



# *STM Team Leader's Guide*

[Adapted with permission from NLI's Leader Guide]

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is a Short-Term Mission? (STM)**

A Short-Term Mission is a person or group continuing Jesus' mission (Luke 4:18-19; 5:31-31; Matthew 28:19-20), usually within a short but intense period of time, and sometimes taking place in a cross-cultural context.

When did short-term mission trips become such a fad? Walk into the exhibit hall at any major ministry convention and you'll find at least a half dozen mission organizations soliciting your business. Open the pages of the leading youth ministry or Christian youth magazine and you'll see their advertisements. Mission trips are certainly popular these days, but is that necessarily a great thing?

There are so many fine, noble reasons to lead your people on short-term mission trips, but the reason at the heart of each mission trip should be because Christ commanded his disciples to be servants, both to each other and to the world. He commanded the church to make disciples of all nations, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When we participate in short-term mission trips, we're doing our part to fulfill those commands.

If that isn't at the heart of our mission encounters and if those commands don't shape our planning, then we've missed the point. And if we miss the point, it's a safe bet that our people will, too. We don't do short-term missions for the fun and excitement, or because everyone else is doing it, or because we've been told our people will be better Christians when they get home. We go to serve and share.

STMs are all about helping people find faith in God. There are countless billions around the globe who do not have a relationship with God or even know this is possible. On mission you and your team will be challenged and stretched through personal and public ministry. Our prayer is that you will see God at work in you and through you, reaching out to the people of the world with love and compassion.

STM Ministry Teams, Prayer Teams, and Work Teams should always go and assist what is already taking place.

### **What are the benefits of STM?**

We have seen the transforming power of STM trips. God uses them to change lives – both of the people who go and of those whom they serve. The constant comment from participants is how much they grew in their relationship with Christ, how much they learned about community and how challenged they were by the commitment and joy of the people they visited. Lives are formed and vocations are clarified through STM.

A natural result of going on Short-Term Missions is an increased passion for the unbeliever and a realisation of God's heart for the world. Many people who have gone on STM have become missionaries or involved in missions in some other capacity.

The Partner Church gains from receiving an STM Team. Their profile in the community is enhanced, good contacts are made, and many people in their community come to a relationship with Christ or at least take a step closer to doing so.

The sending church also reaps immense benefits. After seeing God's power at work on mission, those returning from STM will be more passionate about reaching out to people in their own community. It is vital that the sending church capitalizes on the impact of the mission on the team, through an appropriate debriefing process.

So as you can see, there are benefits all around.

### **What are the key ingredients of STM?**

#### **Social**

The social part of the program is to help raise the profile of the Partner Church or missionary within the local community, and to create long-term opportunities for evangelism. This may include visiting hospitals, orphanages, or practical manual work. We go to serve, not to be served!

#### **Street Evangelism**

Street evangelism enables the team to be seen by the community as they share the Gospel, and gives them the opportunity to invite people to evening outreach meetings and other special events.

#### **Various Evangelistic Services**

Outreach meetings, of different styles and nature (not always crusade type), allow the team and Church Pastor or missionary to connect with different kinds of people.

#### **Schools/Kids/Youth Work**

Teams may be involved in schools work depending on the time of year and which country they choose to go to. For example, the majority of ministry done by STM teams in Asia is teaching English as a Second Language. During local school holidays teams may be involved in running kids/youth activities.

#### **Humanitarian Aid/Disaster Relief/Work Teams**

The church is responding to the plight of the poor, oppressed, and the hurting. Teams are being dispatched to build orphanages, schools, rebuild communities devastated by natural disasters, dig wells, set-up and arrange small businesses, teach farming skills, feed starving children and give much needed medical attention.

## **INFORMATION**

### **Practical Considerations**

- 1) Travel:** The best way to arrange your time on the field is to cover two weekends, arriving on a Friday or Saturday with at least 2 Sundays in the same church or community. The further you travel, and the more expensive it is to get there, the longer you may want to consider staying.
- 2) Dates:** We have no set recommendation for dates during the year. If you submit your proposed dates to your Partner Church or missionary, they will then inform you whether those dates are going to work. Remember to keep in mind that what works best for the pastor or missionary, works best, period.

- 3) **Passports:** Make sure that each team member has a valid passport. Please don't leave this to the last minute. Give close supervision to ensure that passport applications are submitted promptly as this can take up to 6 weeks for these to be processed by Customs/Immigration departments.
- 4) **Visa:** Please check with the embassy of the country you are visiting to see if you need a visa.
- 5) **Immunizations:** Consult with your local travel clinic or family doctor to see if the area of the world you are going to requires shots, vaccines, special antibiotics, etc.
- 6) **Money Exchange:** You will have an opportunity to exchange money in the airport or the town you are working in. Most airports will exchange Canadian money without a problem, but in the odd case it is simpler to bring US dollars instead. Another alternative is to use your debit card at an ATM.
- 7) **Age requirement:** Each church will have its own policy on how old a person has to be to go on mission. It could also depend on where the team is headed (i.e. across town, inter-province, within the continent, or overseas). The usual minimum age requirement for team members is 16 years. However, we encourage families to go on mission and therefore support interest from those under 16.
- 8) **Fundraising:** Give careful attention to individual and team fundraising. This is a great faith building opportunity for everyone. See below for further information.
- 9) **Packing information:** A suggested packing list is found in our STM Guide. Also, make sure to pack according to your airlines restrictions. Packing incorrectly or over packing can result in losing items, fines, and even being denied passage.
- 10) **Flights:** Please consult your STM Coordinator before booking any flights. Book early to avoid costly increases. The cost of flights changes on a daily basis due to fuel costs and fluctuating taxes. Airfare also depends on which airport you're flying out of, and which one you're flying into. The taxes for each airline and airport vary. Beware of flights from online brokers; the cheapest flights cannot be changed, and it is often difficult to find a direct flight with one carrier on an overseas trek. This makes your travel risky when one carrier is late for your connecting flight with a different carrier.
- 11) **Research:** Plan well for your trip. Delegate research topics to team members. These can include the culture, church, dominant faiths, and history of the country you are visiting. There are travel "hot sheets" available online for most major cities and countries.
- 12) **Team building:** As the team leader you need to be intentional about building the team before you go on mission. The most effective teams on mission are 'teams' before they leave their home nation. Have times of worship and prayer together, practice songs and dramas, discuss skills and gifts, socialize and have fun.
- 13) **Liability/Waivers/Insurance:** This is often an overlooked area by trip planners. Most team leaders are unaware of the liability a church takes when sending out a team from their assembly. In order to assist in the protection of the sending church from liability, churches must do due diligence in informing the participants of the risks involved in going on the trip. A great resource for finding out the risks associated with travel to a particular country is the Canadian Foreign Affairs Travel Reports & Warning web site: <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/ctry/reportpage-en.asp>. It is recommended that each applicant sign a "waiver of liability", "an informed consent form", include optional permission from parent or guardian, and show proof of first party, out of country medical insurance. Samples of these forms can be obtained from the STMnetwork by e-mailing [info@stmnetwork.ca](mailto:info@stmnetwork.ca).

## **Financial Considerations**

When accepting applications from prospective team members, it is a good idea to ask for a non-refundable deposit to hold a spot on a team while their application is being processed. This ensures their earnestness and prevents flippant applications from being submitted, taking up limited team spots with people who don't really intend to follow-through. Something in the neighbourhood of \$100-250 would suffice. A good rule is 10% of the total cost of the trip.

If you're flying somewhere, the bulk of the trip cost is going to be associated with the air ticket. As a team leader, to avoid being burned by team members cancelling after their flight has been purchased, we recommend collecting a minimum of 80% of the flight cost from team members in order to buy their ticket. This money is non-refundable once the air ticket has been purchased.

Stagger the payments for the balance of the trip cost over the months leading up to the team's departure. Make sure you receive full payment from all team members before they leave on the trip. The team member's motivation to pay for their trip mysteriously disappears once they arrive back home! Consider accepting post-dated cheques from people you know well and can trust, that are dated after the team returns. They may only require one more paycheque to clear in order to make the final payment.

Things you'll want to include when calculating your team's total trip cost:

- Flights
- Passports
- Visas (not required for entering all countries)
- Departure taxes (not required in all countries, sometimes built in the cost of the flight)
- Immunizations (shots)
- Medical insurance
- Accommodation
- Food
- Internal mission transport
- Interpreters
- Ministry supplies
- Work project supplies
- Advertising
- Site hire & permits
- Literature
- Shipping supplies in advance
- Team T-shirt
- Team's day off outing or group building activity while on the field (Safari, cruise, tour, special event, etc.)
- Mission agency processing fee (if you use someone else to set-up your trip)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Partner Church/Missionary Responsibilities**

The central role of the partner church/missionary is to prepare for the arrival of the STM Team by arranging:

- A program of ministry opportunities shaped by the vision and needs of the Partner Church or missionary and local community
- Follow-up for people who express interest in the Gospel

- Food
- Accommodation
- Transportation

This role is vital to the project. The impact that will be felt in the church and community is connected to the degree of preparation and participation.

### **Team Responsibilities**

The purpose of the STM team is to:

- Provide a trained and equipped team that desires to serve the Partner Church or missionary and local community
- Be prepared to communicate the Gospel in various ways, e.g. creative arts (drama, mime, music, and dance) sports, etc.
- Determine how the team member's gifts and talents can best be utilized
- Generate funds to cover airfares and other costs related to travel

### **The STMnetwork's Responsibilities**

The role of STMnetwork is to:

- Connect the STM team with the most appropriate local Church Pastor or missionary
- Assist the team prior to the mission by answering questions you have
- Provide quality resources for assembling your team (first steps, sample applications, recommended reading, cross-cultural training, etc.)
- Give direction for purchasing flights, getting passports & necessary visas, immunizations
- Deal with any difficult areas
- Assist with the strategic planning of the mission
- Liaise between the Church Pastor or missionary, STMnetwork Coordinator and STM team
- Pray for you!

## **TIMELINE**

Planning ahead is essential for short-term mission leaders and travelers. Here is a handy time line to follow when planning your ministry trip!

### **Nine months before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Booked your mission with the host pastor or missionary (type of trip, tentative dates)
  - Select a destination where you have a prior relationship with a missionary whether through your church support or the personal relationship with the team leader
- Begun advertising to your people about the upcoming opportunity
- Held an information meeting where you presented the trip to invitees or a general audience
- Circulated application forms for individuals to join the team
- Requested a deposit along with a completed application from potential team members
  - Please note that when someone submits an application, make it clear that they understand their application will be considered, and that handing it **is not** an acceptance onto the team. The reasons for turning people down vary greatly:
    - Numbers. Sometimes with teams, there's a restriction on the number of people who can participate. Encourage people who are very serious to apply quickly, rather than waiting until the last minute.

- Age. Too young or too old for the destination country. If the person will need to be “babysat” this takes away from the enjoyment of the experience for those that have invested their time and money to serve in and experience another country.
- Physical health. Make sure team members can handle the physical requirements of the trip. Accepting team members with poor health and physical ailments is asking for trouble.
- Emotional health. Some applicants may have been subjected to emotional trauma at some point in their lives, and may have experiences in their past that would conflict with what they’d be experiencing on the field. Depression that has not been dealt with (through prayer, counselling, medication, etc.) can also be a detriment to a potential
- Involvement in the Church or some sort of service. If they have been long time members and not involved their reasons for going on an STM should be questioned. Is this a holiday or is something happening in their life that you want to get behind and support?
- Personality and relationship abilities. If this person is known to be someone that has created a lot of conflict in their relationships, they may not provide the team unity needed to make the trip a successful one. STM trips can create a stressful environment, so cooperation and self-control become keys to working together.
- Their spiritual “temperature”. This will have to be gauged by the pastor they are closest to. Some leaders have taken brand new Christians, denied long time Christians and even opened it up to secular professionals (i.e. Jewish doctor, contractors, etc.) based on what they bring to the team and their personality. There is also a new trend for team leaders to take pre-Christians, with the hope that this experience will trigger a commitment of the team member’s life to Jesus Christ.

#### **Six months before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Recruited STM team and sent the team information (team size, male/female split, allergies, etc.) to the mission field office
- Booked and paid for your team flights
  - Contact the mission field office to find out when and where you should arrive and depart
  - Check missionary airfares for popular destinations
  - Call your travel agent for the best airfare and investigate group discounts
  - Make air reservations
  - Make deposits to hold the tickets, or pay in full depending on the agent or airline
  - Your travel agent can tell you when your tickets must be issued to retain the lowest fare. Unless your fare is an "instant purchase," you should have reserved your tickets prior to this, up to one year or nine months ahead.
- Communicated clearly with your host pastor or missionary detailing trip dates (arrival and departure plans – especially if someone is meeting you!)
- Worked out a tentative mission itinerary and ministry schedule with the mission field office. When working on this itinerary, it is helpful to view a day in 3 blocks – morning, afternoon, and evening. To get the most out of team members, it is recommended that you only fill 2 of the 3 available blocks in a given day with work or ministry. Going all out for all 3 blocks 7 days in a row will wear a team out quickly and lead to negative experiences for team members. The longer the trip, the more important this principle is!
- Checked and if needed, sent off visa/passport applications
  - Once you submit the documents, passport issuance usually takes two (in person) to eight (in mail) weeks
  - Keep two photos and a photocopy of your passport information page separate from your passport in case it's lost or stolen (See the Passport Canada web page for passport application forms, instructions and fee schedules: <http://www.ppt.gc.ca/> or call your missionary travel agency office)
  - Ask your travel agent for visa requirements and forms, if necessary
  - Contact the Embassy of the destination country to confirm the type of visa necessary for your type of travel and entry
  - Submit signed passports, required photos, completed visa applications and World Health Organization immunization card, if requested
- Begun your monthly team meetings and training

- The purpose of the trip (i.e. evangelism, prayer team, exploratory, task force – building, painting, church ministry, children’s programs, etc.) will determine the amount and frequency of the meetings and training you will arrange
- Started the fundraising process
  - Some people refer to this process as “raising friends” instead of “raising funds”. Friendraising is the beginning of fundraising. Relationships are key, so talk first to people you know well. Don’t ever exclude non-Christians friends in this process. Many will admire what you’re doing, and will want to invest. This also becomes an opportunity for you to share the Gospel with them. Remember though, you can’t live like hell and raise funds for heaven! Your lifestyle comes into question when you go on their radar with a request for STM funds.
  - Funds are most often raised through the writing of personal support letters, car washes, work days, food sales, or special information dinners. It is your choice to divide the funds raised in a particular event equally among all team members, or only to those participating in that specific fundraiser. Consider allowing a family member or friend to participate in place of a team member who cannot fit it into their schedule.
  - Team Leaders should set the example, and raise the funds for their trip too. If you are in a situation where your church will pay for your trip, help raise money for some of your team members. This raises team confidence and faith that the money will come in!
  - Don’t forget that you’re giving people a chance to “store up treasure in heaven”. It’s your God-ordained role to separate people from their money for a good cause! Never apologize for asking for money.
  - Be thankful. Ultra-important and sadly often overlooked. A lot of people support short-termers once. If a supporter is thanked, they’ll feel like their joy in supporting is brought to completion, and will support again. Send postcards from the field, pick-up little souvenirs in the market. The littlest token is appreciated!

### **Three months before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Checked Immunizations
  - The Public Health Agency of Canada (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/>) and the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en/>) (WHO) report on disease outbreaks that occur throughout the world. For the latest travel health advisories and related information, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Travel Medicine Program (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index.html>) web site.
  - Consult the nearest International Travel Clinic for medical advice and services. Click here to find the one closest to you: [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/travel/clinic\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/travel/clinic_e.html).
  - Receive needed immunizations. Allow time between vaccinations if multiple shots are needed- especially if you need them as proof for obtaining visas.
  - If immunizations are required for obtaining visas, this process will have to be started in conjunction with the visa applications
  - Ask if updated immunizations for diphtheria/tetanus, polio or measles/mumps/rubella are advised
  - Depending on where you serve, typhoid fever or gamma globulin (for hepatitis a) vaccinations may also be recommended. Also ask about anti-malarial medication. If necessary, have all immunizations listed on a card from the World Health Organization.
- Raised 50% of the funds needed
- Started working on ministry preparation (dramas, dance, musical items, street preachers, gospel meeting preachers, the art of witnessing)
- Arranged and secured low-cost accommodations
  - Accommodations are usually arranged by the host missionary or pastor in the destination country
  - Your travel agent can reserve budget lodging for your group through the airline or through their sources

### **Ten weeks before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Arranged travel insurance for your team or helped individuals do so
  - Have workers check their current medical policies for overseas coverage. Make sure the policies provide evacuation services to come home due to illness or injury.
  - Suggest that workers buy supplementary travel accident and sickness insurance, plus evacuation services, if their policies don't cover these. Your travel agent can suggest reliable carriers.

- Researched Baggage Regulations
  - Ask your travel agent or the airlines. They can tell you the maximum free allowance per person and fee for excess bags.
  - Remind your travelers of any items excluded from import into your destination country
- From about 2-3 months from the trip you should be having weekly meetings for team training for ESL, drama, prayer, practicing testimonies, learning about the country or simple team building exercises
- Begun working through an STM Guide or Workbook with the team – many are available in bookstores or online

**Eight weeks before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Received proposed internal transport details from the mission field office
- Received food and accommodation details from the mission field office (usually this is based on a per person, per day cost)
- Received a draft mission itinerary and ministry schedule. The host missionary or pastor should aim to get this to you 6-8 weeks before the mission so you can be more specific in your ministry preparation for the mission
- Appointed speakers from team, and helped each team member prepare to give their testimony
- Received passports/visas (if needed) from Consulate/Embassy.

**Four weeks before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Received the final detailed mission itinerary from the mission field office
- Gathered props and costumes for the mission
- Bought any souvenirs from your hometown for the people you will meet and gifts for church planter, host church, and interpreters
- Practiced and refined dances, dramas, mimes, songs, testimonies and street preaching
- Thought about what you will take, how you'll pack and made sure you have camera, team outreach 'uniform', journal, Bible, seasonally & culturally appropriate clothing and any other necessary personal items

**Two weeks before your mission begins...you should have:**

- Arranged transportation to the airport
  - Make sure each worker has:
    1. Airline ticket
    2. Passport with visas
    3. Vaccinations and WHO Card (if needed)
    4. Anti-malarial medication (if needed)
    5. Supplemental insurance
- Notified the mission field office of your impending arrival
  - Make sure someone will meet you, and ask them what to do if no one is at the airport!
  - Make sure you have the address for your accommodations in the destination country. Often this address is required on the entry cards at customs, or to be offered verbally to the customs officer.
- Notified the mission field office of your impending arrival
- Obtained the address and phone number of the Canadian Embassies or Consulates in your countries of travel. These are available from the Canadian Offices Abroad (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/menu-en.asp>) web site.

### 3 days ahead:

- Call the airline(s) to confirm your flights. Be sure to do the same 3 days prior to your return flights also.
- Have a packing party! Bring all donations and ministry supplies, pack the suitcases together, eat pizza, weigh each bag, then have parents and friends come and pray for the team.
- Request passports and visas to be brought to the church in advance so nothing is forgotten on departure day. The team leader should collect and hold on to these until in the airport.

### On departure day:

- **Review Documentation with Workers**
  1. Passport with visas
  2. WHO Card
  3. Airline ticket
- **Tag your luggage**
  - Brightly coloured tags identify your group. Strips of bright yellow J-Cloths work well. Two or three people can handle baggage to reduce confusion.
- **Pray with your team!**

## USING A STM HANDBOOK

Many experienced STM team leaders have put together STM Handbooks or Guides as a resource for you and your team to use before, during and after the mission. They typically contain practical information for your mission, topics for reading and discussion, and a journal to capture thoughts and memories of the mission.

Using a handbook makes training your team easier for you as the team leader. We suggest a minimum of 12 hours discussing issues in a handbook with your team. It will probably be a good idea to split the hours up over a number of meetings, perhaps before you practice drama, testimonies, etc.

You may want to pick certain sections of a handbook to discuss during team meetings and use other sections as “homework” for the team members to read on their own time. Use as you see fit.

The following is a suggestion of topics to discuss as a group: Expectations, Cultural Sensitivity, Working with an Interpreter, Team Dynamics, Conflict Resolution, Re-entry and Debriefing.

If you require further advice or help with training the team then please contact The STMnetwork.

You may download a copy of our guide, called “[The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Planet: A Short-Term Missions Guide for Canadians](http://www.stmnetwork.ca/helping_you_go/hitchhikers_guide.php)” from our web site here: [http://www.stmnetwork.ca/helping\\_you\\_go/hitchhikers\\_guide.php](http://www.stmnetwork.ca/helping_you_go/hitchhikers_guide.php).

## CONCLUSION

We understand that there is a lot of information in this guide, and much to do before you are ready to go on mission into your world. You don't have to do everything in the first week, but you must begin preparing now. Don't get so overwhelmed by all the things you need to do that you end up doing nothing. Preparing for mission can seem a daunting task, and sometimes the trip may start to look less exciting than it once seemed. Ask God to renew your vision for the people of your destination country and your passion for mission. And

remember, you don't have to do everything; delegate responsibilities to other team members where possible. A mission trip is a great opportunity for everyone to grow in their gifts and experience.

The preparation period can be a time of hardship and frustration or a time of learning, growing, and fulfilment. It all depends on your attitude. Check your attitude and your willingness to serve others daily during this time. These months will give you the opportunity to work together with your teammates and develop lifelong friendships.

Pay close attention to the culture and people of the country where you are going on mission. Examine your own habits and behaviour: be observant and objective. You are putting a lot of effort into this trip and its effectiveness can be severely reduced if the people are offended by things you do. If you are normally a loud person, you will have to be especially careful. You don't need to change your personality, but look for ways you can more quietly express the thoughts and feelings you have. You will be representing your country, your church, and Christ. You may be the only foreigner that many people will encounter this year, so be careful how you present yourself.

We encourage you to savour your experience on mission. Each day will produce new challenges and changes in and around you. Notice these developments and enjoy them. Keep a journal from your STM experience...we strongly urge you to do this. Look forward to the opportunities you will have to tell people about what happened to you while on your mission. Write your entries frankly, and allow them to be an encouragement to you when your life seems dry and normal after you have returned from mission.

We are excited you have this opportunity to go on a short-term mission trip and look forward to the mission with you. We pray that God will use you mightily and prepare you for His service in the coming months.

Helping you go,



The STMnetwork  
[www.stmnetwork.ca](http://www.stmnetwork.ca)