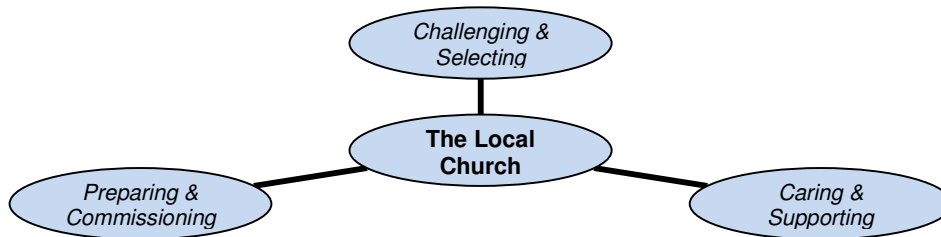


WORLD FOCUS TEAM

Assisting Local Churches and Christians In Global Mission



Resource Paper 14

Good Practice for Churches Commissioning Members for Short-term Mission Service

This statement of good practice is focused on churches commissioning members for cross-cultural ministry of two months to two years duration organised by the church, or a Mission Agency or other Christian organisation. It applies to individual placements, electives, team trips and gap year programmes.

- ❖ **The aim of this statement is to ensure** that planning of, and preparation for, short-term mission service is undertaken well by churches and agencies working together to enable all participants and partners in the programme to find the experience profitable, and assist in increasingly placing mission at the heart of the church in the UK and beyond.
- ❖ **The commissioning church should:**
 - seek to encourage members of the congregation to be involved primarily in mission projects that demonstrate a commitment to Bible-based cross cultural mission.
 - have a clear, and transparent, procedure whereby members of the congregation can make known to the appropriate leader(s) their interest in short-term mission service.
 - evaluate the participant's emotional and spiritual condition to ensure that they can cope with a potentially challenging cross-cultural experience.
 - recognise that it has a responsibility to serve all participants and partners to the highest standards possible.

Clearly, placement situations vary and not every element of this statement will necessarily apply in all cases.

- ❖ **Underlying values that should undergird the process:**

The importance of partnership:

The partners in a short-term mission programme all have a significant contribution to make. They are:

- the participant
- the commissioning church and/or sending agency
- the host church, and/or host agency

There may also be other interested parties involved who should be recognised and included as appropriate. These include the participant's family, supporting friends and, possibly, another Christian community to whom they relate, for example their Christian Union.

See Resource paper 7 in the World Focus section of this website.

Evidence of ministry gifts:

Selection by, and support from, the commissioning church should be focused primarily on those already involved in ministry in the church and/or other Christian community to whom they relate.

Discipleship of the participant:

In recognising the potential impact of short-term mission trips on the participant's faith and personal development, the need for pastoral care and positive discipleship during the placement is important.

The long-term perspective:

Short-term work is often of greater benefit to the person being sent than to those to whom s/he goes. Therefore, it should be primarily considered as training by providing a cross cultural experience upon which it is hoped the participant may build in the future.

❖ **General considerations:**

A short-term mission programme must have clear aims and objectives. These need to be realistic, measurable and compatible with the long-term objectives of the partners.

Through consultation between the senders and hosts, there should be shared ownership of the short-term programme. Care should be taken not to undermine the hosts' ownership of the longer-term project.

The benefits to, and responsibilities of, all the partners should be clearly identified.

There needs to be a clear commitment to disciple and develop the participant through the mission experience.

Preparatory information should be obtained early and should be as comprehensive as possible including the timescale, pre-departure health requirements (e.g. immunisations), visa requirements and financial responsibilities.

See Resource Paper 15 in the World Focus section of this website for outline information on the short-term mission options offered by agencies affiliated to Affinity.

❖ **Training, orientation and selection:**

The duration and nature of the short-term service will indicate the extent of the pre-field training needs of the participant and may, as appropriate, cover biblical studies, evangelism and discipleship training and cross-cultural study. *See Resource Paper 9 in the World Focus section of this website for training, orientation and preparation options.*

It is important that adequate orientation prior to the placement be given to all participants by the commissioning church and/or by the sending Mission Agency if the placement is with such an agency. The host church and/or agency should ensure that satisfactory induction at the start of the project is also provided.

Orientation and induction should cover the following aspects:

- the location and description of the project
- the cultural context of the project

- the religious context of the project
- the short- and long-term objectives of the project
- the expected tasks and the lines of accountability
- guidelines on behaviour and relationships
- team dynamics and conflict resolution
- communication policy with home
- health and safety, child protection, security and risk assessment
- financial procedures and insurance requirements
- expectations regarding re-entry and debriefing.

A suitable, transparent selection process always involving face-to-face contact should be followed. A pastoral component must be included, regardless of the outcome of selection. Where the placement is with a Mission Agency the selection process must involve both commissioning church and the Agency.

Where participants are working with children and vulnerable adults, police checks must be made prior to placement.

Senders need to clearly define their lower age limits and any participant under 18 years needs to have parental consent.

❖ **Placement and care during the assignment:**

Responsibilities of all partners regarding practicalities, job descriptions and supervision need to be made clear and agreed to prior to placement.

Placement decisions must be clear, transparent and made with integrity and should be communicated to all involved, including if and when changes are made.

Pastoral care, support structures and opportunities for personal and spiritual development of the participant must be established and implemented.

On departure, the participant should be interviewed and prayed for in the church's main Sunday service. News of, and prayer for, the participant should be incorporated periodically into the church's services.

❖ **Re-entry support and evaluation:**

On return, the participant should be interviewed and prayed for in the church's main Sunday service.

Debriefing and support for the participant through post-assignment readjustment are an important part of the short-term programme and the process needs to involve all partners as appropriate.

Advice and guidance should be offered to participants to find the next step in their Christian life following the programme. If the placement was with a Mission Agency, this will be done by the Mission Agency in liaison with the participant's home church.

Note:

Global Connections have, on their website, a complementary, Mission-Agency focused, statement "The Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission" and encourage their member Agencies to work towards adhering to the code. That code was instrumental in framing this statement of good practice for churches.