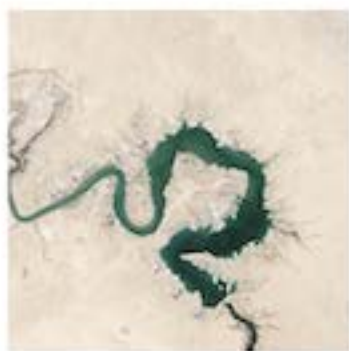


# ***Refuge Global Missions***

## ***Short-Term Trip Team Leader's Guide***



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# Welcome

## Refuge is a Person

Refuge is found in the very nature of God. He is the Father and friend we have all been looking for and He invites us to come to Him through Jesus Christ. Through Him we can have forgiveness of sins and a fresh start.

## Refuge is a People

Followers of Jesus Christ are called to be a people of Refuge in a broken world. We are called to preach the gospel and show our new life in Jesus because of His sacrifice on the cross. God sees you as a new person, and so do we.

## Refuge is a Place

Any place becomes a Refuge if God's people are found doing God's business there. Whether around the corner or around the globe, we offer refuge wherever we do ministry.

We are excited that you have chosen to serve the Lord as a team leader on this trip. Leading a short-term team can have its rewards and challenges. Our hope for you is that through leading this team, the Lord works a sense of authority with compassion, grace, great communication skills, wisdom, and understanding.

You and your team are a crucial part of the body of Christ and representatives of Refuge, the U.S., and the church at large. The responsibility may seem overwhelming, but you are not alone! As you lead this team through the pre-trip, trip and post-trip process, remember, you have the Holy Spirit guiding you and the staff at Refuge to encourage, pray for, and support you.

How can this manual help? This manual was designed to be a guide to equip you to be an effective team leader. Most of the information in this guide is directed towards you and your responsibilities as the team leader. This manual is not designed to answer all the questions, but will give enough information to get started. It is encouraged that you read this manual and use the information.

# Qualifications

In order to participate and lead a short-term missions trip with Refuge you must:

- Be a born-again according to **John 3:3**
- Demonstrate leadership qualities including but not limited to:
  - Organizational skills
  - Communication skills
  - Ability to demonstrate authority with wisdom and grace
- Able to communicate the gospel (**Ezekiel 3:17–19**)
- Age 25 or over; younger leaders at the discretion of RGM leadership
- Can provide character references
- Able to apply 30% of cost from your own funds - team fundraisers cannot cover the full cost of the trip. Personal fundraising is acceptable.
- If working with children at any point in the trip, must have a recent background check on record with Refuge. If not already done, a background check must be done at your own expense.
- Have completed Refuge's Get Up and Go! Course or an equivalent from another missions organization.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## General Responsibilities:

- Serve as a model for your team
- Plan and run team meetings
- Work toward group consensus in making decisions and solving problems.
- Follow up with team members to make sure they are completing their assigned tasks.
- Encourage team members
- Build a sense of community between team members.
- Listen and respond to the needs of the team, missionaries, and national hosts.

**Pre-Trip Responsibilities:**

- Spend time in personal prayer and devotion.
- Pray for your team members, mission field and project.
- Recruit team members.
- Serve as the contact person with Refuge Global Missions staff.
- Review member health needs and situations that may affect team member health.
- Assign job duties to each team member.
- Distribute, collect, and verify all forms.
- Make/verify that all travel arrangements are made.
- Collect and track all payments from team members.
- Provide team with resources for purchasing travel and overseas medical insurance (RGM staff can assist)
- Make sure all team members have filled out their application, background checks, and team covenant and are approved by RGM to go on the trip.

**On-Field Responsibilities:**

- Serve as a mediator and main communication person between team members and missionaries/local leaders.
- Model flexibility-things in the mission field can change quickly.
- Be aware of the physical, emotional and spiritual health of each team member.
- Ensure that team devotions and debriefing occur daily.
- Ensure you know where team members are at all times.

**Post-trip Responsibilities:**

- Complete debriefing forms. Debriefing resources will be provided by RGM staff.
- Follow up with team members and encourage local and international mission involvement.
- Contact Refuge Global Missions staff for trip complications, team member concerns or anything you feel needs to be communicated to staff members.
- Remind team members to follow up with individual supporters to share their experiences, how God used them and what God taught them (debriefing sheet in this packet will help team members summarize their trip.)
- Schedule a time with Refuge Global Missions Staff to share with the congregation.

The list of responsibilities may seem long and overwhelming, but please do not be discouraged. It is important to remember you are not alone. RGM Staff are available to help you. If you plan ahead and assign job duties early, your work will be distributed among your team members. This will give you time to help your team members and focus on preparing your team to serve.

## **Your Relationship with Refuge**

As a team leader, you will be the primary contact between RGM staff and your team. You are expected to contact RGM staff with any issues concerning team member's health emergencies or team members that have failed to meet the requirements to complete the trip (divisiveness, rule-breaking, hindering the team) during the trip. Team members should direct all questions and comments to you, and then it is your responsibility to speak with the RGM staff. This communication structure is important to ensure that all information is accurately communicated.

## **Preparation**

### **Building Your Team**

Bringing together individuals to form a short-term team is an essential part of each team leader's task. If your team is not already formed, these tips can help pull a team together.

### **Recruiting Team Members**

Advertise - work with RGM staff to place announcements in bulletins, share about the opportunity during ministry activities at church or in small groups.

Informational Meetings-Host mission trip information meeting so members can come and learn more. Consider making this a fun and informational evening by adding food from

the culture, pictures, a trivia game, or cultural decorations. Make sure to share what the vision/goal is for the trip.

**Personal Invitation**-Come up with a list with RGM Staff or create a list on your own of people you would personally like to invite to join your team. A personal invitation is always more effective to recruit volunteers. It is important to follow up after the invitation.

## **Team Member Roles and Responsibilities**

It is important that each team member be involved in the planning and preparation of the trip. An important way to build team unity and increase involvement is to assign each team member a specific task. As the team leader, you will be responsible for assigning tasks to each team member. Assigning roles to team members will give them a sense of importance and specific contribution to the team. It can free up the team leader to focus on other responsibilities while giving the team member a task to focus in on.

The following is a list of possible roles. This list is simply a starting place. The roles and responsibilities for your team will be determined by the exact nature of your trip and talents of your team. For example, you may split up the duties under one role and distribute them among several people.

*Assistant Team Leader*-All great leaders have great assistants! You may consider having an Assistant Team Leader who is “in the know” in case of an emergency. Depending on your need and the needs of the team, this person may need to fill another role as well.

*Project Manager*-Short-term trips require someone with specialized skills to serve with the team. Teams doing construction projects, teaching English, leading Bible camps, or medical clinics are some examples. If a specialized team member is needed, it is important that they are given the opportunity over the project. This will allow you to focus on the people and logistics of travel while the Project Manager can focus on the task at hand.

*Researcher*-To prepare for your trip, the researcher will find as much information as possible about the country and ministry for presentations and personal preparation. Assigning one person to the task of gathering this information can save time for the entire team.

*Support Raising Coordinator*-Many teams will sponsor support-raising events. These events connect the congregation to the mission team and garner prayer and financial support. Coordinating these events is a big undertaking. Having a “manager” for each different event can be helpful.

*Treasurer*-The Treasurer communicates all financial information to the Team Leader, who will share with Refuge staff. The Treasurer also manages funds collected in joint support-raising events, and manages and tracks team members individual funds. The treasurer will work closely with the Support Raising Coordinator.

*Logistics Coordinator*-This role takes care of the organizational side of the trip such as schedules meetings, developing a packing list, coordinating team supplies, and coordinating transportation.

*Spiritual Leader*- This leader coordinates a devotion schedule. It is the responsibility of the whole team to care for each other’s spiritual needs and growth and to hold each other accountable. It is also very helpful to have a Spiritual Leader who is working with the Team Leader to make sure that devotional time doesn’t slip through the cracks on the trip. This role does not require a person to be a pastor, any mature Christian can take this role.

*Nurse*-The team Nurse does not need to be a medical professional. This person will coordinate the first aid kit and other supplies. He or she would also help any individuals with medical needs during the trip.

*Communications Editor*-The Communications Editor coordinates the communication activities of the team and is responsible for the final production of any newsletters, brochures or presentations. Having someone who is skilled in this field will benefit the



team's trip by having eye-catching, high quality presentations, brochures, and newsletters.

**Photographer/Videographer-**Although several team members will likely take photographs, the designated Photographer is responsible for producing photographs for needed communications and ensuring that important events on the trip are documented. These photographs can also be used for RGM social media platforms and advertisement for future trips.

## **Team Meetings**

### **Meeting Topics**

Time is a precious commodity for you and your team members. Knowing when to schedule team meetings and for what purpose can be a challenge sometimes. The following is a list of suggested topics that should be discussed at team meetings:

- Prayer for the trip, the team members, the ministries/missionaries you are supporting, the nationals, etc.
- Trip information
- Learning about the country
- Team-building activities
- Information and planning for support-raising activities
- Filling out forms and other logistical details
- Fellowship and family get-together (where members invite their families to meet other team members and get to know one another)
- Short term team training
- Planning for mission task (VBS, camps, building project, teaching, outreach events)
- Debrief meeting after the trip

## **Meeting Agenda**

Productive meetings are important. It is often helpful to have an agenda before the meeting begins to keep the group on topic and to get tasks accomplished. This following list of agenda items are important components of a mission trip meeting:

- Opening devotion
- Prayer (taking time to pray for the team members, missionaries on the ground, and project details)
- Review of past meetings or topics and follow up items that need to be addressed.
- Preview of what is coming in the future.
- Main topic-reason for meeting
- Questions
- Fellowship

## **Daily Field Meetings**

Your meeting during the mission trip will not be quite the same as when you were at home, although some components should remain the same. The teams would meet once or twice a day, depending on your schedule. One meeting should be a quick time for devotion/prayer and checking-in with everyone. The other meeting should be longer and include time for debriefing and sharing. Your mission host may or may not be involved in your meeting on the field. Make sure that all conversations remain honest and positive especially if a national worker or missionary is with you. They worked very hard to prepare for your team, so please be sure to affirm them. If problems do arise, please speak honestly but respectfully when addressing the issue.

## **Team Accountability**

As the team leader, it is important that you set some behavior guidelines for your team before departure and help the team develop accountability within the group to hold up the guidelines that are in place. Each team may have different areas to address, but some topics to consider are:

- Off-days, what limits should be in place
- Conflict resolution methods
- Social media guidelines

- All rules should be adhered to per team covenant, and therefore all team members are accountable to the covenant.

## **Fundraiser Protocol with Refuge**

- Team leader should brainstorm with team to explore ideas for fundraisers. RGM staff can provide suggestions on previously successful fundraisers.
- All fundraisers held at Refuge must be approved through the same channels as other ministries. RGM staff can provide the proper online forms for approval. Each mission trip may be limited to the number of fundraisers to be held at Refuge, in order to provide time/space for other teams/ministries.
- Team Leaders will assign roles to their team for the fundraiser.
- The team must make it clear how the funds raised will be applied (i.e., airfare, supplies, etc.)
- All funds raised for the mission trip must be deposited at Refuge for proper accountability.
- Funds raised should be distributed based on team member participation. If a team member does not participate in fundraising, they should not be credited with funds from the fundraiser. This will help foster a more unified team with everyone involved with fundraising.

## **Mission Trip Preparation Tips**

- The Team Leader should work with the missionary to get a clear vision for the trip.
- Work with a travel agent experienced with missionary travel. RGM staff can provide a list of approved agents.
- Work with RGM staff to book flights, hotel, transportation, etc., once decisions have been made by the team leader.
- If necessary, include a team meeting for packing supplies for the trip.
- Check with team members to make sure they have a valid passport. Most countries require a passport to have at least six months validity after the date of arrival.

## **Traveling with Money**

Your team's lodging, transportation, and meals should be included on the trip unless otherwise specified. Extra snacks, souvenirs and personal shopping expenses are considered the responsibility of the individual team member.

### **Travelers' Checks and Cash**

Most countries do not accept travelers' checks and in other countries they may be very difficult to use. It is best to have other forms of payment. Most countries operate on cash. Restaurants and stores are likely to only accept local currency. It is easy to exchange U.S. dollars in country. It is generally recommended that the team do this at the airport upon arrival unless otherwise specified. Check with the local missionary for best practices for your country. When you are getting cash from your bank to exchange, ask for newer bills, which appear unused. Old tattered bills are often rejected in foreign banks. Remind your team to beware of pickpockets. Protect your valuables and be discreet when handling cash. It is a good idea to carry money in multiple front pockets.

### **Extra Expenses**

Teams may be asked to bring items that are needed such as supplies for VBS, tools, missionaries wants/needs, and other items. Teams will need to factor in these supplies into the cost of the trip and are not the responsibility of the RGM. Any items purchased with trip funds **MUST** be documented with receipts if possible, if no receipt is available, please itemize on a spreadsheet provided.

Even though your luggage may allow for two bags, team members will most likely be asked to reserve space for ministry items that need to be brought out. Pack as lightly as possible. Realize that many supplies that are available to us in the U.S., are not available in many other countries and therefore teams need to be open to taking supplies for trips.

# Rules

## **Lifestyle and Conduct:**

- No alcohol, tobacco products, or illegal drugs (use or possession)
- No profanity
- No pornography
- No fighting
- Never be outside the housing complex alone unless approved by a leader.
- No secular music.
- No fireworks or weapons.
- Shoes must be worn outside the complex.
- No new body piercings or tattoos while on the mission trip (existing tattoos and piercings are generally okay, check with the host missionary for any cultural issues.)

## **How to conduct yourselves in groups:**

- Stay in approved groups at all times
- Romantic dating or pairing off is not allowed during the trip
- No lap sitting
- No romantic physical contact. Married couples, use responsible discretion

## **Dress code:**

The importance of modesty in apparel allows us to minister effectively as well as remain culturally sensitive. The best way to pack would be to ask the missionary on the ground and team leader what is culturally acceptable for dress. However the following rules apply on all Refuge mission trips:

### Ladies

- No shorts shorter than 4 inches above the knee
- No tank tops or shirts that expose the mid section
- No low cut tops
- No mini-skirts
- No two-piece bathing suits or immodest one piece bathing suits (A cover-up to and from the pool must be worn).

- No spandex shorts or leggings

### Guys

- No immodest bathing suits
- No tank tops or shirts that expose the mid section
- No clothing that advertises alcohol, tobacco products, or heavy metal bands
- Shirt must be worn at all times.

### Ministry Guidelines

- The most effective ministry is guys to guys and girls to girls.
- Be on time to all meetings, meals, and group departures.
- Groups must travel and stay together to and from all locations unless otherwise arranged.
- Be wise in the use of social media on the mission field, being respectful of others in the use of photos and in the time spent on social media. Allow yourself to be stretched out of your comfort zone, without the continual need to “check in.” Be sure to read and adhere to the “Short-Term Missions Social Media Guidelines” at the end of this packet.

# Team Covenant

## **Purpose**

Our purpose is to be a Refuge for people through communicating the gospel effectively, building relationships with team members, leaders, long term missionaries on the ground, and locals, loving others selflessly (including team members!), and respecting the authority God has placed over you and your team.

We agree as a team to be flexible in our attitude, actions, and circumstances as we allow Christ's purposes to be carried out through us.

## **Accountability**

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.” **Philippians 2:3***

In all our actions on the mission trip, we are accountable to God first of all. We agree to be accountable to the team leaders, supervisors and other members of our team. We also agree to encourage each other to be faithful servants of God.

## **Responsibility**

*“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men.” **Colossians 3:23***

As team members, we will carry out our tasks in a responsible and timely manner. We will handle all ministry equipment and assignments as wise stewards, taking care to do all things with excellence and responsibility.

## **Time/Punctuality**

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.” **Philippians 2:3***

We agree to exhibit respect to team members and others by arriving on time and carrying out tasks on time. If a situation arises which causes one to be late, we agree to inform leaders and/or team members right away. We agree that time is given to us for God to

accomplish His purposes and being punctual is an outward display of using God-given time wisely.

## **Culture**

*“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the weak I am weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.” 1 Corinthians 9:22.*

As a team, we realize that we are entering other cultures as guests. We will, to the best of our ability, refrain from passing judgement on customs that are foreign to us because they are different. We realize that we answer first and foremost to God’s Word. If this occurs, we will be sensitive how we approach explaining the reason for our inability to participate in whatever activity is presenting itself. As a team, we will strive to show respect to those who are native to the country we are ministering by learning their customs and culture as well as living as they do. We hope that we may gain credibility as people with a genuine love for them as we labor to present the news of Christ to them.

## **Alcohol and Tobacco**

*“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” 1 Corinthians 9:22*

In order to express the best image for Christ as possible, and in light of the alcohol-related problems so rampant in many countries, we will abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages and using narcotics. It is also recommended that everyone abstain from using tobacco products, allowing God the opportunity to work in this area in someone else’s life. If someone needs to smoke, he or she will be extremely sensitive to other teammates and those who are watching our Christian witness by not smoking in hotel rooms, the bus, or with the group.

## **Travel**

Before planning any trips outside of our prescheduled group itinerary, we will discuss it with the team leader, nor will we travel anywhere without another team member. We



agree to stay together in a group wherever we may go, unless given permission to be apart from the group.

### **Conflict Resolution**

*“In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27*

As a team, we agree that when we have conflicts and differences among ourselves, we will, first through prayer and time in the Word, examine ourselves for selfish motives and unrealistic expectation of the other person. We will take responsibility to approach the other person if it is appropriate. We will do this in love, for the purpose of restoring unity. We will forgive one another and pray together. We will not discuss the matter with other team members, causing them to become involved in the conflict. If a conflict cannot be settled among two parties, they then seek council from their group leader.

### **Team Unity**

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Philippians 2:1-2*

Before we are individuals, we are members of the singular body of Christ. As such, we will ensure that we will look not only to our own interest, but also to the interest of others, thus building up the body of Christ in unity.

### **Gossip**

*“With the tongue we will praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?” James 3:9-11*

As a team, we agree to speak only words to and about each other that will serve to build up and encourage. We will refrain from remarks that would hurt or tear down.

## **Social Media and “Scrolling”**

*“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the street to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” **Matthew 6:1-4***

I have read “Short Term Missions Social Media Guidelines” and will adhere to the recommendations within the guidelines. I understand by engaging in excessive or posting inappropriate or disrespectful activities will hurt the team, nationals, missionaries, and the trip in general.

## **Relationship with God**

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” **Luke 10:27***

As team members, we agree to seek out an ever-increasing dependence and deepening relationship with God through Christ by setting personal devotions as a priority and practice humility before God in all communication and circumstances.

## **Relationship with Others**

*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. **Matthew 23:12***

Proverbs 3:34 states, “Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.” We also seek to place other team members’ needs ahead of our own and seek out understanding in all relationships. We will respect each other by submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. Ephesians 5:21 states, “...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” This includes listening to each other’s opinions ideas and needs, and respecting time, property, and sleep.

## **Relationship with Nationals**

*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has receives a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Peter 4:8-10*

In our relationships with nationals we will be obedient to the absolute truth of God and be women and men of integrity in our behaviors and motives. We will respect any cultural differences we may encounter. In all circumstances, we will seek to glorify God. We will demonstrate our love for God and others to the community, educational leaders and interpreters by respecting their opinions and differences. We will support their endeavors by coming alongside them with servant hearts and teachable spirits.

## **Relationships with the Opposite Sex**

*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23*

We will uphold the directives of Refuge by maintaining relationships with other team members as brothers and sisters in Christ and friendship. We will not engage in dating relationships with each other or nationals. We will also respect other cultural differences in relationships with the opposite sex.

## **Relationship with Team Leaders:**

*Let every person be in subjection to the authorities. Romans 13:1*

We will respect our God-given leadership by understanding their responsibility, accepting their decisions, and praying before we approach them with our disagreements. While submitting to and obeying their authority, we will treat them as friends and give them privacy at the proper times.

## **Refuge Short Term Policies**

As a short-term missionary participating with Refuge short-term missions, we are reminded that we are ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we go to minister, we do not only represent Him but the United States and Refuge. This is a tremendous

responsibility; consequently, we confess our dependence on the Holy Spirit that we will be above reproach in our actions and attitudes as stated in the Team Covenant.

### **Agreement to Team Covenant**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a team member of a short term mission trip with Refuge, have read this Team Covenant and promise before God and this team to abide by all of the policies and statements contained therein by the grace of God.

If at any time in my service on this short-term mission, my behavior constitutes a problem, Refuge reserves the right and authority to send me home. Any additional costs incurred as a result of this action will be at my expense.

# Short-Term Mission Trip Application

Trip I am applying for: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (as printed on your passport):

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid passport? \_\_\_\_\_

Passport Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Children (names and ages):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended Refuge?

\_\_\_\_\_

What ministries are you involved with at Refuge?

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Please name a pastor or church leader who could provide a character reference (Include phone number if not a Refuge pastor)

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Please list two people who know you and are willing to attest to your character (name and phone number):

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Have you ever served on a mission trip or had any cross-cultural experience?

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If yes, where and when?

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**Work Experience/Talent**

List any specific talent(s) you have (drama, music, puppets, medical, teaching, etc.)

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Occupation and place of employment:

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List any foreign languages you speak fluently:

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What do you see as your strongest character quality and why?

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What are your personal expectations from this trip?

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How does your family feel about you going on this trip?

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Do you have any condition that might affect your ability to fully function as a missionary on this trip (i.e., fear of flying, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders)?

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Have you ever been convicted of a crime? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

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What are the most significant events that have occurred in your life in the past two years?

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I have read and understand the information. The information states in this application is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge. My signature signifies my approval of all limitations listed above:

Signature of Applicant:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mission Trip Medical Information



Name (as printed on your passport):

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Address:

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Blood Type (If known): \_\_\_\_\_

Prescription Medications:

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Any Known Allergies:

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Any Known Medical Problems:

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Are there any medical restrictions that may affect your participation in the activities of this mission trip?

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Contact in the Event of an Emergency:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (      ) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Proof of Insurance: (Please attach any additional information about travel insurance to this form.)

Medical Insurance Company:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number for International Contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Primary Care Dr. If HMO:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of doctor:

\_\_\_\_\_

# SHORT-TERM MISSIONS SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Adapted and expanded from *Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions*,  
by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (Moody Publishers).



We live in a culture where every latte, sunset, or family gathering is fair game for a photo-op and social media post. But we have to be aware of how our love for photography and social media can play out on a short-term mission trip.

Reflect on the following guidelines to ensure that your photography and social media use affirms the dignity of low-income people:

## 1. GIVE YOURSELF BOUNDARIES:

When we enter another community, we need to set boundaries to help us remember that we are guests. The stories we hear and the scenes we see aren't ours to share with the rest of the world by default. We have to respect the dignity and privacy of the people we encounter. That means we should operate deliberately and willingly by a different set of rules in our photography and social media than we use at home.

## 2. RESPECT YOUR HOSTS:

Before your trip, ask your hosts about their preferences and policies for social media and photography. Some hosts may ask you to refrain from all social media use, while others may

request that you don't post or photograph certain events. In particular, hosts in closed countries or areas experiencing hostility toward Christians may request that you don't post or photograph anything at all. Submit to whatever guidelines and policies they provide, and enforce them with your team while on the field.

## 3. AVOID SPECTACLE MODE:

When entering low-income communities, if not careful, our use of photography and social media can be exploitive. We can unintentionally act as tourists, capturing and consuming the materially poor's images and stories as if they were a show to be observed. This dynamic dishonors the image of God in low-income people, and can contribute to feelings of shame and powerlessness that they might already feel.

## 4. BE PRESENT:

Even if your host allows social media, consider taking a break during your trip. Be fully present with those around you, and be aware of the Holy Spirit's movement. You will learn more, engage more deeply, and bless the people you visit more fully if you set aside the urge to document your experience for an online audience. You can share about your trip when you return. While on the field, simply be.



## 5. HONOR CERTAIN SPACES:

Don't post or photograph during worship services or when in people's homes. Put all devices away during those times, ensuring that you don't distract yourself or others from entering into worship and fellowship together. Further, pulling out a phone or camera in church might be seen as rude or sacrilegious. Similarly, when in people's homes, focus all your attention on engaging with them.

## 6. DO UNTO OTHERS:

Before photographing or posting, ask yourself how you would feel if your roles were reversed: How would you feel if people drove down the street photographing your daughter or niece without your permission? What if they then posted the images on Instagram? How would you feel if your son or nephew randomly appeared on a church's facebook cover image? Pause before shooting or posting, considering whether you are "doing unto others" well. Ask permission before posting pictures of or with people, and be extremely cautious of posting pictures of or with children.

## 7. AVOID THE SAVIOR SYNDROME:

Does what you are posting imply that you are saving people who are poor? Does it paint you as the hero and them as the helpless victim? Does it establish a provider-receiver dynamic where you have the answer to their poverty? Be especially careful of cliché phrases like "the least of these" or "bringing light and hope" in your posts. Use any social media updates to highlight the dignity of the community and what God is already doing over the long haul, rather than elevating your own role and impact.

## 8. TELL THE WHOLE STORY:

Do the pictures or posts you are crafting tell the whole story about the community? Are they highlighting the beautiful and redemptive things God is doing in a community, or only the heavy and painful brokenness of poverty? Don't reduce low-income people or communities to a caricature of desperation, but also don't ignore the reality of poverty. Avoid statements like, "They have absolutely nothing," or, "They are so happy all the time." You wouldn't like your life and identity reduced to a single slice of your wide spectrum of experiences. Don't do it to others!

## 9. DELAY YOUR POSTS:

Mentally running your posts through these filters requires diligence and hard work. It takes effort to retrain our brains to consider others' realities in our social media use, especially when in low-income communities. If you are unsure about a draft post, walk away from it for a half an hour and then look at it again. Or, consider showing your draft to other team members to see if it strikes them as appropriate and dignity affirming. Ultimately, if in doubt, don't post.

## 10. SHARE WHAT YOU LEARN:

There is a place for sharing what you experience on a short-term mission trip. When crafted with the above guidelines in mind, social media and photography can be a powerful way to advocate for the work and community you visited—especially after you return home. You have an opportunity to share with your friends what you learned during your trip, encouraging and challenging your peers to engage in the work God is doing in the world.

