening, including social security numbers. VISA staff are notified when background checks are completed, and they see the names of guest ministry participants and a rating of "Accept," "Do Not Accept," or "More Consideration Needed." Basic background checks provided through PMM are valid for three years should you serve again at a later date.

The cost of a basic background check is \$15. There are a few states where a basic background check isn't possible because the state doesn't share information about offenders with the national database. In these situations, PMM will alert VISA staff of what additional processing steps they will take to meet our minimum standards and what the additional service fee is.

No money is due at the completion of the background check. Before the team's departure, team members and/or churches will be invoiced for background checks and the VISA Travel Insurance.

PACKING TIPS

- Keep valuables and passports safe and carry only enough money for anticipated expenses. Carry passports, tickets, and money separately.
- Be sure to pack according to the weather of the host country. A small umbrella might be handy depending on location and time of year.
- Don't take anything you can't afford or wouldn't want to lose.
- Don't put your most valuable items in your checked luggage. Airline liability for loss is incredibly low and filled with exclusions.

- Don't pack spare lithium batteries in your checked luggage. Specific regulations may vary by airline and country.
- Think through what it would be like to be separated from your luggage for several days. What must you have with you in your carry-on?
 - Prescription medications
 - Extra pair of prescription eyeglasses, especially if you'd be blind without your glasses
 - Essential toiletries
 - Change of clothes
- Pack several zip-top plastic bags for various purposes.
- For security reasons, refrain from bringing wrapped gifts. Instead, pack gift-wrapping supplies and wrap the gifts upon arrival if necessary.
- Avoid bringing anything you can live without. Opt for traveling light, as airline baggage rules are intricate and may differ between different legs of your trip.
- Go through your wallet or purse and purge unnecessary items.
- Couples traveling together should pack one change of clothes in the other's bag in case one goes astray.
- Keep an eye on your baggage in public places 100% of the time. Do not allow anyone to carry it unless you know the person or the Team Leader signals that it's okay.
- Electrical voltage and outlet shapes vary globally. "**Power Plugs and Sockets**" (power-plugs-sockets.com) is a useful website with detailed information about the electrical outlets, plugs, and voltage used worldwide.
- Many phones, laptops, tablets, etc., are dual voltage and may only require an adapter, not a converter. Check the label on the power cord or refer to the usual manual. If it indicates a range like "100-240V," the device is dual voltage and can handle different voltages worldwide.
- On the day of travel, consider wearing your bulkiest clothes to save space in your luggage. Coats are not typically considered over-the-limit carry-on items by airlines.

- If you're taking clothes, tools, or supplies to leave behind, pack them in a collapsible bag you can bring home inside your other suitcase or in a plastic storage container that you can leave behind.
- Using an address on your baggage tags other than your home address is not generally recommended, as using the correct address helps facilitate recovery. Consider using your church address if you are concerned about unscrupulous people seeing your address.
- For easier identification of team members' luggage, tie a bright-colored piece of fabric or ribbon on each bag.
- Distribute your VBS and other ministry supplies among the luggage of several team members so you're not faced with disaster if a single bag is lost.
- For trips to "closed" countries where evangelistic media is prohibited, ask the experts receiving you at your destination about specific guidelines and actions to take.
- Bring your own medical supplies, including basic items you think you'll want or need, such as aspirin or Tylenol, decongestant, antiseptic, band-aids, sunscreen, medications for diarrhea, constipation, colds, sore throats, and sunburn. Also, bring along extra contact lens solution as needed.

BAGGAGE INFORMATION

In recent years, the airline industry has made significant progress in the speed and care of baggage handling. While the number of bags damaged, lost or delayed is small, this is no consolation when your luggage does not accompany you or arrive in good condition. If problems occur, here are steps to take to ensure your claim is processed promptly, thoroughly and fairly.

- Go directly from your flight to the baggage claim area. Make any necessary phone calls there, keeping your eye on the luggage carousel.
- Immediately report any damage or loss to the airline's baggage service office. If your bag was irregularly shaped or fragile, it may have arrived in another section with specially handled bags.
- Ask when the next flight from your departure city is scheduled to arrive. Most bags that were overlooked or checked too late for loading will be immediately forwarded.

- Complete a Damaged or Missing Article or Delayed Baggage Report before leaving the airport or, for International flights, before leaving the baggage claim area and heading into the customs area.
- Note the name of the airline representative handling your claim. If possible, keep in touch with this person daily until your claim is settled.
- Make a list of what's in your luggage while packing at home, and include a copy with your other traveling papers. Put your name, address, phone number, flight number, destination, and host's name, address, and phone number inside each piece of luggage.
- Retain your baggage claim checks and copies of all claim forms. Do not give them up until your property is returned or your claim is settled.
- Don't jeopardize your entire claim by inflating the value of your possessions. If you purchase luggage or clothing for your trip, keep receipts safe at home. This will save haggling later if your luggage or possessions must be replaced.
- Be patient. The average tracking time for lost luggage is 30-45 days from the date of travel to the date of settlement.

*Many of these ideas came from **The Essential Guide to the Short Term Mission Trip** by David C. Forward and **Successful Mission Teams: A Guide for Volunteers** by Martha VanCise.*

GUIDELINES FOR A POSITIVE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

These guidelines aim to ensure that your mission experience is mutually beneficial for both you and the host. Following these tips will help ensure that careless action does not jeopardize the ongoing ministry of the national church.

Empathize: Put yourself in the shoes of those you are visiting. Try to see things from their perspective.

Don't Evaluate: Avoid attaching "good" or "bad" labels to the new things you see. Most things are just different from what you are used to.

Allow Grace: Be careful not to criticize the missionary or national leader, even if you think they are wrong. Defer complexities to those who know and understand the host country's culture, customs, and history. Remember that what you see in two weeks is just a glimpse of the whole picture.

Cliques: Avoid standing and sitting with only English-speaking people. Mingle with the people in your host country.

Food: Eat what is put before you without negative comments. As Elizabeth Elliott once said, “Don’t you dare sing, ‘Where He leads me I will follow’ unless you are willing to say, ‘What He feeds me I will swallow.’” Food and sharing a meal are significant social activities in many cultures. Often, your host will have gone to great lengths and expense to prepare a meal for you, their guest. Do not reject them and their kindness by rejecting their food.

Translation: When using a translator, remember that what you say will become twice as long. Speak clearly and say only a sentence or two at a time. Don’t quote poetry or use puns. It doesn’t translate well, and most humor gets lost.

Time: Many cultures are more event-oriented than time-oriented. Be prepared to “hurry up and wait.”

Sports: If you engage in unorganized pick-up games, be sure to integrate teams. Consider the message you’ll send if you play an “us against them” game. Don’t get too competitive. Maintain good sportsmanship.

Photos: Be sensitive when taking pictures. Don’t offend by taking pictures of what nationals might consider their private space or a negative aspect of their country. Ask permission before taking pictures.

Money: Protecting your money and travel documents is crucial, as in any large city, including those in the US.

Talking: Avoid discussing the country or its people, assuming those around you are unaware of what you’re saying. It’s surprising how many people understand English. Exercise caution with jokes and sarcasm, as they can be easily misunderstood, and the tone of your voice may be interpreted as negative. Be mindful of your volume to avoid being perceived as loud or obnoxious.

Dress: Be careful in the way you dress. Be considerate of the people you’re going to serve. Don’t overdress or display evidence of economic superiority or underdress, giving them a reason to misunderstand your morals. Modesty is not defined by your culture but by the culture of the country in which you’re ministering. Opt for simple and unassuming clothing to convey respect and cultural sensitivity.

Respect: Your conduct should reflect a high level of Christian character and commitment. Polite and courteous behavior is expected at all times and is to be extended to *everyone*. Avoid writing or speaking that would be offensive to the government or your host country’s established religions.

Wealth: Be careful not to let your sympathies run away with your judgment. You may feel like emptying your pockets to help certain individuals, but your partiality could create problems. If you want to leave a gift for someone or if you brought things to give away, check with the missionary and/or national leader first. Usually, they prefer you to leave the items with them to distribute after you’ve left.

Devotions and Prayer: Devotional time will be an important part of your daily activities. Your spiritual growth is an integral part of your trip. Prayer is a necessity!

Damage Control: If problems happen on the field, keep them in confidence. There are problems in every field, including those in your own back yard. If you feel obliged to talk about them, talk to your team leader and report to VISA staff if the situation warrants it.

GOOD RELATIONSHIPS AREN'T AUTOMATIC

SIX TIPS FOR BUILDING HARMONY WITH CO-WORKERS ON THE FIELD

By: Barry Hancock

People on short-term mission trips are often impressed with the caliber of Christians they meet. But good relationships with career missionaries and national Christians aren't automatic. Here are six tips to help you build fulfilling relationships with your new coworkers on the mission field.

1. Work on good communication.

One skill you'll need is good communication. Read all you can about clear communication and solid relationships. Study the skills you'll need and apply them as you learn to work comfortably with both the nationals and the missionaries you serve.

2. Be a good guest.

Living arrangements for short-termers vary widely. If you're living with nationals, inquire what your hosts expect of you. If you're living with missionaries, apply the same courtesies you'd expect of a houseguest in your own home. In either situation, look for ways to lend a hand.

3. Develop a tolerance for diversity.

Missionaries and national Christians are human. Be slow to judge. It's easy to give negative labels to things that are simply different. There's a natural craving for the familiar in strange surroundings. When a person's relational style is unfamiliar, it's easy to reject the person as well.

4. Make allowances for stress.

Stress is inevitable. But keep in mind that your hosts face challenges too. Although it may take a while to understand their pressure points, you can be sure they have them. Your visit – while an avenue of blessing – also brings added demands on their time and energy. Pray for special grace for all of you.

5. Recognized “third culture” people.

The best career missionaries adopt their new cultures and move between cultures with relative ease. Some even incorporate elements from both cultures into a personal hybrid. Because of this, their styles may not be what you expect. You may struggle to feel “at home” with them, and even misread them.

In addition, career missionaries usually can’t keep track of trends in their “home” culture while they’re away. You may be surprised when they don’t understand the latest jargon or important issue from home. Societal attitudes and values change too. You may be shocked by something like a casual comment about the consumption of whale meat – a cultural taboo based in your home culture that you would find insensitive.

6. Learn to withhold judgment.

Your short-term trip will affect you deeply and take months to process. Save your conclusions for later. You may think one person is “too aloof” and another “doesn’t get much done,” but hold these opinions lightly. Sort them out when you get back to your home.

Remember, your intuition won’t serve you the way it does at home. It may help you “read” folks in your own culture, but expect it to be unreliable in your new setting – especially when you first arrive. An embarrassed grin in one culture looks different in another. Laughter has different meanings too. It can take years to understand these subtleties. And don’t presume you can “read” a veteran missionary who speaks your language and once lived in your culture. You can’t be certain which embarrassed smile that “third culture” person uses.

You can build deep, enriching relationships with the national Christians and career missionaries you meet. Ask God to help you approach them with love and sensitivity. Remember your role as a short-term missionary – to learn and to serve.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

UNWANTED BAGGAGE

There’s some luggage you carry when you travel abroad that you can’t see and you can’t check on an airline. It’s “cultural baggage.” And it’s part of you, although you aren’t aware of it.

When you open your cultural baggage, you’ll find it’s full of who you are and how you got that way. Your best preparation for short-term mission is to get a clearer view of yourself. Examine your cultural baggage and try to find out which

circumstances and influences helped shape your life and outlook. What values determine your lifestyle and decisions?

Most of us are unaware of what makes our society unique in the human family. We are often unaware of the values we hold dear – the ones that infiltrate our belief systems, like personal liberty. We are jealous of our rights. Individualistic. Self-centered. Our society is based on individualism and lends itself more to competition than cooperation, success than service, material goods than spiritual peace.

Unlock Your Baggage

Use the following questions for personal reflection. Your answers can help you unlock the mysteries of your “cultural baggage.”

What priorities does my culture teach?

1. Where do these priorities come from?
2. What main cultural influences have shaped my life? Start with basic factors like age, sex, and race.
3. How do other cultures shape the people who live in them?
4. Which culture values will give me the most trouble in another culture?
5. Which of my personal characteristics will be the most difficult for others to handle?

Which of my values are strictly scriptural? This question isn’t as easy as it sounds.

Which cultural values can I afford to leave behind?

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

DEVELOPING AND WRITING YOUR TESTIMONY

Discuss – What’s good about the Good News? Motivate using John 8, 9.

A well-written personal testimony:

- is a powerful tool in evangelism
- is easy and natural to use in conversation
- is proof that our God is alive and active in our lives
- gives evidence that cannot be denied or refuted

A poorly written personal testimony

- gets too long
- focuses on a sinful past
- is vague
- does not illustrate God at work in a life

General Structure

Begin with an engaging introduction. It can include:

- thanking God for the opportunity to be with the host congregation
- a greeting in their language
- something you are enjoying about their country, a light/funny story about why you came to their country or a cultural blunder you made

Think of a testimony as a series of paintings that depict your life. Describe the paintings for your audience. There are two types of testimonies: a salvation testimony and a testimony of God's activity. If you really want to be versatile and sensitive to your audience's context, you will prepare one testimony of each type.

1.) Salvation Testimony

- Your life, thoughts, priorities or relationships before believing in Jesus
- How you came to believe in Jesus or came to trust in Jesus daily
- Your life, thoughts, priorities or relationships since believing in Jesus

2.) Testimony of God's Activity

- How God has made a difference in your life recently (how He's answered a prayer, met a need, spoken to you, led you on this mission trip, etc.)
- Invite others to seek this same God who can make a difference in their lives.

Brainstorm

- Pray for God to guide you to recall the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- Take 10 minutes to write down ideas of things that could be included.
- Think of an occasion that could be described to illustrate the point (a story of worrying during exams to illustrate that you were a worrier). Use an illustration people from that area of the world would understand.

Write

Take 15 minutes to gather ideas into an outline. Aim for a 3-minute testimony. Avoid complex sentences, word plays, puns, idioms and Christian slang.

Practice

Divide up in pairs, preferably experienced with inexperienced. Give each person three minutes to share his rough draft. The listener can take notes for evaluation.

Evaluate

The listening partner gives feedback on what was said. Consider:

- How did faith in Jesus influence this person?
- What did I learn about Jesus?

- Was faith in Jesus the pivot point?
- Were there any words used that a non-believer might not understand? i.e., saved, freed, “He” for Jesus and God (“God” is more generic, use “Jesus” primarily)
- Were there any negative comments about churches or denominations?
- Did it contain specific examples?
- Was it fresh and interesting?

Rewrite

Give appropriate time to write out testimonies word for word. A written copy is useful for the translator.

Be Sensitive

- To your *translator* – Make sure your translator understands what you are saying. Be patient if they have questions. It’s wise to make your translator look good, so don’t get impatient or make it appear that they are making mistakes.

Give your translator a copy of your testimony well in advance so they can translate it on paper if needed. It should be written double-spaced so they can write underneath each line. Ask your translator if they prefer you to read it phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, or in its entirety. Most usually prefer sentence by sentence.

Always remember to thank your translator when you are finished. Express your gratitude twice – a public thanks in front of the audience immediately afterward and then a private thanks later.

- To your *audience* – This may be the first Christian testimony some people in the audience hear. You are excited to be there and have a lot to share with them, but there is a limit to how much they can take in. Don’t cram your testimony so full that no one remembers your point. It is better to share a little and have people understand than to share a lot and overwhelm them. Remember that the most powerful testimony you will give is by living your life for Christ. Do not preach to your audience. Simply invite them to take a closer look at who you are by sharing what Christ is doing in your life.

TIPS FOR SPEAKING AND PREACHING USING A TRANSLATOR

1. Be aware that there is no 100% perfect correspondence between an English word and a word in another language. Since most words have nearly exact correspondence, most of the time, that will not cause any problems. However, if your sermon speaks of attitudes of the heart or personality traits, you may get the wrong translation.

2. Go over your sermon with the translator ahead of time, if possible. If he is inexperienced, go over the whole sermon. If he is an experienced translator, you may need to check only a few keywords with him.
3. Be aware of differences in Bible translations. Your favorite Bible verse may not be as clear or emphatic in another language. (You can see this in English by comparing verses in the King James with a modern translation. Note Isaiah 10:27.) The French, Spanish, and German Bibles are closer to the modern translations than King James. If your sermon is based on a word or particular phrase from your English Bible, be sure to check with the missionary or translator about what their Bible says. Sometimes, the word in the other language does not support your point. A difficult term in some languages (for example, German and some African languages) is "spirit" (referring to the human spirit). Check what you want to say with the translator.
4. Avoid expressions like, "Hello?" or "Are you with me?" They are meaningless in other languages.
5. Telling jokes is also dangerous ground. In some countries and in some churches, it is completely wrong to tell any joke from the pulpit. Even when it is accepted, the joke may not translate intelligently. What is humorous to us may not be to others. Plays on words don't translate; don't use them.
6. If you use alliteration in your sermons, don't expect it to translate in alliterative form in the other language.
7. Avoid idiomatic expressions, especially new ones that the translator will not know. Even missionary translators who know the expressions will have difficulty translating them.
8. Many audiences in developing nations are unfamiliar with computers, lasers, television, etc. Choose illustrations they can understand.
9. It takes longer to interpret the sermon than to preach it. Fifteen or twenty minutes of preaching makes a 40-minute sermon. Don't be too lengthy.

If possible, practice having your testimony or sermon translated before going overseas! You'll be surprised how much you learn!



PART 7 – FUNDRAISING GUIDE

GUIDING VALUES

There's no escaping the fact that mission trips cost money. If the thought of financial matters stresses you out, read on. There is hope.

Fund raising is usually not a sweet-sounding phrase to our ears. We wish the money was just there and we didn't have to ask for help. But fund raising is not just something you have to do before you can go on a mission trip. It is very much a part of the trip. It is a learning experience. It builds unity among team members and gives supporters a sense of sharing in your ministry. You are embarking on an adventure of faith, even before you get on the airplane! Here are some ideas to help you save up for your mission trip.

GUIDING VALUES

Pray.

God will give you faith and peace. Ask for wisdom; ask for providential contacts. Remember, ours is a God who rose from the dead: ask for a miracle! Get your friends and church to pray for you.

Plan.

If you start right away, you can save toward the trip cost by putting away a manageable amount of money weekly. Make a list of realistic ways to earn, save, or raise money.

Persevere.

Stick to your commitments. Work hard, and be resilient. If one plan doesn't work, reevaluate and try another. Continue to pursue Jesus. Think of the fund-raising process as an act of worship. God loves childlike faith and a submissive heart.

Say Thanks!

Your supporters have invested in you. Thank each one personally for their prayers and support! Report back to them about your experiences. People give because they are excited about your ministry opportunity, and they want to hear about the ways God worked on your trip and how it is affecting your life. Above all, thank Jesus. Ultimately, it is an act of His providence that any of us can go anywhere.

DONATIONS

By committing to being part of a mission trip, you are putting yourself in a position to learn about missions and to see how God is working in another part of the world. When people contribute to your mission funds, they are sending you to work within a whole ministry and to bring the lessons you learn back with you. Often, this exchange is quite joyful and spiritually fruitful, not a burden or obligation on behalf of the donor. When you are soliciting funds for a mission trip, keep this perspective in mind, allowing this attitude to guide you both before and after your trip.

Here are some ways you can partner with donors:

- Whenever possible, share your desires for your mission trip with your friends and family when you gather in person. Help them to see your vision and participate in it.
- If your pastor approves, you can send a letter or email to people you trust who will pray for and support you. Their prayers will strengthen and sustain you for your mission. See the [sample letter](#) for your reference.
- Ask your church for an opportunity to share briefly about your mission trip and invite donations. When you return home, be sure to share how the Lord worked and what you learned through your mission experience.

Things to consider when partnering with donors:

- Share the details of the ministry you will be doing and why you feel called to go. This way, you are asking them to contribute to a cause they can believe in and a person they can trust.
- Ask for a specific dollar amount or tell them the total figure you have been asked to raise for the trip. This helps them to grasp how they can practically contribute.
- Give clear directions regarding where and how to send money and what your deadlines are. In order to receive a tax deduction for their gift, donors must give to the project as a whole rather than to a specific individual.
- Be sure to personally thank all your donors for their investment in your life and ministry. Share pictures and stories with them after you've returned so they can hear about the ways God worked on your trip and how it affected your life.

SUPPORT LETTERS

Before sending letters, talk to your pastor and ensure that your church is behind your mission and supports your letters. Working together with your church is essential!

Answer some or all of the following questions as you write your support letter. Remember to keep it brief!

1. What is important information about the country/culture you are going to? Consider the area, population, main religions, literacy rate, per capita income, etc.
2. What do your supporters need to know about FMWM as well as the specific ministry for which you'll be working?
3. What you will be doing? Include why you are doing this particular project/assignment and how much the assignment will cost.
4. Will you be keeping a blog, emailing, or communicating in other ways while abroad? Let your supporters know as they will probably want to keep up with you!
5. Why do you want to be involved in this particular mission? What are your strongest reasons for going on this assignment?
6. How can your readers support you? List specific expenses that comprise the ministry cost, and suggest they sponsor a portion of your trip. Keep it simple. Include specific prayer requests as well.

7. How can contributors respond? Include the following:

- Whether you are requesting prayer, financial assistance or both
- How to write checks or give online to your church
- Where to mail checks
- Deadline for turning in money

Make sure to personally thank all your donors for their investment in your life and ministry!! Share pictures and stories when you return!

Adapted from Vacations with a Purpose, Chris Easton and Kim Hurst, 1993, David C. Cook Publishing Co., Elgin, IL.

SAMPLE SUPPORT LETTER

Best Practice: Don't delay in sending thank you notes after receiving donations!

[Include the date and a greeting.]

November 10, 20--

Dear Kendra,

[Introduce what you'll be doing.]

I'm heading to Rwanda this coming July to help with teacher training for several Free Methodist schools! I'll be part of a team from my church and will be gone for two weeks. I know this will be a time of personal growth for me and a time of great service to the Rwandan people with whom I'll be working!

[Tell your story and a description of what God is doing or has done in your life leading to this point.]

When I was in high school I went on a VISA team to Mexico. That experience turned my heart inside out and my life upside down. For starters, I no longer think it is someone else's responsibility to "go into all the world and preach the gospel." As I helped with Bible school, I learned that I had a knack for teaching and that God could use my talent "across the border," even for just a short trip. He can stretch my abilities into something more wonderful than I ever imagined.

[Paint a picture of the work already going on in the country and your role in that work. Give specific details and/or history of the country, if you can.]

Now that I've finished college and have a degree in teaching I believe God has given me this opportunity to go to Rwanda, Africa, where there is a great need for quality education. Because of the desire for a good education, many are sending

their kids to Free Methodist schools and the teacher's are asking for more training, especially in the area of science, which I love. My team is going to work with the national teachers our second week and have a science-centered Bible day camp for children in the community. I'm really looking forward to the module I'll be leading on creation.

[Outline the reality of your financial needs.]

I'm able to finance my own travel expenses, but the Rwandan teachers don't have the funds to travel from their villages to meet for training in the city. Our team is committed to resource them and my part is \$1000. In order to see this project through, our whole team will be contributing \$5,500 by June 15th. Pray that the Lord will provide the necessary money and that I will be a blessing to those with whom I serve.

[Explain how to donate funds.]

If you feel the Lord leading you to give financially toward this ministry, please make your check payable to: First Free Methodist Church, and designate "VISA - Rwanda July 20-- on the memo line. All contributions are tax-deductible, as allowed by law. Please don't write your checks to me personally if you want a charitable contribution receipt.

Thanks for your interest in my life!!

God Bless,

Kelsey Caldwell

[Include a brief "PS" personal note for each of your sponsors if you wish.]

P.S. Thanks for being such an amazing college roommate! College wouldn't have been the same without you.

EVENT EFFORTS

Events are one-time projects designed to rally community support for the cause. Events have great fund-raising potential but are often more labor-intensive than people realize. The cost in time, as well as the necessary expenses, must be considered. Keep in mind that events should complement, rather than replace, your private raising efforts.

Ideas for fundraising events:

Put on a free community service, like a car wash, which accepts donations.

Organize a dinner at your church featuring food from the country where you will be serving, collecting donations and/or setting a price for the meal.

Organize a rummage sale or auction at your church, soliciting item donations from members of the team, congregation, and neighborhood.

Sell baked goods, coffee, or other items on Sunday mornings at your church.

Hold a 5k race for the community with a participation charge, T-shirts, and an outdoor food stand with drinks and snacks for purchase.

Things to consider with event fundraisers:

Clearly explain your purpose and vision for your mission trip.

Assess your target group: are you raising funds through your church, school, neighborhood, etc.? Different constituencies will have different needs.

Assess the skills and talents of your group who will be holding the event. Is someone on your team good at baking, sewing, art, acting, comedy, etc.? Make use of their talents.

Calculate the cost of your event and weigh it with the potential gain. Be careful to avoid costly events that will not draw in a lot of income.

SAVING

Saving is an often neglected discipline; most of us would be shocked to see how much money we waste each day. Saving money is generally a more fruitful way to pull money together than event-oriented fundraisers like car washes. However, saving is a hard discipline since it makes higher demands on your lifestyle than an event. Beyond piecing together a couple thousand dollars, you will develop better money-management skills as you save for your mission trip.

- Set a goal that is a reasonable amount to put aside in a week. Write it down, and stick to it.
- Ask a trusted and responsible friend to demand progress updates from you.
- Open a new bank account for your mission money to keep you from spending it.
- Look over your daily spending patterns. How much money do you spend on fast food? You'll save five to ten dollars every time you pack a lunch. How much money do you spend on little food luxuries like snacks and candy? Or that cappuccino habit you've acquired? Making even minor cuts in these areas (besides being good for your body) could save several dollars a week.
- What about your spontaneous spending habits? How often do you buy books or music? If you check out books from the library rather than buying them, you'll save fifteen dollars at a time.

- What about entertainment? There are many things to do for free, and the savings add up quickly.
- What if you get off track? Don't beat yourself up, but do what you can and try to return to your rhythm. Don't try to catch up; continue from where you are.
- Be encouraged! If breaking habits is hard for you, congratulations on trying! Remember that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Pray for spiritual strength. You are doing more than saving for a mission trip; you are developing discipline.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, the Apostle Paul wrote: "All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything." Talk to other Christians and ask them to pray for you. We are all in this together, and if we can learn how to serve God better with our resources, the better for the whole body of saints.

EARNING

How do you earn a couple thousand dollars when you barely have time to breathe? The secret is to make use of structures you already have in place. However, be sure to have a thankful heart. The financial liberty we have is a great privilege in today's world. Unemployment, destitution, bonded labor, and perpetual warfare affect billions of people around the world. We must never take even part-time jobs for granted but should focus on the bounty of Christ's blessings. We often grumble about going to jobs that seem drudgery, but a job is a gift from His hands and an opportunity to worship Him.

- Pray! God will show you where to go, where not to go, and how to earn the money.
- If you have a part-time job, consider adding a couple of hours per week as "mission hours." Over a few months, you could put together a good portion of your mission trip costs.
- Check out the classified ads in your newspaper or tell your community that you are willing to do odd jobs. Paint a house or fence, rake leaves, mow lawns, or weed gardens. Stuff ads at a newspaper, help with an organization's large mailing, assist a store with inventory, or help someone move.

- Remember to do high-quality work and finish your job (including the clean-up). You are not performing or entertaining but serving. People rarely hire you to exploit cheap labor but to give to your cause. Make an effort to show Christ to them.
- Consider tutoring. Many people underestimate their academic skills and their marketability. Sometimes, universities will pay for conversational partners for international students. What about tutoring local high school students? Many schools have money set aside for tutors for disadvantaged or at-risk kids. This could be a tremendous use of your time and a great way to learn about the heartbeat of your city. Call a local high school and ask if they have a program for hiring tutoring services.
- Tithe. Income is income, regardless of the source, and God's provision is worthy of our praise, regardless of the vehicle He uses. Ultimately, any money you raise is God's blessing, more than the fruit of your own hand. Tithing is a physical demonstration of our faith that He provides for our needs.



PART 8 – SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

EXPECTATIONS

REALISTIC PLANS FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION

By: Robertson McQuilkin

Avoid disappointment and discouragement by taking a good, clear look at what short-term mission isn't. Then praise the Lord for the wonderful things he does accomplish through the short-term experience.

Short-term Missions Can't:

1. Help you try out being a “career missionary”. A short-term mission venture isn't a trial run. Something is tried on a short-term trip, but – like a trial marriage – it isn't long-term commitment. Effectiveness in long-term missionary work is integrally tied to the deep level of identification prolonged commitment brings. This includes mastery of the language and a solid understanding and appreciation of the culture. None of this can

happen in a short time. A short-term mission trip might be better compared to dating. You have fun together. You get to know one another. You share in wonderful and meaningful ways. But in time, you both move on to other relationships and other situations.

2. Help you solve “big” problems. Short-term missionaries rarely solve major problems during their short stay. You aren’t going to save the world. You won’t see a seismic spiritual impact in the country you visit. The work of evangelizing and church planting is a cooperative effort that takes many lives over a long time.
3. Help you “buy off” God. Short-term mission isn’t a way to soothe guilt over the condition of the world and lack of involvement in finding a solution. It’s not a way to “put in time.” The question of how you respond to the Great Commission is a broader question of your surrender to the Lord and His direction in your life. It can’t be brokered by a short-term mission experience.

Short-term Missions Can:

1. **Give you a wonderful education.** If you are well prepared for your trip, have good supervision during your stay, and find ways to debrief after you get home, you’ll find you’ve learned a great deal – about yourself, about another culture, and about God’s work in the world.
2. **Inspire you.** The short-term experience can infect you with the excitement of God’s plan for the ages. Not only can it transform your life, it can also bubble over to others as you share with them upon your return.
3. **Lead you to a deeper commitment.** Whether it’s a future career as a long-term missionary or a resolve to support the mission emphasis back home, a short-term missionary experience can point toward a permanent response to the Lord. It can be a stepping stone to a lifetime of investment in bringing the world to Christ.

Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.

By Floyd McClung, Jr.

God wants to use you to change the world. You really can make a difference. Take the challenge. Join a short-term mission outreach and become the Lord's eyes and ears to the lost. His voice and touch to those in need.

I still see faces from my first trip to the West Indies twenty-seven years ago. Little children – eyes alight at hearing the Gospel for the first time. Street gangs – shedding their tough exteriors at the simple witness of other young people gathered on a street corner to talk about a God who cares. Pastors and missionaries – encouraged by team members who were willing to sleep anywhere in order to help evangelize. This deep fellowship, spiritual devotion, and intense ministry changed my life forever.

Short-term mission is firmly based in Scripture. Jesus Christ Himself sent disciples on evangelism trips lasting only days or weeks – at times without financial support. He wanted them to learn to depend on God for every need. Their reports back to Him were times of blessing and instruction for all. Short-term mission trips today still reflect the value Christ placed on them.

Get practical experience. As you test yourself in a real-life setting, you'll become aware of your strengths and weaknesses. You'll find out where you need to be stretched in order to grow. Unlike theoretical study, this is on the job training.

Lend energy and enthusiasm. New and fresh, you can present your spiritual, emotional, and physical reserves as a gift to an ongoing missionary effort. Using short-term teams, one missionary in Thailand planted over twenty-five churches – and this among Buddhists who speak no English. Short-term music and drama teams are sometimes allowed where full time workers are barred and they can flood prisons, hospitals, and schools with “Son” light.

Confirm your calling. A short-term outreach gives you the chance to test your cross-cultural abilities, and to prayerfully examine your sense of calling in the midst of another culture. Jesus intended short-term mission to be a vital link to long-term missionary involvement – whether as a career missionary or as a support person back home.

Accept the challenge. You often hear that God wants to use you in furthering His Kingdom. You can channel your efforts in a positive direction with a well-planned short-term mission. Mistakes along the way will be turned to learning experiences under the guidance of a steady pastor.

Become a vital link. You can bring love in many forms to long-term missionaries who are separated from their home congregations. And when you return home, you'll know better how to support and encourage them from afar.

Gain new perspective. I left on my first short-term mission when I was only 19 years old. God spoiled me for the ordinary. I could not come back and live the way I had before. The American way of life no longer had a hold on my heart. I had seen God use me. I had helped people meet a loving Savior. Nothing was ever the same.

God wants to use you too. You really can make a difference. Short-term mission will point the way to a lifetime of involvement in spreading the Gospel to every tongue and nation. Give the Lord a chance to convince you. Join His short-term team.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

SHAPE UP FOR MISSION:

A Personal Fitness Training Routine for Short-Term Mission

By: Steve Hoke

Like high altitude mountain climbing, short-term mission takes careful planning. If you “train” right and “pack” well, you’ll be ready to handle the unexpected and weather the difficulties. Here’s a “personal fitness training” program with three levels – self awareness, sensitivity, and practical skills. Greater self awareness will lead to greater sensitivity which, in turn, will help you develop greater practical skills.

Self Awareness Level

You carry your culture with you – whether you’re conscious of it or not. Self-awareness begins with a clearer understanding of yourself. Until you see yourself as you really are, you’ll see others from a distorted point of view. The first part of your personal fitness training program helps you gain a balanced perspective.

God wants to change you. And He’ll go to extraordinary lengths to transform your life. “Teachability” means “stretchability.” You must allow the Holy Spirit to stretch the wineskins of your soul, to expand your vision, to enlarge your heart, and to extend your reach beyond yourself – to the whole world.

What do you know about yourself?

Take time to know who you are. Let the Holy Spirit form your inner self through worship, corporate and private prayer, learning and applying Scripture, and loving service. Meditation, fasting, reflective writing and reading, and contemplation are helpful too.

Mission leaders have become increasingly concerned about their candidates' lack of spiritual depth. Character faults and interpersonal problems are the primary source of difficulty on the mission field. Fragmented Christians in spiritual identity crisis have little to offer baby Christians in other cultures. Rather than imparting Christ, they often export their own dysfunctionality.

Master the message of Romans, Philippians, and Colossians. Let the Father overwhelm and refresh you. Accept a heightened sense of your identity as His child, an heir to His promises and power. Take this new identity with you into the spiritual battle ahead.

What do you know about your home culture?

Don't wait to travel abroad to discover the essential traits and values that characterize your culture to the watching world. Step outside yourself through reading and by talking with others from different cultural backgrounds. Build an ongoing awareness and acceptance of cultural differences and diversities. Check your "cultural baggage" as well as your suitcases before you leave – to see if it passes God's inspection.

What do you know about your call to missions?

How well do you understand your basic call to mission and your motivation for going on a short-term venture? Maximize your personal fitness training by examining your motives in light of the biblical reasons for obedience and evangelism.

Keep a journal to reflect on God's work in your life and your response to Him. Read current mission articles. Dip into great mission biographies – people like Bruchko, William Carey, Elisabeth Elliot, Jim Elliot, James Fraser, Isobel Kuhn, Helen Roseveare and Hudson Taylor.

What do you expect from your short-term mission?

Check out your expectations against any information you can gather on the realities of the situation. What will the experience really demand? What value will it really have? Develop this by reflecting on your expectations, writing them down, and talking them over with others.

What do you know about God's plan for the nations?

You don't need to be a biblical scholar or an expert on missions to be effective as a short-term missionary. Still, a firm grasp of God's "policy" for reaching people and an appreciation of the Church's responsibility in world evangelism will provide a foundation in mission. Combine your personal study of the Bible with recent studies outlining God's plan for the nations.

Sensitivity Level

Short-term missionaries today must be "world Christians." As a world Christian, you'll be sensitive to people from other cultures – gaining a basic understanding of

their values, emotions, and behaviors. You'll seek to learn who they are, what they feel, and how they act.

What about general knowledge?

No one expects you to know everything. You need some background knowledge, however, to be an effective short-term missionary. You can learn about your host culture through individual study. Books, magazine articles, and television shows are your best source of current information. You'll have to dig a little harder if you're going to an isolated, "unreached peoples" area of the world.

Knowledge about your host church and its history is hard to gather from general sources. Look to the organization that's sponsoring your short-term mission trip for help on this one. Correspondence with missionaries and national Christians can fill in the picture.

What about values?

It's hard to find a perfect fit between what you say and what you do. But as you strive for values that lead to sensitivity, it's helpful to cover three dimensions.

1. The Kingdom dimension.

A missionary today must be a servant from head to foot. Do you know the difference between God's values and those of the "good life?" Have you matched your core values against those Jesus Christ taught in the Gospels?

A missionary today must follow a simple lifestyle, leaving the "good life" behind to minister to those who are struggling for life itself. Immerse yourself in the values of the Sermon on the Mount. Study Christ's life as a model for living and working in all levels of any society. Evaluate your own values by examining your daily lifestyle. Pray that the Holy Spirit will transform your inner person.

2. The cultural dimension.

After you've established a Kingdom mentality, you must acclimate yourself to the basic cultural values of your host society. What values do they attach to relationships, family, children, work, wealth, religion, God, the present, the future? The list goes on. Add a "learner mentality" to any information you gain. Remember books can be wrong or out of date. Or you may have filtered the information through the wrong cultural sieve.

Lengthen your cultural "antenna" when you arrive. Ask questions and listen to the answers with an open mind. Get acquainted with your new setting. Notice details. Do young women talk to older men? Do men hold hands with other men while talking or walking? Do people clean their plates when they eat? Cultural rules are broken more often by doing the wrong thing than by saying the wrong thing.

With Kingdom culture in your heart, you must adapt your spirituality to the customs of your host society whenever possible. When missionaries fail to identify spiritually with host people and local cultures, it's difficult for the Gospel to become incarnate.

3. The apprenticeship dimension.

You are God's representative, His ambassador. You must follow the "Jesus model" and reject any prestige that may be assigned a "wealthy foreigner." Your ministry must be incarnational as you identify with the people you wish to serve. Training by apprenticeship – something not often found in schools – is the most natural preparation for ministry. Do you have a spiritual mentor? If not, find one before you go abroad. Learn to receive instruction from a person who is further along than you are in the spiritual walk. A "seminary of the streets" would pair new missionaries in mentoring relationships with experienced national or missionary co-workers. Where would Paul or John Mark in the Bible have been without Barnabas as their mentor to lead them into greater ministry?

Practical Skills Level

The last part of your personal fitness training involves the basic communication and ministry skills necessary to build relationships. Eight skills will help you become a successful cross-cultural missionary.

1. Coping Skills.

Change begins at the moment of birth when you greet the outside world. Some of us resist these changes more than others. What's your response to change? Do you embrace it? Or do you stand back and wish it would go away? Visualize your move to another culture. This time you'll be handling change at every level – and all at once. But you can adjust. Even if you're one of those who initially resists change, you can fit in. Remember that your coping skills are linked to your "entry posture." Attitudes of openness, acceptance, and trust as you arrive will pave the way for you to be flexible, adaptable, and unflappable. And when you hit the inevitable frustrations of missed cues, nonverbal signals, and unfamiliar customs, remember you're a learner. And this is what learning is all about.

2. Listening Skills.

Jesus always seemed to know when and how to respond to a person's need. As He listened to the woman at the well, He detected nuances of feeling, inner questions, and unspoken concerns. Your listening must be active too – your listening skills finely tuned. It's difficult enough to understand one another without the language barrier. With language in the way, only a listening heart can make the difference.

3. Observing skills.

Are you a curious person? How well do you pick up on cues? Use all your senses. How do things look, feel, sound, smell and taste? Use observation games and drills to increase your perceptual skills. As an observing servant, you will grow in your ability to discern the needs of those around you.

4. Friendship skills.

Build healthy relationships at home. Learn what it means to become a faithful friend. Good relationships will prepare you for the main event on the mission field

– building holy relationships that allow you to become a bridge for Christ’s love. Don’t force the Lord as a topic of every conversation. Let the needs and questions of those you meet become natural doors through which to bring His life.

5. Facilitating skills.

Nowhere is the role of facilitator needed more than in short-term mission. Like Barnabas, you can play a significant role in a brief time by learning to become an encouraging facilitator. A missionary facilitator comes along side national Christians to ease and aid their work – whether it’s digging a well, diagnosing a disease, feeding the hungry, or planning a better future.

6. Participation skills.

Do you remember a time when you were in a group and no one asked your opinion? When you had something to offer, but no one let you participate? This is how local people often feel when visiting “experts” descend with their “help.” No one allows them to join in designing their own future. Learn to elicit participation. Ask questions. Accept suggestions. Follow the Master by learning to operate as part of a team.

7. Empowering skills.

People are immobilized by feelings of powerlessness. The hungry half who go to bed without enough food every night. The urban half who have lost hope in the cities. The younger half who can’t take care of themselves. Subgroups of every society – women, poor, disabled, sick, unemployed, uneducated, and illiterate – who have been pushed to the margins. Perhaps what they need most of all is someone to encourage them.

They need help to believe in themselves. To value their own history and culture. To become actively involved in seeking a better future for themselves. To hear the Good News and understand God’s purpose for their lives. This is what “empowering” does. It shares energy. It builds confidence that a task – once thought impossible – is within reach through Christ.

You can’t take an “Empowering 101” class. And you can’t learn it from a book. You learn what it is and how to do it by truly loving the people you serve. You empower others as you allow the Lord to breathe His life through you into their hearts and minds. This empowerment rekindles inner dreams and ignites the hope for change.

8. Spiritual-Warfare Skills.

As a short-term missionary, you’ll be joining a fight – sometimes locked in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, sometimes battling as part of a group, sometimes pausing to re-arm before the next attack. Make no mistake. You must learn how to fight the spiritual fight.

But how? Study the prayers of the psalmists, the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus himself. When things got tough, what did David do and to whom did he go? How did Jesus pray in the garden before his encounter with the devil? Your best preparation for spiritual warfare is to learn from your spiritual elders – in the

Bible, at home, safety is in being part of a strong spiritual team. Don't be a "Lone Ranger" Christian. Come to the battle as part of an army equipped with the armor of God.

Personalize Your Fitness Training

Personal fitness training before you leave on a short-term mission venture is important, but it's not a substitute for "on site training" once you arrive. You need both. Let your training at home spur you toward on-going instruction when you get there. No amount of "pre-field" experience can replace the real classroom. Personalize this "personal fitness training" program. Take these ideas and add your own. Enhance your self-awareness. Focus your sensitivities. Sharpen your basic skills. Begin your short-term missionary venture in the best shape possible and stay healthy throughout your trip.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

LEARNERS, SERVANTS, AND STORYTELLERS

By: Tim Gibson

Attitude. It's the most important aspect of the short-term mission experience. The right attitude has three parts: the roles of **learner**, **servant**, and **storyteller**.

Become a Learner

As a learner, you take responsibility for yourself and for what happens to you. You trust God to use you. Ask questions to make the most of your experience – questions about what you're seeing, hearing and feeling. As a learner, you come to another culture to find out how people think and what God is doing among them. Your expectations are based on learning what God is already doing, not in your own ability to convert others or to make a lasting contribution.

Become a Servant

As a servant, you follow Christ's own example. He labeled Himself a servant rather than a leader. Servants are rare in our culture, but their attitude allows them to facilitate others in their own unique visions. A true servant asks, "How do you want this to be done?" instead of saying, "Let me show you the right way to do it." God has given His vision to people all over the world. As a servant, you try to understand the particular vision God has given His people in your host culture. Then offer your help to facilitate their efforts.

Become a Storyteller

As a storyteller, you feel free to tell your own story because it belongs to you. It's easier to share what God has done in your life, though, if you listen first to others, the stories of their lives, their culture, and their perceptions of the world. As you tell your story in return, you encourage them to think about their lives in God. This isn't preaching. It's simply the honest record of your life with the Lord – past, present, up and down. It soon becomes natural to talk freely about how God is working.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*



PART 9 – RE-ENTRY

READY FOR ANYTHING

You had the “perfect trip” in mind. You planned every detail, checked and rechecked all plans, designed charts and made lists. But your short-term trip wasn’t the perfect package. In fact, you think it was a disaster. So what went wrong?

Simple. You got on the plane. If Murphy’s Laws apply anywhere, it’s in the context of short-term mission trips. Consider the odds of nothing going wrong with this mix of variables:

- Communication across cultures and languages
- Shifting political movements
- Changing economies
- Fluctuating airfares

- Parental expectations versus pastoral descriptions
- Hotel accommodations
- Food preferences
- Bus and train schedules
- Team members
- Diseases (fifty identified strains of malaria so far)
- Underpaid staff
- Age ranges
- Theological ranges
- Differing tolerances
- Racism
- Sexism
- Nationalism
- Narcissism
- Perfectionism

Be surprised if nothing goes wrong. Be absolutely amazed! There are two important points to remember about the unpredictability of short-term mission trips. Things go wrong because there are so many variables. And a large part of what goes “wrong” is really your “expectations.”

Plan well. Not so that everything will go “according to plan,” but to reduce the potential for mishaps. If you’re relying on an agency to put the details of the trip together, go with one that has a long history of providing good service. Ask for references and talk to previous clients.

If you’re going on your own, do careful research. Learn all you can. Then adopt an attitude of flexibility and laughter. Aim for the perfect attitude to handle the unexpected – rather than focusing on perfect circumstances.

Exposure to different ways of life is the core of cultural learning. And you can’t deal with different ways until you meet them. That’s why things really can’t go “according to plan.”

You’ve decided to invest time and money in an experience that will expand your worldview. Go with it. Let the experience teach you and cause you to grow. At times, it may be threatening, but it’s worth the work.

TRANSFORMING A TRIP

TURNING A NEGATIVE TRIP INTO A POSITIVE MEMORY

By: Harry Burke

It's hard to construct a clear picture of a negative short-term mission trip. It can result from any number of problems – bad weather, illness, unfamiliar food, personality conflicts, doctrinal disagreements – in a long list of difficulties. The “success” of any trip, however, depends largely on a person's perspective. If you've had a “bad trip, there's still time to turn it into a valuable learning experience.

Paul's Difficult Journeys

Consider the difficulties the apostle Paul described in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. “Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches.”

The most likely source of negative feelings about your short-term experience is your own expectations. Cultural adjustment is an occupational hazard in any cross-cultural venture. And it can lead to discouragement. Take time to evaluate the factors in your disappointment. Reevaluate the original goals of your trip. How were they unrealistic? How could you have changed them to make the trip more positive? What do you think God's goals for you actually were?

Time for Reflection

Your response to these questions is important. Disappointment may turn to anger and depression if you don't understand the cause and give your feelings to the Lord for His intervention. When anger and depression run their course, they can cause you to reject others, mission work, and even – God Himself. The process of reflection allows you to rethink your expectations and give them to the Lord. Then you can accept His priorities for you and allow Him to weave the experience into your life as He sees best.

Not everyone is called to become a career missionary. Perhaps yours is a different calling. This “negative” experience may help you coordinate your individual gifts

with your sense of Christian vocation – enabling you to more effectively serve Christ. If you allow the Lord to turn a negative trip into a positive memory, your commitment to Jesus Christ will continue to grow. There's a place for everyone in furthering His Kingdom – whether it's at home as an advocate for missions or on the field as a missionary.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

EXTENDING YOUR TRIP

SIX DISCIPLINES TO MAKE THE BENEFITS OF A SHORT-TERM EXPERIENCE LAST FOR THE WHOLE OF YOUR LIFE

By: Dave Hicks

After his first week of door-to-door literature evangelism in France, Stan wanted to grab the first plane back to New York City. Everything about the short-term mission trip threatened to overwhelm him. Several times during the summer, he tried to convince Linda, his wife, to cut their losses and go back home. But she was determined to stay. As difficult as that summer in France was for Stan and Linda, they now see it as a God-fashioned turning point in their lives. They learned God wasn't calling them to be cross-cultural missionaries. Instead, He wanted them to be world mission promoters on the home front.

Shortly after returning to the United States, Stan became the director of missions in their home church. Since then, eight career missionaries, dozens of short-term workers, thousands of dollars, and a consistent mission prayer emphasis have poured from their local church. Stan and Linda keep missions in focus for a whole body of believers by their faithful stewardship of their short-term experience.

Even when a mission trip is difficult, it can have long-term benefits for you and for God's Kingdom. Stan and Linda extended the benefits of a trip to the whole of their lives. How can you do the same? How can you be a good steward of the investment you've made in another culture? These six disciplines will point you in the right direction.

1. DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.

Nothing is more important. A mission experience won't give you spiritual victory for the rest of your life. You need Jesus every day. Make a daily time to read the Bible and reflect on God's Word, to listen for His voice, to worship, and to intercede for others. It is essential for spiritual health.

2. MAKE A FIRM COMMITMENT TO A GROUP OF BELIEVERS.

Beyond this, find at least one believer with whom you can develop ongoing friendship and accountability in the face of life's temptations, complexities, and adversities.

3. VIEW YOUR CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AS A BRIDGE.

Your short-term mission trip is not an isolated event. Let it build on your past and contribute to your future. God wants to use you for His Kingdom – whether here at home or abroad in another culture.

4. KEEP YOUR COMPASSION AND VISION ALIVE.

Minister to hurting people around you. Apply the same cross-cultural skills you learned on your short-term trip with international students, immigrants, and visitors from other countries. Don't forget how wonderful it is to be helped and befriended in a strange land.

5. STAY IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE YOU MEET.

The friendships you've made on the field can grow through prayer and correspondence. And remember the prayer and financial support you needed for your trip? Now, you can turn around and do the same for someone else.

6. BECOME A WINDOW OF THE WORLD FOR OTHERS.

Because you've experienced missions firsthand, you can help interpret the needs of the world to your home congregation. You can also explain the needs of the missionaries your church supports. And you can help train other short-term workers. Your short-term experience can contribute to a life of vision and effectiveness.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*

THE PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGE

THE BEST SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS HAVE STRONG LINKS WITH NATIONAL CHURCHES

By: Edward Ellis

Mission belongs to the local church. It's part of our discipleship and calling. Jesus gave the Great Commission to a local body of believers. As we grasp this concept, the results are extraordinary. But if mission belongs to our own local churches, it

belongs as well to local churches abroad. That's why "partnership" is such a key element in short-term mission.

Partnership works. When short-term programs are planned and carried out in cooperation with host churches, the results benefit everyone. It's a question of stewardship. No single congregation has the insight, contacts, skills, information, and spiritual gifts to carry out the Great Commission alone. We need each other – in short-term mission more than ever.

Evangelization is a task of mutual trust and fellowship. It requires strategic coordination and implementation. The cost of failing to build partnership is high and threatens to prolong world evangelization and rob our witness of credibility.

The Attitude Barrier

Why do our short-term ventures fail to partner effectively? Many of us operate with an unconscious colonialist attitude – seeing mission as the strong doing what their strength permits because the weak are too frail. We elevate our own culture at the expense of others. The result is dependency. Those being evangelized must rely on the "superior" culture and resources of those who evangelize them.

Take a hypothetical example – unfortunately all too close to reality. An American team goes to Haiti to build a church. The Americans bring in equipment and supplies, roll up their sleeves, and begin pouring the foundation. The building is up in a couple of weeks, and the short-termers go home with a sense of fulfillment. They finished the job. The village now has a much-needed church building. What could be wrong with this "sensible" scenario?

The American team came and went without establishing a partnership with the local Haitian church. If they had taken the time to ask and to listen for honest answers, they would have learned that many unemployed Haitian Christians were available to help with the building. Some were experienced builders and could have helped design something better suited to the climate and the needs of the congregation. A precious chance for fellowship and communication was missed because no one took the time to ask the Haitian church to become an active part of the project. There was no partnership.

Models for Good Partnership

We need models to show us how good partnership works. Not long ago, leaders from Ambassadors Fellowship in Los Angeles went to the Africa Inland Church to talk about sending a mission team from African-American congregations here to Kenya. They discussed areas of concern and what such a team might do.

The African church identified two areas of need – youth leadership development, and small business development and evangelization of the business community. The African church also expressed the need for Christian business to help finance their ongoing ministries. Ambassadors agreed to help build a combined conference center, guesthouse, and missionary quarters.

Then Ambassadors recruited six people with the appropriate backgrounds and interests and began forming them into a team. This mission team will live in the conference center while they are in Kenya. When the team has finished its task, the church will have new leaders and a new outreach to the business community. It will also have a revenue center to help it become more self-determining. A source of income for years to come.

Failures of Pre-field Orientation

If you're a leader planning a short-term trip, several important tips will help you partner effectively with a national church or ministry.

1. Pick a mutually beneficial time for the trip with your national partners.
2. Let them determine your schedule while you're there.
3. Ask them to be sure your group makes a needed contribution.
4. Share what your group hopes to learn from their short-term experience, but don't overburden them with your own personal goals.
5. Raise money to help your partners with the costs they'll incur during your stay. Staff time, meals, telephone and transportation costs add up.

The Real Task

Finally, an attitude of serving is the key. We are not in another culture to be served, or to be obeyed, or to be deferred to, but rather to come alongside the local church and help it do its work. Servants enable and empower. This is our real task.

*Reprinted with permission from **THE SHORT TERM MISSION HANDBOOK**, 1st edition, 1992, Berry Publishing Services, Inc., Evanston, IL 60202.*



PART 10 – SAMPLE FORMS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR TEAM

The following forms are for your church (or whatever organization is sponsoring your team). Feel free to tailor the material so it fits your organization best. You do NOT need to share these with VISA staff. See [the list](#) of the documentation that VISA requires to process your team.

SAMPLE TEAM MEMBER APPLICATION

Name	Birthdate (if under 18)
Address	Cell Phone #
	Email
Citizenship	

1. Involvement in Church Ministry:

- How long have you attended this church?
- How are you currently engaged in the ministry of this church?

2. Mission Trip Participation:

- What motivates your desire to participate in this mission trip?
- If you've been on mission trips, provide details such as when, where, and with which organization.

3. Skills and Talents Contribution:

- Describe the skills or talents you believe you can contribute during the mission.

4. First Aid Training:

- Have you undergone First Aid Training?

5. Language Proficiency:

- Do you speak languages other than English? If yes, specify the language(s) and your fluency level.

6. Experience with Diverse Groups:

- Share any experiences you've had with racial, ethnic, or cultural groups outside your own.

7. International Travel Experience:

- Briefly outline your travel experiences outside the United States.

8. Health Assessment:

- How would you categorize your health: [Vigorous, Good, Fair, or Poor]?

9. Medical Concerns Overseas:

- Are there any medical issues that might impact your ministry abroad? Please explain.

10. Faith and Relationship with Jesus:

- Briefly describe your relationship with Jesus and when you came to faith in Christ. Share how God has been working in your life recently.

11. References:

Do you waive your right to see any reference information collected?

Provide three non-family references along with their names and contact numbers.

- Name: _____ Phone: _____
- Name: _____ Phone: _____
- Name: _____ Phone: _____

I affirm that the details provided in this application are accurate and complete. If selected for the VISA team, I agree to engage fully in all aspects of the ministry before, during, and after it's over.

Name: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEAM MEMBERS

- Tell us about your family, your work, and your ministry in this church.
- Share about your conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. How did you become a Christian?
- Describe a specific instance when you had to trust God to meet a critical need.
- Why do you want to be part of our short-term VISA team to _____(country)_____.
- What do you believe you could contribute to this mission trip?
- What do you hope to gain from going?
- Are you financially able to pay at least part of your way?
- How do you feel about raising support?
- If accepted on the team, what difficulties do you anticipate?
- What other concerns do you have?
- If accepted, would your family be supportive? What concerns do/would they have?
- Do you have any health problems that have significance for overseas travel?
- What risks do you think being on this VISA team might entail? How comfortable are you with this?
- How does your body react under stress?
- How much direction do you require to get things done?
- How adventuresome are you in an unfamiliar environment?
- What do you think about staying in the home of someone with whom you're not able to communicate in English?

- What happens when you don't get enough sleep?
- Describe your personal devotional life. Indicate specific areas of recent growth and areas where you would like to grow.
- Are you prepared to follow the guidance of the team leader, national leaders, and FM missionaries as necessary? Does this give you any cause for concern?
- Do you have any reservations about getting vaccinations or taking medication for this trip?
- Do you have any questions for us?

SAMPLE TEAM MEMBER REFERENCE FORM

_____ has applied to be a part of our church ministry team to _____. We'd appreciate it if you would take a moment to answer the following questions, which will help us build a strong team. All information shared will be kept confidential.

Please return this completed form to:

1. How long and under what circumstances have you known the applicant?
2. Can you share any experiences you've had with the applicant that would provide insight into their ability to work effectively as part of a team? Here are some phrases to help illustrate what we're looking for:

- Frequently causes friction
- Insists on own way
- Usually cooperative
- Works well with others

Please explain your response:

3. What strengths have you observed in the applicant that would make them a good team member for overseas ministry?
4. What weaknesses have you observed?
5. Have you experienced the applicant in a stressful or challenging situation? How did they handle the stress or pressure?
6. What is the applicant's typical response to authority? Here are some phrases to help illustrate what we are looking for:
 - Defiant
 - Quietly grudging
 - Respectful-questioning
 - Overly "eager to please"

Please explain your response:

7. Please describe your impression of the applicant's flexibility and capacity to follow a team leader or national leader.

8. Please describe the applicant's Christian experience. Here are some phrases to help illustrate what we are looking for:

- Relatively superficial
- Genuine by mild
- Warmly contagious
- Rich and growing
- Overly-emotional

Please explain your response:

9. Please describe what the applicant's social relationships are like. Here are some phrases to help illustrate what we are looking for:

- Avoided by others
- Tolerated by others
- Liked by others
- Sought out by others

Please explain your response:

10. Do you have any reservations in recommending this person for our team? If so, please explain.

11. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for us to know?

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Feel free to modify and expand this form based on the needs of your church, conference or school.

Personal Information:

Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Address:

Phone (Home):

Phone (Mobile):

Email:

Emergency Contacts:

1. Name:

- **Relationship:**
- **Phone (Mobile):**
- **Phone (Home/Work):**

2. Name:

- **Relationship:**
- **Phone (Mobile):**
- **Phone (Home/Work):**

Medical Information:

- **Primary Care Physician:**
 - **Phone:**
- **Health Insurance Provider:**
 - **Policy Number:**
 - **Emergency Contact Number:**

Allergies:

- List any known allergies (food, medication, etc.):

Current Medications:

- List any medications currently being taken:

Medical Conditions:

- Are there any pre-existing medical conditions we should be aware of?

Immunizations:

- Ensure routine vaccinations are up-to-date.

Special Dietary Needs:

- Specify any dietary restrictions or special requirements.

Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization:

In the event of a medical emergency, I authorize qualified medical professionals to administer necessary treatment and, if required, transport me to the nearest medical facility.

Travel Information:**Passport Number:**

- Destination(s) of the Missions Trip:
- Date of Departure:
- Date of Return:

Additional Information:

- Provide any additional health or emergency-related information you believe is relevant.

By signing below, I confirm that all information provided is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicable): _____

Date: _____