

Northwest University

Supporting Sponsors of Short-Term Missions:  
A Sponsor Handbook

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International Community Development Thesis

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## Introduction

It was a typical warm Cambodian day, and I was leading a group of high school students on their first workday of a short-term mission (STM) trip. I was the host organization's trip leader for a team of high school students from a private Christian school in New South Wales, Australia. The team had been working alongside our Cambodian builders and families all day. Finally, the generator turned off, signaling the end of our workday. When I turned around to help the team in our daily clean up, I found each and every participant sitting in the shade with a bottle of cold water, not one of the sponsors or participants volunteering to help pack up the power tools, wrap up the long cords, or carry scrap materials to their designated piles. We, the host organization staff, were left to persuade *all* the participants to help finish the tasks so we could go home for the day. This was not a unique experience either; it happened during every water break and at the end of every day during their two-week trip. The sponsor had to be asked to repeatedly to help get the participants on board with the expectations of their roles as STM participants. It made the job of the host organization leader even harder than it is typically when leading a group of 25 non-nationals. Everyone was glad to see the group leave by the end of their two-week STM trip. They had left an impression of not caring, understanding, or even wanting to connect with anyone outside their group.

Not every experience was as stressful as this group. There was another STM with a team of high school students from a different private Christian school, this time in Queensland, Australia, that arrived fully prepared to serve not only the Cambodian builders and families but also the host organization staff. Every day they worked hard to connect with the local staff, practicing what few words they knew in Khmer and developing lasting relationships. These participants never once had to be asked to help pack up at the end of the day, and the sponsor

was always encouraging, guiding, and connecting with each participant. This sponsor came back year after year with a different group of students. And at the end of each STM, there was always a hint of sadness when they left. The sponsor was prepared and understood how to lead each participant on the journey of an STM. He allowed the host organization to do our job, and he addressed the needs of each participant. After returning to Australia, there were even students who decided to take a year off their schooling to volunteer with us in Cambodia. This group became a sought-after group to lead, and I looked forward to every year I could partner with them.

This thesis will examine ways to support and train an STM trip sponsor to avoid the mistakes of the first group and identify the strengths of a successful STM, as illustrated by the second story. It will briefly examine the history of STMs and recognize how they have changed since the last century. The qualitative research for this thesis was conducted while employed at Southern Adventist University (SAU) as the Global Engagement Coordinator. I spoke with SAU trip participants, veteran sponsors, sponsors who had only gone through training due to COVID-19, and partner host organizations. I also conducted research with contacts from STM programs outside the United States. This thesis project, a sponsor handbook, was created to support the current SAU STM program. The handbook will cover different skills and knowledge needed to successfully guide a trip participant on an STM. The handbook has been developed to help STMs of all backgrounds and roles.

Often, faculty and staff are willing and eager to volunteer to lead the STM, but as the Biblical Proverb says, “zeal without knowledge is not good; a person who moves too quickly may go the wrong way” (*The Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, Proverbs 19.2). The information in this handbook is essential to help create copowerment, a give-and-take model in

which all the stakeholders are empowered because of the other one (Inslee). Those leading STMs must have a solid understanding of the how's and why's of STMs, equipping them to foster healthy mission practices and a long-term missional lifestyle within the trip participants. The work of organizing and running an STM is constantly changing and building upon new knowledge, as STM history shows. Brian Fikkert, a leading voice in the Christian community of poverty alleviation and one of the authors of *Helping Without Hurting*, states that the goal of an STM is to learn about, engage with, and support poverty alleviation and missions (9). To run an STM successfully and create a long-term change in the trip participant, care and intention must be taken when selecting, training, and equipping the trip sponsors.

The method of research I used was primarily action research. This allows all the stakeholders involved in sponsor support to begin where things already are and allows for more details to be developed as the complicated topics are addressed (Stringer 8). The three steps of action research are: look, think, and act. The look phase of this research began in the summer of 2021. That autumn, the thinking phase followed, resulting in the first draft of the sponsor handbook used to train SAU's current STM sponsors in early January 2022. Action research should be seen as a "recycling set of activities" (Stringer 9). Thus, revisions have been made to the handbook before training the next round of STM sponsors in March of 2022 and the finalization of this thesis.

## Thesis Paragraph

A trip sponsor must be thoroughly prepared to lead an STM. All the stakeholders rely on a sponsor's success in their ability to lead. The actions of a sponsor create the overall tone of an STM. The local community and host organization rely on the sponsor to influence the trip participants. Often when problems do arise, host organizations report that the problems came

from the person leading an STM (Offutt 801). An STM handbook is used to support, guide, and inform the sponsor of best practices in cross-cultural work, contextualization, and copowerment as they navigate the journey of leading a group of trip participants.

## Overview of Field Research

### Personal History:

My first experience with an STM was during a very formative time in my life. In the early weeks of my first year at SAU, terrorists attacked the United States of America on September 11, 2001. I was already interested in international social work and disaster relief, so when the university put the call out in February 2002 to go to New York City, six months after the attacks, I leaped at the chance to serve. I was eighteen and desperate to do my part to help make the world a better place. The week I was on the STM, I spent most of the days working as a case manager for an umbrella organization offering support to those who were displaced or had their work affected by the attacks on the Twin Towers. I also volunteered for two twelve-hour shifts at St. Paul's Chapel at Ground Zero. While there, I offered support to the government workers who came on their breaks to get away from reality outside the doors of St. Paul's Chapel. For the first time in my young life, I was working and helping people. The impact of this experience has continued to help shape who I am two decades later.

A year and a half after my first experience on a week-long STM, I took a year off school as a student missionary (SM) to live and work in Honduras. I spent time supporting and working alongside local staff at a daycare for at-risk children. Before leaving for Honduras, I had been enrolled in an SM class to help prepare me for life outside of the university and in the "trenches." While the course was helpful in some ways, I learned so much more once I was on the ground in Honduras. This was my first experience working cross-culturally and figuring out at the same

time how to put academic knowledge into practical work. The experience inspired me to return to the university and join the Student Missions Club to help equip the next generation of students as they prepared to serve and to support them during their year away.

Similarly, more than a decade after my first STM, I worked on the other side; I was a trip leader for the host organization. For almost four years, I worked for an Australian non-profit organization in Cambodia. As the host organization trip leader, I worked alongside the sponsors, ensuring their needs were met so they could support the participants during their two weeks on the ground. During those four years, I saw various types of sponsors. Our host organization did not require any training to be done by the trip sponsor, and I often wondered what we could do to support the development of trip sponsors. Career missionaries receive training before they commit to working abroad, so it seems natural to say it is just as significant for STM sponsors to receive training (Priest et al. 434). In my experience, some sponsors had done nothing to help prepare the participants to learn about the history of the Khmer Rouge, leaving them shocked and traumatized when they visited the killing fields and Toul Sleng, the school-turned torture center now a museum. Other sponsors worked closely with the participants, encouraging them to learn Cambodia's basic greetings, numbers, and history. Those groups often came with the intentionality to work *alongside* the local staff, creating friendships and bonds that will likely help shape their lives forever. The difference in the types of groups was reflected in their answers during the final debrief at the end of their trip and in the results of participants returning to Cambodia to volunteer post-high school.

While working for this non-profit, I created our host organization leader training handbook, empowering expatriate staff and the local team to support the trip participants. By the end of the fourth year, the local staff were stepping in to fill the roles of host organization leaders,

thankfully making my job obsolete. The training was developed from feedback from trip participants, research, and experience using the action research cycle of look, think, act. As such, the host organization leader training was constantly changing and adapting to fit the needs of the STM.

After almost fifteen years, in the summer of 2021, I returned to SAU to become the Global Engagement Coordinator, responsible for the training, fundraising, and support of trip sponsors and trip participants on STMs. Because of my background with STMs and my recent enrollment in the International Community Development (ICD) program at Northwest University, I created a contextualized resource supporting successful STMs, specifically at SAU and other universities in the Seventh-day Adventist school system.

#### Research, Interviews and Documents:

The qualitative research was done through two forms of collection. The majority were semi-structured interviews with stakeholders connected to STMs; past, current, and almost sponsors (those who went through training but their trip was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020); host organizations; and trip participants. The second form of data collection was document data. Throughout the interviews, I intended to create an environment that would permit the stakeholder to talk about “the situation at hand” as well as speak to “the emerging worldview” of the trip participant and allow for “new ideas on the topic” (Merriam and Tisdell 111). For the document compilation, I looked at SAU’s “written, visual, digital, and physical material” to train and prepare the trip sponsors and participants for the STM (Merriam and Tisdell 110). I examined the university’s past handbooks, resources, and sponsor guides used on the STM. I also read the course materials used in the university class, which is a pre-requisite for



the student to participate in the STM and receive the service-learning credit necessary to graduate.

In the 2021-2022 school year, the university offered two STMs, one during spring break in March and the other in May at the end of the school year. This means that the first draft of the handbook and training was implemented in Winter 2022. The benefit of doing research within an ongoing program was identifying the things that worked well and incorporating any changes into the successful parts of the program (Hammond 3). While completing this thesis, the entire action research cycle has begun again, using the feedback gathered from the first draft of the handbook to make adjustments for the second draft, which is listed in Appendix A.

#### [History of STM at Southern Adventist University](#)

Southern Adventist University began in 1892 as an academy; in 1942, it had grown enough to change its name to Southern Missionary College (“History”). In doing this, they were cementing their belief in the value of serving others. As they grew, their vision to “inspire each student to engage with God’s Church and the world through service and witness” did not change (“History”). In 1996 its name became what it is today, Southern Adventist University, and they continue to strive to “enable every student to participate in local service and/or mission service activities” (“History”). In the last decade, they have made service a graduation necessity. Each graduate must meet the Christian Service requirement: two Service-Learning credits and a minimum of three Community Service credits. The Service-Learning credits are earned as part of a class, through approved “Student Initiated Projects,” or through opportunities like STMs (“Christian Service”). The Community Service credits must have a cumulative minimum of three hours each. This can be done in many ways, including the university-wide service event

that began in 1993 of celebrating the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. by serving the local community (“History”).

There are many ways to accomplish the Christian Service graduation requirements at the university. The home base for all of these activities lies in the Office of Ministry & Missions, which houses Humanitarian Engagement. Inside Humanitarian Engagement are two halves; one is Christian Service, the side responsible for tracking and supporting students with their Christian Service requirements. The other, Global Engagement, is responsible for creating and running Service-Learning trips in the form of STMs. This office is intentionally working to deliver opportunities for the student body to “fulfill God’s call on the lives of students through the work and services that impact all communities now and forever” (“Christian Service”). This paper will focus on the STM work done within Global Engagement.

### History of STMs

Early Christian missionaries decided that evangelism meant that the global Christian church must look like the North American and European churches. The effects of this belief can still be seen in the remote Chadian village of Beré, wherein, in the mid-1970s, European missionaries established the local Seventh-day Adventist church (Ogouma). In 2007, when I lived there, I observed the local male church members wearing a tie to church to “properly worship God,” abandoning their own culture to worship as a European Christian. Missional colonialism has done its damage, and now the global Christian church is learning from its past mistakes. The term missional colonialism describes the hegemony used to further the European/American Christian views in the name of Christian evangelism. This type of hegemony is done by convincing a group of people, those the missionary is visiting, that the missionaries’ social actions are the norm and not the local culture’s norms (Moe-Lobeda 89).

This type of colonialism forgets to consider that God created people to be different and that the differences are part of their connection to God (1 Peter 4:10, Genesis 1:27, 28).

Church-led STMs have been around since the last century, but they began to disappear in the 1960s, leaving the work to be carried out by a few non-church sending organizations (Wuthnow 23). However, the popularity of the STM has turned around in the last half-century, and by the early 2000s, there were more than one and a half million participants yearly (Priest et al. 432). Hoping to avoid repeating Christian missionaries' "zeal without knowledge" actions in the 1900s, some Christians are now thinking beyond classic evangelism (Proverbs 19:2). A healthy STM holds the sending organization, church, university, etc., accountable to wholistic support. This is done when an STM purposefully works towards "social action, social justice, poverty, and development" (Myers 48). This means that the participants of the STM care about the environment of the local community and about making sure the local voices are being heard by the larger global community if needed. With the awakening of colonialism and even neo-colonialism in missions, millennials are fighting against experiences like the lack of Chadian culture incorporated into the worship service at the Beré Seventh-day Adventist church in Chad. According to Kent Rufo, the chaplain at Pacific Union College, a Christian college in Northern California, students question the value of participating in an STM and ask if it is possible to even have one without causing damage (Rufo). The students are challenging their role in an STM and recognize that they need help in making sure they are not hurting the local community by their presence. The current form of an STM serves as a modern pilgrimage to "serve and help others in distant places. . . not only for self-transformation but for change in the places to which they go" (Priest et al. 434). With this awakening, participants, sponsors, and sending organizations are

held accountable in the hope that previous patterns of STMs will not continue and history will not repeat itself.

The problem in missions, specifically STMs, is a lack of accountability in ensuring the development of healthy and effective STMs. They should support the purposeful formation of healthy relationships with the host community, a sustainable change in the STM participants' lives, and the sustainable support of the host organization. STM leaders must be trained and prepared to help accomplish these goals. Yet history shows there is often no substantial training for an STM leader (Priest et al. 434). Those leading the STM must understand the how and why of an STM to guide the trip participant on their journey to healthy missions and foster a long-term missional lifestyle.

## A Detailed Description of the Context

The Short-Term Missions Sponsor Handbook was born out of the research conducted for this thesis and a personal passion for helping educate young adults on how to participate in an STM successfully. There is also a drive to help the next generation of adults understand that poverty is complex and, especially, that “our worldview, education, and training” often keep us from seeing poverty from all directions (Myers 132). This handbook will benefit the three critical stakeholders in STM: the trip participant, the sending organization, and the host organization (Hartman et al. 109). Using the research findings, I have done my best to adapt the material so that the sponsor can then contextualize their information for the trip participant.

## The Impact on the Community

The damage of missions being done poorly is long lasting but preventable. The lack of documented training for sponsors negatively impacts the SAU community and their STM

program's success and longevity. Especially this year, 2022, the SAU staff member who developed the current STM program and ran the training resigned from their position, taking the organizational memory with them. With the core staff of the STM program at the university comprised of students, there is a constant turnover in staffing, and a lack of documentation leaves much room for oversight.

### My Research

Within the first few months that Dan Santos began teaching at SAU, he was introduced to STMs. The STM director at the time was an old friend who invited him to join a trip to Latin America. However, he was apprehensive about joining a group of twenty students because the total ballpark value of the tickets to travel would cost more than a full-time salary for multiple local staff members on the ground, approximately \$40,000. Having grown up outside of the United States, he knew the value of the American dollar, and using it to send twenty students to Latin America seemed wasteful to him. What eventually made the difference for Santos was having a mentor guide him through the journey of an STM. The STM director encouraged Santos to join them on this trip as a participant. By going on this journey of learning and discovery, Santos became one of the biggest advocates on SAU's campus for the power of an STM in the life of a trip participant (Santos). Santos needed to have his ideas challenged and questions answered to get where he is today. The solution to his biases and assumptions was not reading articles and books but responding to the call to action (Seversen 84). Sponsors and participants can read books and sit in classes about holistic engagement and learn about the value of cultural intelligence on an STM. Still, until they have their boots on the ground working through the ideas and concepts in real time, they will not completely understand the value of an STM.

There is a need for a clear framework within an STM to create holistic engagement that is “clearly understood and applied by host communities, sending organizations, and volunteers” (Hartman et al. 109). The framework must be created and applied from the start, which begins with the trip sponsor. The role of the sponsor is to walk with the trip participant on their entire STM journey. Sam James, a host organization trip leader, explains that the STM as a whole will be much more successful when the sponsor understands their role and is comfortable in that role (James). The role of the sponsor is comparable to the mythical role of the mentor in Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The trip sponsor will guide the “hero” on a journey to traverse the world’s difficulties to fulfill their calling and master the challenge present (qtd. in Kaufmann 18). Along the way, the sponsor and participants will do more than visit a new community; they will actively work towards a lasting change in their lives, mindsets, and actions as they work with God’s given resources (Corbett and Fikkert 5). The uniqueness of this thesis project is that a sponsor must be trained and supported in their roles. The sponsor must also be able to take their training and replicate it in the training of the trip participants. Their goal is to model what a successful journey looks like using their resources and offer a path for those they are leading so the participants can complete their journey and one day become guides on someone else’s “hero’s journey” (Kaufmann 21).

#### Clearly Defined Roles

The first step in support of a sponsor is to define roles clearly. This is done with a clear STM sponsor job description in the handbook and job descriptions of the student leaders and student media roles. Once a role is defined clearly, a sponsor can better know what is needed and how they can help. Donna Jackson, a regular sponsor, spoke about her desire to work with participants during their training and how not knowing the level of involvement required or what

her role looked like added stress and uncertainty to her ability to support the participants (Jackson). By having the expectations for the sponsor clearly outlined from the start, Jackson can understand where she fits in the overall journey and work together with the sending organization to shape the journey for the trip participant (Joyaux 305). Creating a job description goes a long way to helping the sponsor feel supported and empowered to lead the STM.

#### Power to Act

To create a strong group of faculty and staff willing to lead trip participants on an STM, a sponsor must be enabled by those in charge of the STM program. The sponsor must be given the “wherewithal, opportunity, and adequate power to act” as they see fit (Joyaux 295). This means that the sponsor must know what authority they have before, during, and after an STM. They must share responsibility with the STM program leaders, co-leaders, and trip participants. The sponsor must “participate in [the overall training] process, ask challenging questions, think critically, and help make key decisions” (Joyaux 295). In the research with past sponsors, I was told, “I don’t necessarily feel like as a leader I’ve been included in that” when discussing planning decisions that directly affected the sponsor (Jackson).

The inclusion of the sponsors in the decision making must start with the sponsor onboarding process. The sponsors must be introduced to the STM program and then guided through their training. Once the trip participants are officially signed up, the sponsors gradually need to gain more responsibility for the trip, leading up to the start of the STM with all of the communication from the host organization going through the sponsor as they finalize plans for their trip.

The handbook is designed to help encourage the sponsors to share the STM responsibilities with their trip participants; after all, “power shared is power multiplied,” and the

work can be accomplished together (Joyaux 295). While on the STM, this is easiest to accomplish during the regular morning meetings and evening debriefs, as this time is used for feedback, information sharing, and group decision making.

### Cultural Intelligence

An essential skill that must be developed in a sponsor is cultural intelligence. The *Harvard Business Review* explains that cultural intelligence is “the ability to make sense of unfamiliar contexts and then blend it in” (Earley and Mosakowski). A sponsor is working across many cultures. Their role requires them to maintain open communication with the host organization and local staff. Often there are language barriers for both the sponsors and participants that must be addressed before traveling on the STM. For Chan Dara, a Cambodian national host organization leader, being greeted in his language on the first day was a moving moment that made him feel respected and understood (Dara). A sponsor may not be fluent or thoroughly immersed in the cultural traditions, which is acceptable—not knowing all the “common courtesies” while on an STM is a “forgivable offense” (Offutt 806), so long as the sponsor is willing to experiment with the language and attempt to contextualize the culture. This will empower the participants to follow suit while building relationships with the local community.

The secondary need for sponsors to have cultural intelligence is working with the participants. Cross-culture skills were once only used outside of the country; now the United States is more multicultural because of the globalization of trade, technology, and jobs, making communicating effectively a necessary skill (Griffin). A sponsor must be aware of the cultural context they are working in as they develop and plan their interactions with the participants.



## Holistic Engagement

An STM from a Christian university should strive for holistic engagement in their work. Following along with Jesus' teachings in the Gospels, there should be a focus *on* the material, social, and spiritual needs of those they are working with and for; these areas are what will help transform lives (Myers 48). A successful and holistic STM will include an opportunity for the trip participant to learn about environmental racism, neocolonialism, and other kinds of justice. This is important for the growth of the participant. Throughout the STM journey, the participant will learn to understand the local and global issues beyond what mass media presents, helping them independently analyze problems in their neighborhoods and connect with the global community (Hartman et al. 110). The trip sponsor should help develop awareness about different issues in the world of the participant. They help the participants understand the cultural meanings of how they present themselves in clothes and actions. The sponsor must help show the participant what products to purchase for the trip, helping them understand that the water filtration system may differ from their home. With the guidance of the sponsors, the participants can know that each action they make has an ethical consequence, good or bad (Clawson 14). Before the participant leaves for their STM, they are introduced to these ideas. Showing the participant the value of holistic engagement will help them see that the caring for the environment and understanding the cultures around them do not stop when they finish their STM, but they can make lifestyle choices that will help others for the rest of their lives.

## Reflection and Debriefs

As the sponsor guides the STM, there are structured opportunities for daily reflection. This is done so the participant has a chance to reflect on intercultural connections and diversity

within their STM experience. These daily reflections will lead to a structure of “reflective intercultural learning and acceptance” within the STM program (Hartman et al. 113).

There are many ways to support and create reflection on the STM. The sponsors are trained to conduct a daily debrief with the participants, and the daily debrief functions as a chance for students to share what took place during their day (Linhart 264). The daily debrief also supports the opportunity to “share power” with the trip participant keeping them engaged in what is going on and the plans for the next day.

At the end of the last workday on the STM, the sponsors will bring together the participants and the host organization staff who have been working alongside the participants. According to Laura Joplin, an author of experiential education, a debrief is the time for the sponsor to help the participants recognize what they have learned, articulate their experience, and then help them self-evaluate (Joplin 19). The final debrief is the chance for the sponsor to support the participants as they sort and organize their perceptions from the STM and work to connect them to their beliefs. In the role of guide, the sponsor is needed to make sure the experiences from the STM do not “drift along unquestioned, unrealized, unintegrated, or unorganized” (Joplin 19). The final debrief is also the chance for the sponsor to help guide the participant from theoretical ideas to actual change in a way that must be done while doing the work and not just talking about the work (Seversen). The final debrief has a set of questions to be asked that will address the experience and changes moving forward. These same questions will help the participants structure their stories and share their STM journey as they return to their homes.

Solutions—Why I Did This

When I talk with people who have had experiences with an STM, my mind is constantly running. I am processing their experiences, wondering about new ideas or how to replicate their stories. I am a natural teacher, and because of that, I am always thinking about ways to help train and educate those who are new to an organization or field of work - in this case, sponsors. I developed the thesis project so I could add to the existing handbook because I realized there is so much room for improvement. Like with social entrepreneurship, success is not about being the best in the field, it is simply about changing the field, and I want to help change the field of STMs (Bornstein and Davis 68). I also wanted to use the ICD program resources to research what currently exists in the way of support for sponsors. As I went through the ICD program, I discovered a wealth of ideas, everything from how to recruit and work with a volunteer to the global damage of environmental racism. During my research at SAU, I discovered a participant has books, journals, guides, videos, and other content available for the university to use in their training. In my general research, I found many books available about cross-cultural work, creating an STM, and working with participants that offer a wide range of support.

Still, at SAU, a sponsor is only given a half-day of training before becoming in charge of the STM journey. The sponsors look forward to the STM all year and see it as the highlight of their year (Gem). Yet they are not even given a list of sources to use for self-improvement in preparation for the trip. This left significant gaps in skills and knowledge given to sponsors. How could SAU trust that each STM would be successful and reach the same goals? Thus, the sponsor handbook was created; it is not complete and should always have things added to it. The research I did was out of a passion for supporting the overall program of an STM. Improving the sponsor's experience will make a difference in the lives of all stakeholders.

Using a university for the qualitative research was ideal because a university is a natural place for growth in a young adult. There is also motivation to focus on STMs at the university level because they have a non-profit status. The administration's actions are based on more than just money as the bottom line (Hartman et al. 109). A university additionally houses a significant source of faculty and staff willing to learn and instruct. Faculty and staff have a wealth of knowledge regarding humanitarian services that allows space for ongoing assessment and evaluation of the support given on an STM (Hartman et al. 109). The participants are also ideal young adults at a time in their life when they naturally encounter new ideas and discover a larger world (Salter McNeil 49). The sponsor will be able to help the students "translate the learning [from the STM] to their own lives" (Powell 10). This is possible because the staff and faculty at SAU are in a mindset of mentoring and discipling in the Christian faith and are supported by the university president's office to take time off work to lead out on an STM.

I focused on the support of sponsors because most STM resources focus on the participant and what they need to do in preparation for the trip. There is currently no guide or resource book that I know of with brief introductions to concepts that will need to be addressed on the STM. There is so much information in books, articles, and videos that I wanted to help pull all of it into a central location for the sponsor's support. The research points again and again to their value-added to an STM. Terence Linhart, a researcher on STM curriculum, describes the need to prepare the participant but also the incredible value of a well-trained sponsor:

Short-term mission needs to be situated as part of an overall emphasis, theologically and pedagogically, on service and mission within a youth ministry. The disconnect from their own culture [while on the STM], combined with the surreal and experiential nature of the experiences, works against effective transfer and integration into students' lives without

continued support and feedback of adult leaders post-trip. Students can experience growth in their faith, lives, identities, and world-awareness from such trips; however the curricular hope placed on learning through experience requires greater attention to the way that a short-term mission trip functions as a curricular process. (268-269)

Without proper training, a sponsor will not have the background knowledge of how to assist in a curricular process. They will simply take the trip, struggling to connect with the participants, and then return to their old lives with no change to themselves or the participant.

It is impossible to expect a faculty or staff member of a university to keep up on all the research on their own. This handbook is intended to be a living document, created to be updated with new research and feedback from the stakeholders. This plan allows the sponsors and participants to identify what they do well and focus on how to do more of what works and less of what does not work well (Hammond 5). Updating the handbook via feedback from the sponsors, participants, and host organizations allows all voices to be heard. Each member can be acknowledged as valuable to the program and recognized as unique and remarkable (Hammond 25). This builds a culture of all stakeholders being responsible for the success of the STM. The long-term success of the handbook for sponsors relies on all the voices involved knowing they are accountable for its success (Joyaux 298). This handbook gives SAU and any other organization a starting point to incorporate the experiences of their stakeholders into actual change for the improvement of their STM programs. The buy-in of all stakeholders will only make the program stronger.

### What Others Have Done

In the last two decades, more and more research has been done on STMs. Research has focused extensively on the impact of an STM on a participant (Twibell 344). The studies have

looked at what the participant learned through the experiential learning filter of an STM and examined the adult sponsor's role in the success of an STM (Linhart 258). Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert have written extensively on STMs. They have researched the effect of not working with the host organization and how service done poorly can do more damage to the community (*When Helping Hurts*). Research has been done to examine the benefits for the host organization and the participants of interacting globally and exploring the cross-cultural growth and shortcomings of those interactions (Offutt). There are instructional books written about how to plan a successful STM (Bugbee and Cousins; Livermore; Powell and Griffin). There are also resources available on being a better world traveler, even focusing on world peace (Abu Sarah). Additional research supports incorporating cultural intelligence (CQ) into the work of an STM (Griffen). The wide variety of research done in the last decade alone is enough to take ages to read and would require a full-time job to implement into a new STM.

David Livermore has done research to “open our eyes to existing blind spots in global missions, specifically short-term missions” (13). He explains that the biggest obstacles to navigate are “communication, misunderstanding, personality conflict, poor leadership, and bad teamwork” (14). His work is thorough in explaining the differing views between participants from the United States and many of the host cultures, giving both Biblical and cultural backgrounds to understand both sides better.

### Self-evaluation

In May of 2021, I was hired to use my background to enhance the STM program at SAU. Due to an injury of a sponsor, my first day of work was joining a vision trip (vision trip is the SAU term for an STM) as its primary sponsor to Atlanta, Georgia. I was handed a binder of participant information, given an hour's worth of knowledge, and sent on my way with fifteen

participants and one other first-time sponsor. My question quickly became “is this how all sponsors are sent on their trips?” While I had almost a decade working in STMs, I still did not have all the knowledge needed to run this trip successfully.

When I returned to the office, I looked at all the materials they gave to old and new sponsors and realized the information offered only surface-level support, such as a petty cash template, contact numbers, and how to organize a medical clinic. With my experience as the host organization working with sponsors, I knew there was room for more assistance. My qualitative research question became “how do we *better* support STM sponsors?” With my role in the organization as the person who works with the sponsors and participants, I became the perfect person to facilitate action research. My new position would help me guide the question and allow the sponsors themselves to define their needs as we worked to find the solutions and support them. This type of facilitation is a textbook example of what Ernest Stringer says action research should look like (20). This research was not done so that I could force change on the program but so that together we could improve on what was already being done.

In developing the thesis project, I incorporated the stakeholders’ suggestions for improvement. Based on research, I also covered materials that should be included in the preparation of a participant to be facilitated by a sponsor. Many other things included were based on my ideas of what to teach a sponsor so they can successfully guide a participant on the journey of an STM with the end goal of learning about themselves and how they view the world, and committing to continue to serve others in their life. Research supported my thoughts, but the handbook also includes topics and programs I wanted to see happen while I was working as a host organization.

As I progressed in the ICD program, I continued to learn new things about development and contextualizing any program to meet the needs of all the stakeholders, specifically the participants and the host community. The role of this thesis project became one that needed to help teach the sponsor how to teach the participant. Contextualizing the information became key to successful training, as modeling is one of the best ways to teach a teacher how to teach!

The handbook has incorporated themes connected to the ICD program: sustainability, environmental racism, contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration. The ICD program inadvertently helped shape the handbook by pointing out the tools and information a community developer needs to succeed.

The handbook could have included so much more, and over time more topics may be added, and issues that are no longer relevant may even be removed. The good intentions of an organization will not always lead to successful projects; sometimes money and effort are wasted (Pogge 8). Yet that does not mean we no longer work towards a successful STM program. The handbook is a living document that, if used correctly, will continually be shaped by the stakeholders. There is room to include information about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and explain the pros and cons of the success of the SDGs. There should be a section teaching about what a healthy non-profit looks like—what key things to look for in a healthy non-profit.

## Conclusion

The role of the sponsor is vital. They serves as a mentor, teacher, and guide and connect the participant and the host organization. James, an apostle of Jesus, wrote, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly,” signifying that to lead an STM is no small task (*The Holy Bible*, NLT,



James 3.1). If we ask someone to lead, we should also prepare them to do so. This thesis project has examined the history of STMs and how to support them better so that they can guide the participants on a successful STM. The skills and knowledge needed for sponsors will be extensive, but this handbook gives them a place to start. It offers topics, ideas, and background to understand the ins and outs of an STM. By supporting the sponsor, a sending organization, like SAU, will create a culture shift in how people serve as the hands and feet of Jesus.

When a sponsor is successful, the participants will be guided through their own hero's journey. The participant will be prepared to go through a chaotic event, the STM, and with the sponsor's guidance, they will learn that there is a world outside their sphere. This will empower the participant to get comfortable in the discomfort. At the end of the hero's journey, the participant will emerge a different person, just as Jesus talked about, for those "who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for [Jesus's] sake will find it" (*The Holy Bible*, Matthew 16.25). A well-supported and equipped sponsor will go on their own hero's journey, emerging on the other side as a person with a gentle worldview and a better servant of Jesus Christ.

The attached handbook for sponsors was created to be used in the training of sponsors. It is meant to give a basic understanding of the theories and ideas behind successful STMs. It is a starting point to understanding the participants' needs and how they will experience the chaotic event of an STM. It can be adjusted to fit the needs of each specific sponsor program while also maintaining the integrity of the material. The handbook is created to serve sponsors of an STM and can be used in helping to prepare a student missionary, which has a similar role to a sponsor. The handbook is not the means to an end but merely a starting point for all those wanting to

change participants' lives and support host organizations with on-the-ground projects. The healthy support of a sponsor can and will change lives.



SPONSOR

HANDBOOK

*For Short-Term  
Missions*

*Resources to support  
the trip participant  
and  
work well with the  
host organization*

BY SONYA REAVES

Usa River, Tanzania

# Sponsor Handbook for Short-Term Missions

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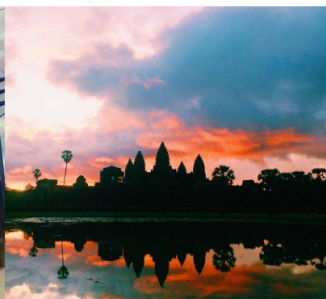
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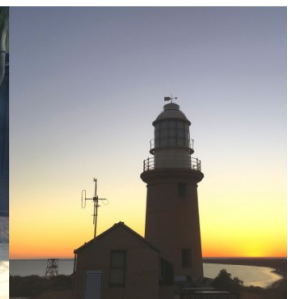
Iquitos, Peru



Angkor Wat, Cambodia



Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



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**Welcome to the Sponsor Handbook for Short-Term Missions!  
Inside here, you will find everything you need to lead a smooth  
and successful trip.**

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**"Leadership is a concept we often resist. It seems immodest,  
even self-aggrandizing, to think of ourselves as leaders. But if it  
is true that we are made for community, then leadership is  
everyone's vocation, and it can be an evasion to insist that it is  
not. When we live in the close-knit ecosystem called community,  
everyone follows and everyone leads."**

PARKER PALMER (682 OF 1030)

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Bayon Temple, Cambodia

# *WELCOME*

I created this handbook as a part of the research for my International Community Development master's program. I took Southern Adventist University's existing handbook and, based on my research, added new and necessary information. My passion is empowering sponsors to lead the best short-term mission (STM) trip, and successfully guide the trip participant on a journey of discovery. Sponsors are vital to the success of an STM because "students themselves don't know how to translate the learning to their own lives," and that's precisely what sponsors help with (Powell 10). You are here because you accepted the call to lead students to a larger worldview and help them understand how they can serve in missions now-- and in the long term.

I'm thankful for you and I am excited to support you as you lead an STM team.

Go, team go!

*Sonja Reeves*

Information in this handbook will guide you in learning about things needed to run a short-term mission (STM) trip, including sustainability, environmental racism, and the United States' role in the local communities' struggles. While reading, keep this quote from Edward Hale in mind: "I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can" (qtd. in Moe-Lobeda 271). Use this handbook as a starting point for changes you can make in your own life and let that spark conversation with the trip participants.

Some of this information may make you uncomfortable. We acknowledge that good and evil are entangled in humanity and that "no person, group, or entity composed of human beings is singularly good or singularly evil" (Moe-Lobeda 273). We want to acknowledge that since the "rise of European states," racism has been an organizing standard of the modern world, and it is our job to change that (Pellow 37). Together we can help develop Dov Deidman's "sustainable values" in the participants; these values are "honesty, humility, integrity, and mutual respect" (qtd in Friedman 379). By learning these values, the participants will develop "trust, social bonds, and above all, hope" (Friedman 379). Use this handbook to learn, discuss, and make changes in your own life as you prepare to guide the participants on the STM.



Phnom Penh, Cambodia

# What it takes to be a sponsor

The Hero's  
Journey

Job  
Descriptions



## What it takes to be a sponsor

### The Hero's Journey

When you agree to lead an STM, you agree to do more than herd participants through the airport. You are signing up to be the mentor for each participant on their hero's journey. You have most likely been on this journey yourself when you went on your first STM. If you think back to your first trip, was there someone who helped guide you on your journey? Maybe you processed the trip with someone once you came back? As a sponsor, you will step into the role of mentor, guide, and assistant.

Each participant is going to go through the general stages of this journey. According to Joseph Campbell, the author of *The hero with a thousand faces*, these are the 11 steps of the Hero's Journey (adapted to reflect the steps of an STM participant):

1. The Call to Adventure/Service
2. The Reluctance of the Call- "How much money do I need to fundraise?!"
3. Meeting with the Mentor (that's you!)
4. Crossing the Threshold- Stepping out of the plane.
5. Test, Allies, & Enemies- The everyday adventures on the STM
6. Approach to the Innermost Cave- The last push to the end of the STM.
7. The Supreme Ordeal- The Chaotic Event (see Understanding the Chaotic Event)
8. Reward- Celebrating the friendships made
9. The Road Back- Post STM, what do they want the world to look like?
10. Transformation- Making the decisions on how they will be moving forward.
11. Return to the Ordinary World- Back to school, or everyday life. . . but different!

## Job Descriptions

# Short-Term Mission Trip Sponsor

### Job Overview

Work with the co-sponsor and student leaders to create community with the trip participants as soon as the team training occurs. Work alongside co-sponsor and student leaders to guide participants on how to serve God in a safe and lasting way. While on the trip, checking in daily with all participants and coordinating with the host organization to ensure all needs are being met.

### Reports To

The Global Engagement Coordinator in the office of Humanitarian Engagement.

### Qualification

- A dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ
- Cross-cultural experience (preferably via a previous Vision Trip)
- Local service experience
- Flexibility
- Willingness to learn
- Previous experience in the host country and language skills(Peru/Spanish, etc.)
- Spiritual maturity
- Good-natured (patient, relaxed, good sense of humor)
- A heart for missions and evangelism
- Leadership experience
- A motivator and human-centered

### Application Process:

- Express interest
- Attend a Sponsor Interest meeting
- Three (3) student recommendations forms
- One (1) peer recommendation letter
- Meet with H.E. staff

### Responsibilities and Duties

#### Pre-trip Duties:

- Review with H.E Office preparations for the trip
- Assist administrative aspects of the team in cooperation with H.E. (Work with the Student Leaders to organize logistics and daily schedules)
- Assist as needed with training, recruitment of team members, fundraising, assigning responsibilities to team members
- Withdraw cash from Cashier's office
- Participate in vision trip training weekend Sunday, January 16 & Monday, January 17, 2022.

- Meet as a group at least one time in person before the trip and once after the trip returns (funding available for food).
- Complete Strengths Finder with the CTE.
- Have current CPR/First-Aid certification

On-Trip Duties:

*Mentoring the trip participants*

- Set an example to the team through daily reflection times and consistent Christian character.
- Be aware of and sensitive to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the trip participants.
- Seek opportunities to speak to the students individually about their career, calling, what they are experiencing in poverty alleviation work, etc.

*Logistics*

- Serve (alongside the co-sponsor) as the official liaison for the team with the host organization.
- Maintain communication between the group and the H.E. office.
- Prioritize tasks considering the needs of the host organizations, nationals, and the team as needed.
- In cooperation with the host organization, arrange daily team meetings to share and discuss information about changes and logistics.
- Address any problems that arise in the field.
- In cooperation with the host organization, oversee the team's lodging, facilities, and vehicles/transportation.
- Manage trip finances and budget.
- Communicate any issues with airfare promptly with the H.E. office.

Post-Trip Duties:

- Immediate debriefing with the trip participants
- Submit a report to the H.E. office
- Debrief in person with the director of Humanitarian Engagement
- Recommend to H.E. any potential future student leaders from participants
- Submit a written evaluation to H.E. of the host organization's strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for future teams.
- Follow-up debriefing with each team member three months later for accountability on their decisions of change made during the trip.

# Student Leader Job Description

## Job Overview

Work with the sponsors and co-student leaders to create community with the trip participants as soon as the team training occurs. Collaborate with the sponsors to set expectations and work towards the desired outcomes. Help shape a culture of missions that is more inclusive of students from all majors. Create change through awareness of the causes of poverty and sustainable development solutions.

## Reports To

The Global Engagement Coordinator in the office of Humanitarian Engagement and primary trip sponsor while on the STM.

## Qualifications

- An active relationship with Jesus Christ
- Cross-cultural experience (preferably via a previous Vision Trip)
- Previous experience in the host country and language skills (Peru/Spanish, etc.)
- Local service experience
- Flexibility
- Willingness to learn
- Spiritual maturity
- Good-natured (patient, relaxed, good sense of humor)
- A heart for missions and evangelism
- Leadership experience
- A motivator and a people-person

## Application Process:

- Express interest to the office of Humanitarian Engagement
- Submit resumé
- 3 student recommendations forms
- 1 faculty recommendation letter
- Meet with H.E.

## Responsibilities and Duties

Pre-trip Duties:

- Review with H.E Office preparations for the trip.
- Work with the sponsors to organize logistics and daily schedules.
- Assist as needed with training, recruitment of team members, and fundraising.
- Participate in STM trip training weekend.
- Support the sponsors in organizing a team meet-up at least once in person before the trip and once after the trip returns.
- Complete Strengths Finder with the Center for Teaching Excellence.
- Have current CPR/First-Aid certification or be committed to attend a training.

On-Trip Duties:

*Mentoring the trip participants*

- Set an example to the team through daily reflection times and consistent Christian character.
- Be aware of and sensitive to the spiritual and physical needs of the trip participants.
- Seek opportunities to speak to the students individually about what they are experiencing in poverty alleviation work, etc.

*Logistics*

- Serve (alongside the co-sponsor) as the official liaison for the team with the host organization
- Alert sponsor to problems that arise during the trip and assist in providing solutions if needed appropriate.

Post-Trip Duties

- Submit a report to the H.E. office
- Debrief in person with the director of Humanitarian Engagement
- Recommend to H.E. any potential future student leaders from participants
- Follow-up debriefing with each team member three months later for accountability on their decisions of change made during the trip.

# Student Media Job Description

## Job Overview

Document the trip with photos, video, content, and write-ups. Help tell the story of the participants by showing what they learned, shared with others, and experienced. You will also help the host organization increase awareness about their projects.

## Reports To

The Global Engagement Coordinator in the office of Humanitarian Engagement, working alongside the Humanitarian Engagement Marketing & Communications Coordinator. On the trip, the trip sponsors will be the supervisors.

## Qualification

- An active relationship with Jesus Christ
- A heart for missions and evangelism
- Cross-cultural experience (preferably via previous short-term mission trips)
- Previous experience in the host country and language skills (Peru/Spanish, etc.)
- Local service experience
- Feature writing and photography skills
- Spiritual maturity

## Application Process:

- Express interest to the office of Humanitarian Engagement
- Submit resumé along with a portfolio
- 3 student recommendations forms
- 1 faculty recommendation letter
- Meet with H.E.

## Responsibilities and Duties

### Pre-trip Duties:

- Meet with the Global Engagement Coordinator and the Marketing & Communications Coordinator to discuss the trip agenda and media needs.
- Start documenting the trip on the weekend training.
- Secure the equipment needed for the trip.
- Assist as needed with training, recruitment of team members, fundraising, and assigning responsibilities to team members.
- Participate in trip training weekend.
- Support the sponsors in organizing a team meet-up at least once in person before the trip and once after the trip returns.
- Complete Strengths Finder with the Center for Teaching Excellence.
- Have current CPR/First-Aid certification or be committed to attending training.

### On-Trip Duties:

- Set an example to the team through daily reflection times and consistent Christian character.

#### *Logistics*

- A daily check-in with the sponsors to get an overview of the day.
- Document the critical events of the trip, per the pre-trip planning.
- The key is to document but *still* volunteer and work alongside the other trip participants.
- Based on the pre-trip plan, work on editing and writing material to be finished by the end of the vision trip

#### Post-Trip Duties

- Deliver the photos, videos, and write-ups to the office of Humanitarian Engagement.
- Debrief in person with the director of Humanitarian Engagement.
- Recommend to H.E. any potential future student leaders from among the trip participants.

# Preparing to go

ON THE STM



Santa Barbara, Honduras

## Personal Preparation

Understanding  
Catalytic Events

Cultural  
Intelligence

Glasser's Total  
Behavior

Building  
Community

## Logistical Preparation

The Budget of an  
STM

Money

Fundraising





Béré, Chad

---

**"Sociologists have consistently found that the way we anticipate a situation will strongly influence how we engage in it."**

DAVID LIVERMORE (48)

---

### Personal Preparation

The following sections help you, the sponsor, understand the theories and ideas behind the “why” of an STM. They will help you understand your personal experiences and give you the tools and understanding needed as you guide the participants on their STM journey and help them make meaning to their own experiences.

### Understanding the Catalytic Event

It is helpful to see an STM as a journey arch, with the peak of the STM being the catalytic event that will help force a shift in the participant's view of the world. An example is a shock of seeing how different a hospital or clinic is in a developing country or hearing the story of a child who died due to not having clean drinking water. Brenda Salter McNeil, the author of *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0*, defines catalytic events as “often painful but necessary experiences that happen to individuals and organizations” to kick-start the growth journey (46). An STM is structured to be that catalytic event for a participant, which means you, as the sponsor, need to understand what that can look like for the participant. For them, events that happen while on the ground can become the extra push to get out of their comfort zone to see a world of different perspectives (46). This STM will help move the participant out of an ethnocentric view of the

world and into a new view that will escort them into something they have never in their lives experienced before (49). From the first time you interact with the participant, you are creating a safe place and building relationships that will help them process this catalytic event as it happens.

It is necessary to remember that this may be a challenging experience for some participants and very easy for others. You must also do self-reflection as you use your interactions with the participants to discern how they are doing on the journey. Even if you have participated in an STM, you may still be seeing things new and need to lean into your catalytic event as it happens.



Mondulkiri, Cambodia

*It is helpful to remember that you are in charge during this stage of the journey. However, you are not in control.*

It is helpful to remember that you are in charge during this stage of the journey. However, you are not in control. Many things will simply happen, no matter how much we prepare ahead of time. By acknowledging that this chaos will come, we are leaning into it so that we can learn through it and learn from it.

### Glasser's Total Behavior

This section will help you understand how the participants and yourself react to the world around them. Dr. William Glasser developed Choice Theory in the 1970s. Within his Choice Theory program, his theory created ways to understand why and how people respond to the world around them. This is useful in understanding participants' reactions and your reactions as the STM progresses.

While on the STM, the participants will be reacting to the world around them. This will help you and the participant understand what is going on internally better. We can use the Total Behavior car graph to help understand and explain that *thinking* and *acting* are front-wheel drives—what the driver can control and direct. The ‘driver’ can directly influence how they act and think. However, the back two wheels are feelings and physiology—what happens because of the actions and thoughts. With this understanding, Jim Roy, an expert in Choice Theory, explains that we know then that ‘driver,’ or participant, have only indirect control of their emotions and physiology (Roy). It may be that a participant is having physical symptoms of illness because they are ‘driving their car in reverse.’ You can help participants navigate this process by directing them to begin by looking inward.

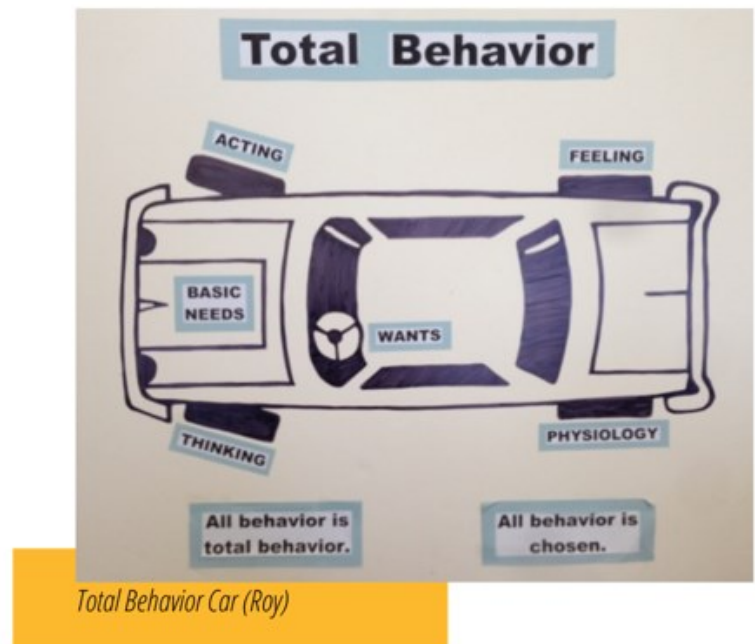
You can ask yourself if you are ‘driving your car forward or backward,’ meaning are you reacting to your emotions and how your body feels, or are you in control of your actions and thoughts? Knowing this information will help you understand how a participant experiencing things outside of their control may be reacting. To help support those who may be ‘driving their car backward,’ you can pause and ask a few questions:

What are you thinking about?

What are you doing?

Is it helping or hurting the situation?

Another concept to keep in mind is that everyone sees the world through different filters—life events that affect how they see the world around them. Imagine you have two volunteers: Volunteer A has a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice; Volunteer B has a glass of water. They both drink from their glasses, and then you give them a sour gummy. While they are both experiencing the same sour gummy, Volunteer A will likely find the experience much worse than Volunteer B.



While on the STM, some participants will react to an event differently, simply based on what they know of the world. Your job is to help guide them through that journey of understanding. As they look at the world around them through the lens of what is familiar to them, it is necessary to encourage the participant to understand the differences in their perceptions of reality and the reasons behind those differences. Just as we can understand why Volunteer A will find the sour gummy more sour after drinking orange juice, so we can learn to understand the reasons behind the various viewpoints of participants. While on the STM, the challenge is to concentrate less on our behaviors and words and instead examine our individual filters to see how we view others around us (Griffin). Perhaps you or the participants will discover a new way of seeing the world around you.

#### Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) observes and reacts to cultural cues and experiences (Griffin). The cross-cultural experiences will exist within your STM team and with the host community. Both will call for awareness and continued working toward a healthy CQ. Four areas help create a strong CQ: knowledge, interpretation, perseverance, and behavior (Livermore). The following breakdown is based on information from both Livermore and Griffin.

---

**“The biggest problems in short-term missions are not technical or administrative. The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflict, poor leadership, and bad teamwork”**

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DAVID LIVERMORE (14)



Tamborine National Park, Australia

## Knowledge

**Ask:** How am I different from this person or group?

Learning about cultural differences starts in the STM class. It is important to note that knowing the differences or the language is not enough; it is not the same as being able to interpret the actions and words of your host.

## Interpretive

**Ask:** What goes on below the surface?

Interpreting your cultural knowledge is understanding what is going on beneath the surface. This requires strong observation skills. You can practice by observing each sense: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. Take any questions about things above and below the surface to the local staff, and build a dialogue.



*Cultural Iceberg (Soptv)*

## Perseverance

**Ask:** Are we committed to building long-term relationships?

An example of this is the distinction between holding a perceived stereotype that all Cambodians love *prahok* (fermented fish paste that is spicy and salty) and learning more about the types of fish Cambodians eat and how it connects culturally to meals and community by building friendships with them.

## Behavioral

**Ask:** Can we apply CQ to a real interaction?

Do our thoughts and behaviors adapt appropriately to our surroundings? What does it look like to balance being true to who we are and still “flexing to the cultural expectations or norms of others”? It is valuable to stay true to ourselves but make sure to do that in a way that is not offensive to others. For example, someone can balance their craving to be loud and energetic with their ability to slow down and genuinely share about themselves when needed.



Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

!! Great achievements are not born from a single vision but the combination of many distinctive viewpoints. **Diversity challenges assumptions, open minds and unlocks our potential to solve any problem we may face** !!

It is helpful to note that local communities are honored when you experiment with language, greetings, and other cultural differences. Do not let a “lack of familiarity with common courtesies” stop you from trying to connect; this is a “forgivable offense” while on an STM (Offutt 806). It is a risk to feel vulnerable when speaking a new language, but in this case, the risk is worth it; it will go a long way to building that connection!

Putting in the effort to understand how the host organization and community “think, feel, and act” will help make a lasting difference in the outcome of the STM (Hofstede 4). The local community relationships will strengthen as you lead the STM participants through the journey of understanding the cultural differences and similarities.

### Building Community

Building community is your primary task as a sponsor. It begins with the participant's first interaction with the sending organization and with you, the sponsor. In the pre-work leading up to the STM, you build a community. Creating a community that has the same goal will create a united voice. Whether the participants speak about the Gospel or social justice, a unified voice is always louder. The first step is to understand what Jesus looks like in our backyard before asking, “What does Jesus look like in the host community?” The participants must take the time to identify who they are, their home culture, and how they each relate to one another. The community you build will provide a safe place for participants to question their cultural expectations and customs then as they “search for new meaning and purpose, and reclaim aspects of their racial and ethnic heritage to nurture that sense of self” (Salter McNeil 75). Understanding self is just the first step in understanding others, which is part of building community.

Questions participants can ask themselves as you build community together:

- \*Name one family tradition. How is it related to your ethnic heritage?
- \*Think about yourself in terms of identifiable groupings, such as race, economic class, geographic origin, age group, gender, or personal interests. What are some words you use to describe yourself to others?
- \*Expand on these terms using stereotypes or negative connotations you've heard associated with them.
- \*How do you respond emotionally and intellectually to these stereotypes?

\*What descriptive terms would you *like* to be used to characterize your particular ethnic heritage or family background?

\*What aspects of your ethnic heritage have helped you to understand God? Reflect on this and give praise to God.

(Taken from *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0* pp. 83)

Charles Vogl, the author of *The Art of Community*, has offered seven principles to use as you intentionally build community:

1. *Boundary*: The knowledge that you are a member of this specific STM team.
2. *Initiation*: The first meeting with the new STM team of the year.
3. *Rituals*: The handing out of the STM team shirts, nicknames given during the STM, and the big presentation from the STM trip.
4. *Temple*: The host community's space where daily meetings are held.
5. *Stories*: Team meetings before the trip and daily debriefs during the journey.
6. *Symbols*: The STM team shirt, local money.
7. *Inner Rings*: The transition from an outsider to a participant to student leader to sponsor. (31)

## Logistical Preparation

The Budget of an STM

When creating the STM budget, it is essential to understand the breakdown of the formula used. What is the cost of insurance per person, the daily per diem for food, and is it based on the minimum number of participants needed to cover all expenses of the trip? Does the participant's fundraising cover the cost of the sponsors? Budget transparency is valuable for the participant to understand why they are required to fundraise a certain amount, what is being done with that money and how to speak competently about it with partnering donors.

“We must understand that access to pertinent information is essential to getting a job done. The right to know is basic. Moreover, it is better to err on the side of sharing too much information rather than risk leaving someone in the dark. Information is power, but it is pointless power if hoarded. Power must be shared for an organization or a relationship to work” (qtd. In Joyaux 310).



You need to understand the cost of everything as a sponsor who will need to pay for things at times and share the financial breakdown with the participants.

#### Money

Check the current exchange rate using the app Units Plus

Before leaving: check with the host organization to know where to change money.

Take new, clean, crisp \$20s; you can get these from any bank—*not* an ATM.

#### Tipping

Communicate with the host organization leader to find out how to best give to the organization or leave to give a “thank you” honorarium.



La Ceiba, Honduras

”

Churches have a key role to play in being advocates for children and ensuring that, whatever loan or aid is given, it will reach those most in need and will not damage local initiatives or resources.

”

MILES, GLENN & WRIGHT (309)

**“Fundraising is first and foremost a form of ministry”**

**Henry Nouwen**

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The goal of this section:

- A.** See fundraising as a WE goal.
  - B.** Understand fundraising is about a relationship
  - C.** Feel confident in offering a partnership in this ministry opportunity
- 

**“Fundraising is as spiritual as giving a sermon, entering a time of prayer, visiting the sick, or feeding the hungry!”**

**Henry Nouwen**

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Vocabulary:

It’s important to remember that this is not about *me* getting to do *this*; *it* is about offering others the opportunity to partner and serve God in this way. Not everyone can travel on a vision trip, but everyone can participate somehow. The vocabulary is essential. Using the correct language will help you frame a successful request.

- Invite the individual to Partner
    - *Don’t* ask them to be a donor for you on this vision trip. *Invite* them to *partner* with you to be part of the ministry for this project.
  - Ask them to partner and support the project, not *you*.
- 

**“We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We invite you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you - your energy, prayers, and money - in this work to which God has called us.” Henry Nouwen**

---

Audience

Below are suggestions of people/organizations/communities you might invite to partner with you in this ministry.

- Home church
  - Sabbath School

- Small groups/Bible study
- Family
- Friends
- Co-workers (old & new)
- Similar businesses to the work being done on the STM

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**“Indeed, if we raise funds for the creation of a community of love, we are helping God build the kingdom. We are doing exactly what we are supposed to do as Christians”**

**Henry Nouwen**

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*Fundraising Resources:*

Nouwen, Henri J. M., and Mogabgab, John S.. *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. United States, Upper Room Books, 2011.

Better Mission Trips podcast: Kingdom Resource Raising.

[www.open.spotify.com/episode/1H4sIqmL36PnFnwPB7FByk?si=6fa444fab26c4535](https://www.open.spotify.com/episode/1H4sIqmL36PnFnwPB7FByk?si=6fa444fab26c4535)

Experience Missions: 20 Ways to Fundraise During a Pandemic

[www.experiencemission.org/blog/blogdetail.asp?recordkey=7C9E3410-4FF7-4C85-891C-90EAC98D78E4](http://www.experiencemission.org/blog/blogdetail.asp?recordkey=7C9E3410-4FF7-4C85-891C-90EAC98D78E4)

TED Talk- Chris Anderson, Secret to Great Public Speaking (7:55)

[www.ted.com/talks/chris\\_anderson\\_ted\\_s\\_secret\\_to\\_great\\_public\\_speaking?language=en#t-370990](http://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_ted_s_secret_to_great_public_speaking?language=en#t-370990)

TED Talk- Simon Sinek, How Great Leaders Inspire Action (Start with “Why”) (17:48)

[www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

Outline for a Persuasive Speech:

[qualityansweringservice.com/outline-for-writing-a-persuasive-speech/](http://qualityansweringservice.com/outline-for-writing-a-persuasive-speech/)

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**“Fundraising must always aim to create new, lasting relationships”**

**Henry Nouwen**

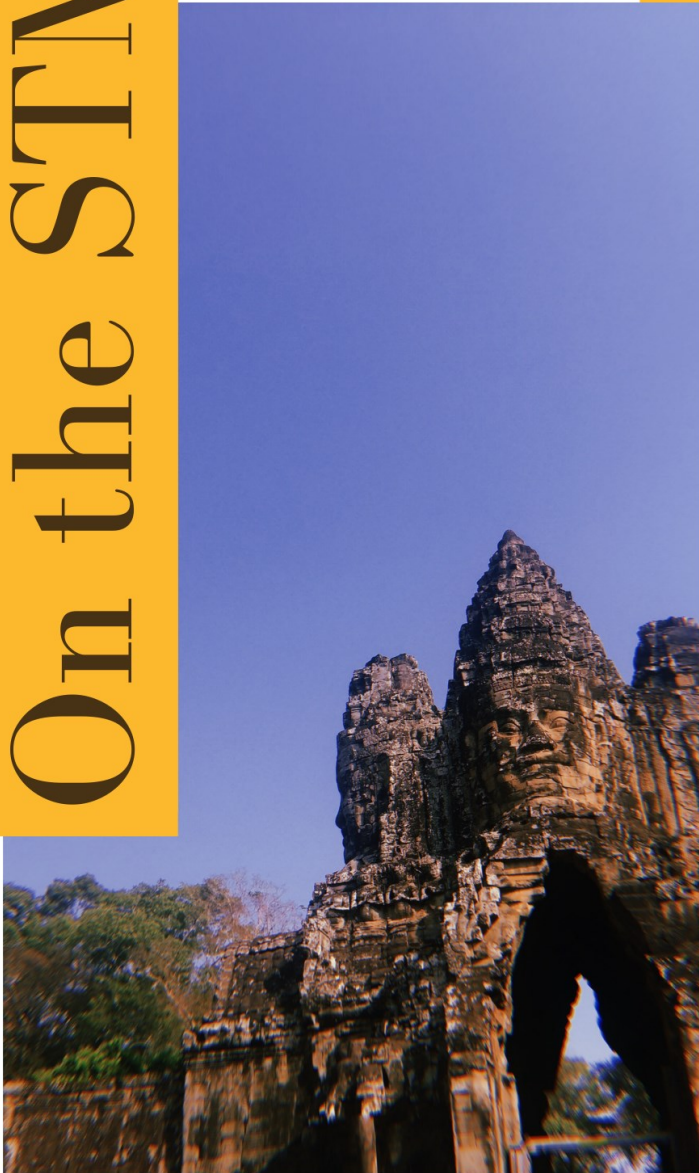
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**When we approach  
fundraising in a spirit of  
gratitude, we do so knowing  
that God has already given us  
what we most need for life in  
abundance.**

Henry Nouwen

# On the STM



Seim Reap, Cambodia

Daily Responsibilities

Daily Programming

Final Debrief

Staying Healthy

Guiding the Team

Perceived Power

Breaking Stereotypes

Understanding America

General Daily Information

Communication

Photography

Country-Specific Info

Packing

Sustainability

## On the STM

### Daily Responsibilities

#### Daily Programming

Once you are on the STM, your daily programming will be fundamental. This is the best opportunity to share information with your team. This is also key to helping maintain the safe space you created in the pre-trip meetings.

#### *Morning meeting— 30-45 min.*

**Worship:** Work with the Student Leaders to organize the daily worship and choose a Bible verse theme. This time is for the morning thought of the day; focused, more extended worship is done in the evening.

**Getting to know you:** Divide the number of people by the number of morning meetings available so that everyone, including sponsors, has shared by the last morning meeting. They share their name, major/career dreams, fun facts, why they wanted to come on the STM, etc. (Each day, the main question should be the same. You can mix it up on how you choose who shares next—the last person to speak decides who the next person is an easy method).

**Daily agenda:** Share what to expect for the day, etc.

#### *End of Day Debrief- 30-45 min*

**Shout-Outs:** Participants acknowledge others in the team or others from the host organization who stepped up and helped, supported, or were champs. Behaved beyond ‘self’ and served ‘others.’ This is not the time to poke fun at or call out mistakes made.

**Heads-Up:** Let participants know what to expect for the next day, so they are prepared.

**Worship:** This is a time for a more elaborate worship service, keeping in mind the participants' energy levels at the end of long working days.

The daily debrief is useful “to nudge group members beyond their initial conclusions and help them suspend judgment until they’ve gone deeper in service. For example,” . . . students see lots of smiling people . . . and their “fast” conclusion is that even without money they are happy. “Are they? Maybe— maybe not. Perhaps the locals are simply being polite. Whatever the case,

we might assume the nonverbal behavior we're observing means the same thing it means at home" (Powell & Griffin11). Use the debrief time to work together to understand the world around you and the participants.

Suggested topics for meetings:

- ★ Talk about body language (participant or host) and what it looked like was being said.
- ★ Be curious. Think about an interaction with someone, local or participant. Ask, "I wonder" For example, *I wonder: what does "Lucy," the little girl from vacation Bible school, think/feel/need?*
- ★ **Reverse sides.** Identify different people introduced during the day and consider things from their perspective. Ask how the day would look from their point of view.
- ★ **Shout-Outs** are used to celebrate kindness. Participants acknowledged others on the team or the host organization who stepped up and helped, supported, or were champions.
- ★ Challenge participants to learn something new about a teammate or a local team member each day. (Food, talent, activity, book, favorite \_\_\_\_\_)
- ★ Acknowledge a time when a trip participant was courageous by speaking up for someone else, a teammate, or other people.
  - "You know, sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage — just literally twenty seconds of just embarrassing bravery, and I promise you that something great will come of it." (Benjamin Mee, *We Bought a Zoo* qtd in Borba)
- ★ The ABCs to use when needing to cope with emotional distress:
  - Aware. Be mindful of what you are feeling and ask, what do I need?
  - Breath. Focus on slow, deep breaths.
  - Calm. Take a break from the situation to decompress. Watch a funny YouTube clip, tell a joke, and get a drink of water.

(The above ideas are for one-on-one conversations or debriefs and are based on suggestions from Michele Borba, author of *UnSelfie*.)

- ★ Create opportunities for risk— Use the OSV scale (*Oriented, Safe, and Valued*). Ask internally and sometimes aloud:



- Is each [participant] oriented [to what is going on with the STM]?
- Do they understand where we are, where we're headed, and what's going on?
- Does each person feel safe? Physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally, have we pushed too far beyond the bounds of comfort for anyone (or everyone)?
- Does each person feel valued?
- Have we communicated that anyone's voice is unnecessary or that their safety doesn't matter?
- Have we devalued the image of God in anyone by our actions, words, or attitudes?  
(Powell & Griffin 19)

#### Final Debrief

It is done after the service work is completed. This is an intentional time allocated to help the participants process their week and start thinking about their future. Have the group sit in a circle; everyone (sponsors, host organization, participants) must share and answers the three questions:

1. What was your highlight?
2. What surprised you the most on this trip?
3. What will you do differently moving forward (at home, career, etc.)?

The primary sponsor should go last and use this time to thank the host organization, student leaders, and any other key people who helped during the STM.

It is essential to be aware of the type of sharing during the debriefing and, specifically, during the final debrief. A safe space has been created, but there are still things that are not appropriate to be shared in *this* safe space. On the STM, the definition of a safe space is a group of participants who are encouraged to “take risks and be intellectually challenged” as well as offer respect and “emotional security” (Yee). Suppose a participant brings up past trauma, physical, sexual, emotional, or other. In that case, it is vital to acknowledge the participant and their pain, but it must be done so that it does not open up the space for them to delve into their trauma. After the debrief, it is your responsibility to document the conversation and report it to the appropriate people.

## Staying Healthy

While there are plenty of ways to be proactive and conscious of participants' health on trips, sponsors should at least be prepared in a few significant areas.

Staying hydrated will make all the difference to the overall health of the STM team. Encourage participants to drink at least eight ounces of water *before* breakfast, specifically when they first wake up. At lunch, a participant should drink a minimum of eight ounces again, if possible, with electrolytes. At dinner, before the participant is allowed to drink a carbonated beverage, they should again drink a minimum of eight ounces of water.

During the day, monitor the air temperature and humidity to keep the participants hydrated, even in a cold environment. Never feel guilty for calling water breaks. If a participant refuses to drink water during the day, they must be pulled from work and kept back for their safety. Informing the participants of the seriousness of hydration from the beginning will help prevent illness.

Washing hands is an effortless thing to do to prevent contagious illnesses. Make sure you travel with an environmentally friendly soap. (Liquid is easier to transport, as a bar will get slimy if not able to dry out between uses.) Connect with the host organization beforehand to clarify the handwashing station available. If needed, empower the host organization to build a *Tippy Tap*. The simple instructions can be found at [TippyTap.org](http://TippyTap.org).

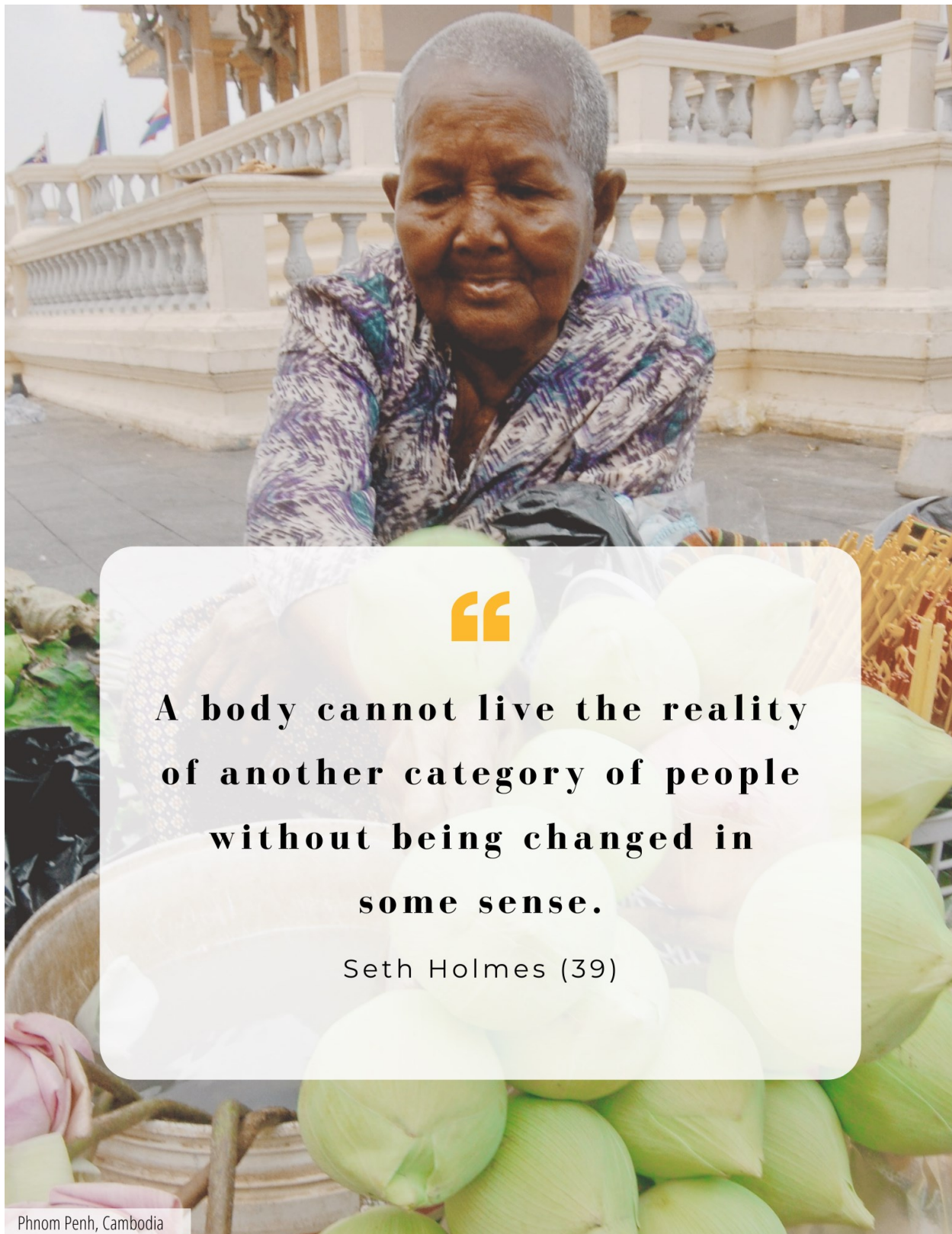
## Guiding the Team

### Perceived Power

Be aware of ways that your particular heritage, set of circumstances, and the country you represent put you in a role of power. As a participant from America, even if your passport is not American, you are seen as an American. Ask yourself: “In what ways do we (or might we) participate in the oppression of others because of who we are and where we’re from? What should we do about that?” An example is the clothes you wear—where were they made? Where is the food you eat from? (Powell & Griffin 54). Being aware of the unspoken roles you may be given can help protect you from awkward or dangerous situations, such as being perceived as a medical professional or pharmacist.

For the sponsors who are white: it is crucial that you understand your role in white privilege. In your personal life and while on the STM, your role in challenging the continuation of racism and racial inequality will be powerful for the participants. It will also be necessary to identify the parts in history that America has played in racism and racial inequality both at home and globally. Because as the participants themselves begin to make these same connections and discoveries, they will rely on you to help equip them with the language to identify and name the injustice and environmental racism (Hagerman 209). The participants will be able to follow your lead as you acknowledge and talk about the role America and Europe have played in history, both past and current. Together the group can move forward in healing and understanding.

The words used to describe people, events, places, and experiences will infer cultural judgments, such as: “quaint, picturesque, simple, primitive, native, or backward” (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 197). While the words are not intended to be degrading, there is a personal bias. If you say the local staff member’s house was simple, you are likely placing your own culture’s standards as the norm. Colonization is not just referring to occupying a country; it is “imposing your own culture’s sense of time, place, religion, food, rituals, hygiene, education, morals, and even story structures” (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 197). It is imperative that you know the language you use as you talk and how you express your reaction to the things you experience while on the STM.



“

**A body cannot live the reality  
of another category of people  
without being changed in  
some sense.**

Seth Holmes (39)

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## Breaking Stereotypes

One of the many goals of an STM is to break down stereotypes and build connections. Contact Theory and meaning-making activities are potent tools for accomplishing this goal. Contact Theory connects different groups, such as the STM participants and Native Hawaiians. Contact Theory suggests that “meaningful contact” will improve relationships over time (Brewer & Miller qtd. in Salter McNeil 37). Meaning-making activities are “when hosts and visitors interact with one another. . . [in] activities that influence individual and group identity” (Offutt 805). These types of activities are essential to include in an STM. The goal should be to conduct these activities in an “intimate setting,” both religious and personal. This will help further build relationships and break down stereotypes between the host organization and the participants (Offutt 805). Every opportunity should be taken to connect with the local community and host organization. This can look like combined worship services with different cultures represented. When possible, invite local staff to join you for meals, outings, church, etc. In the words of a Rwandan proverb: “If you cannot hear the mouth eating, you cannot hear the mouth crying” (Katongole & Rice 91). Meaning-making activities work together to change social realities for both the trip participants and the local community.

The following is based on the Contact Theory chart from Jim Everett, and it breaks down the four components needed to make up a “meaningful contact” in an STM.

1. Equal Status: All stakeholders should be on the same hierarchical level
  - a. The participants are going on the STM as learners, *not* as someone who can save the world or offer all the solutions.
2. Cooperation: All stakeholders should work together in a non-competitive relationship
  - a. The participants are working *alongside* the host organization staff.
3. Common Goals: Stakeholders need to rely on one another to reach the desired goal
  - a. The entire team: participants, and the host organization, are working to accomplish an achievable goal by the end of the STM- build the house, present the sexual-assault prevention training, etc.
4. Supported by Social & Institutional Authorities: All social and institutional authorities involved in the STM support the collaborative work.

- a. Sending organizations and host organizations are willing to work towards a collaborative STM.

### Understanding Home

When traveling outside of America, there are often cultural comparison questions among the participants. It is important to remember that they are processing the world much as a toddler does, and they may ask questions that, on further examination, are rude or ignorant. It is important to remember that they are simply learning and processing information. This section will introduce some American customs to help inform participants as they make their home country comparisons.

### The journey of American trash

The United States produces 19% of the world's waste, yet we only make up five percent of the world's population (Pellow 100). America is great at hiding trash. Here's how North America hides their waste; they 'recycle,' but often that means sending the recycling to a facility that will export it to a developing country (Pellow 100). In 1993 PepsiCo shipped more than 9 million pounds of plastic rubbish from California to a community in India, where it simply was dumped and left to blow away in the wind (Pellow 134). In 2019, The Guardian reported a story where Cambodia received 83 shipping containers full of 1,600 tons of waste from Canada and the United States ('Not a Dustbin'). The article did not state where the shipping containers were intended but that the Cambodian government refused to accept the plastic. The many countries that receive 'recycled' paper, plastic, metal, and electronic goods are exposing themselves, their workers, communities, and ecosystems to dangers that would never be allowed in the United States (Pellow 100). Before we question the trash system in other countries, it can be beneficial to understand the journey of our trash.

### Why does this country do X instead of Y, as we do in America?

This question assumes the global North or, specifically, the United States has all the answers, and therefore the United States' methods should be duplicated worldwide. There are two answers to this question. The first is, why would we want the host country to be *just* like the United States? Brian Fikkert answers that well by saying, "the story of poverty alleviation shouldn't be to turn Uganda into the United States or the inner cities into suburbs for all these places are

*fundamentally broken*” (35). Instead, we should want these places to become more like the place God created for them to be, which is true to their authentic God-created self.

The second answer to this question is, *Do I want the host country to fit in with how I, as a person with power, coming from the global North, want things to happen?* Merriam-Webster describes “influence or control over another country, a group of people, etc.” as hegemony (“Hegemony”). Another way to describe this action is colonialism: when a dominant culture convinces a restrained culture that a certain way is best and should be the norm. Hegemonic vision gains traction in other countries because it convinces people that the current social plans of the global North are ordinary and necessary (Moe-Lobeda 89). At all times, hegemony should be avoided. Your goal, as the sponsor, is to help the trip participants see the beauty in the local culture and understand that just because it is done differently does not make it better or worse. There is often superior problem solving in the global South; actual recycling and advocacy for environmental justice are among a few things.



“

**When too many people across society have difficulty taking the perspective of others, polarization, and political stagnation result.**

Bornstein & Davis (78)



## General Daily Information

### Communication

#### **Communicating with the Host Organization**

As you are on the ground guiding the participants on the STM, you are the connection between the host organization and the participants. You may, at times, also need to be the ‘cultural broker,’ the person who builds the bridge between the needs of the organization and the needs of the participant. You will need to meet regularly with the host organization and interact frequently and clearly. The following are suggestions from Erin Meyer, the author of *The Cultural Map*, to establish clear communication:

- Listen to what is meant instead of what is said.
- Reflect, ask clarifying questions, be receptive to body language cues (Diaz as quoted in *The Culture Map*. Meyer 50)
- Ask open-ended questions-try not to back them into a corner that requires a yes or no answer.
- Keep it humble- “self-deprecation allows you to accept the blame for being unable to get the message and then ask for assistance” (52)

### Photography

It’s necessary to help participants tell the story of their STM journey. This will help them process what they are learning, and it will help them become a guide to someone else as they think about going on an STM.

While on the trip, everyone will learn, explore, and be challenged. The job of everyone is to help make sure to tell more than a “single story,” as explained in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TEDTalk. [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s The Danger of a Single Story.](#)

RAW Impact, an Australian STM host organization working in Cambodia, has created a guideline to help tell a better story with photos:

Start by asking, “Would I be allowed to take or post a similar picture in my home country?”

- ⇒ Please **DO NOT** post publicly any photographs of families that are part of the programs we are serving, including slide shows, etc.
  - ⇒ Please **DO NOT** publicly post the location of any projects.
  - ⇒ Please **DO** post photos on IG, FB, Snapchat, etc.
  - ⇒ Please **DO** ask the Student Media Leader to take a specific photo that you would like.
  - ⇒ Please **DO** post your photos from around the city etc.
- ★ Show the diversity of people, situations, and scenery
    - Include descriptions of where you are and what’s going on. Show images of local staff working together in their communities. Our stories should help change how the world perceives the community we are serving.
  - ★ Always represent local people with dignity and respect.
    - Don’t compare situations, people, or places to things in your home country.
    - Photos of children.
      - If a child is nude, don’t take a photo. Check with the parent or guardian before you take any pictures of the children. Children are incapable of giving consent. **Think about how your image looks to someone who doesn’t know the whole story.**
  - ★ Question your motives behind posting a photo:
    - What response are you hoping to receive?
    - Would you post a photo of a slum/inner city, homeless person, or child from an orphanage or foster care home in America?
  - ★ Ask for consent: **develop relationships** with people before taking a photo
    - Put yourself in the shoes of the person you would like to take a picture of – would you want that information shared publicly without your consent?

Each community and person is complex and multidimensional—and everyone wants to be recognized for more than just the negative aspects of their lives. We are there as a guest, not an intruder. Learn names, faces, successes, and traditions, and look beyond the poverty-single-story

(Abu Sarah 100). Participants have been given a chance to help tell a better story of those they meet and become friends with; they just need some extra guidance on how to do that.

#### Country-Specific Info

##### List of things to research

- History of the overall country (wars, colonization)

- History of the local community (import/exports)

- History of the organization

##### Where to look:

State Department-- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>

CIA World Fact Book-- <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>

Hofstede-Cultural Insights-- <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

## Packing

This may change depending on your specific host country—  
Please check with the sending organization for any questions

### Basics:

Quick-dry/lose travel pants  
T-shirts  
Light long sleeve shirt to protect against the sun  
Rain Jacket  
Sleepwear  
Underwear  
One-piece swimsuit (in some cultures, women will need to plan on wearing a shirt and shorts with their swimsuit)  
Quick-dry/Travel towel  
Sandals  
Close-toed shoes (especially if doing medical or manual labor)  
Casual clothes for evenings after work  
Church clothes (check with the H.E. office to see what the cultural expectation is for your location)  
Hat  
Sunglasses

### Toiletries\*

*Dr. Bronner's* pure-Castile liquid soap (it is a concentrate and can also be used as shampoo)  
*Tom's of Maine* toothpaste  
Native Deodorant- in plastic-free packaging  
*Lush* shampoo & conditioner bars  
Reef safe sunscreen  
Feminine-hygiene products\*\*  
Menstruation supplies  
*Ziplock*  
Biodegradable Wet ones  
Extra supplies

### Extra Items:

Snacks to have on hand while traveling  
Travel tissues- to be used for toilet paper etc. while in the field or traveling  
*Ziploc* bags to keep items dry  
Day pack (backpack)  
Earplugs (if a light sleeper)

### Medical Trip Supplies:

Stethoscope  
Blood pressure cuff  
Watch with a second hand  
Scrubs

*Things to note:*

All clothing should be loose-fitting.

Keep in mind the specific activities you will be doing and make packing adjustments as needed. Culturally appropriate clothing is key to a successful vision trip. Being aware of what story you are telling with your clothing is essential to think about before you pack. It is always better to err on the conservative side when in doubt.

When traveling, it is always best to leave your jewelry at home. Please do not bring or wear any rings, earrings, or necklaces.

*Men:* no short shorts, tank tops, or clothing with graphics that are degrading to women

*Women:* no yoga pants, shirts with low necks, and only clothing to your knees or longer.

#### Sustainability

DO NOT leave your dirty, used clothes or shoes behind. If you don't want them, take them home and dispose of them. Why would we leave them for someone else? As a general rule, *nothing* should ever be planned to be left behind unless the host organization has communicated its needs *ahead* of time. When an STM team leaves behind all of their shoes, it affects the local 'Mom & Pop' shoe store, which relies on the local community purchasing their shoes. To learn more about this, I recommend watching the movie *Poverty.Inc.*

While it is convenient to pack single-use items to avoid carrying them back to the United States, it is critical to remember that the things you leave behind may not be taken to a landfill (which is still terrible). Instead, they may be left on the side of a mountain, a road, or burned. Items taken to landfills are just as treacherous because families live and work there to find items of value for resale. It is a dangerous livelihood resulting in accidents and subjecting them to toxic chemicals that cause cancer and other terminal diseases (McPherson). Being aware of what you contribute to the community is complicated, but we can do better by planning ahead.

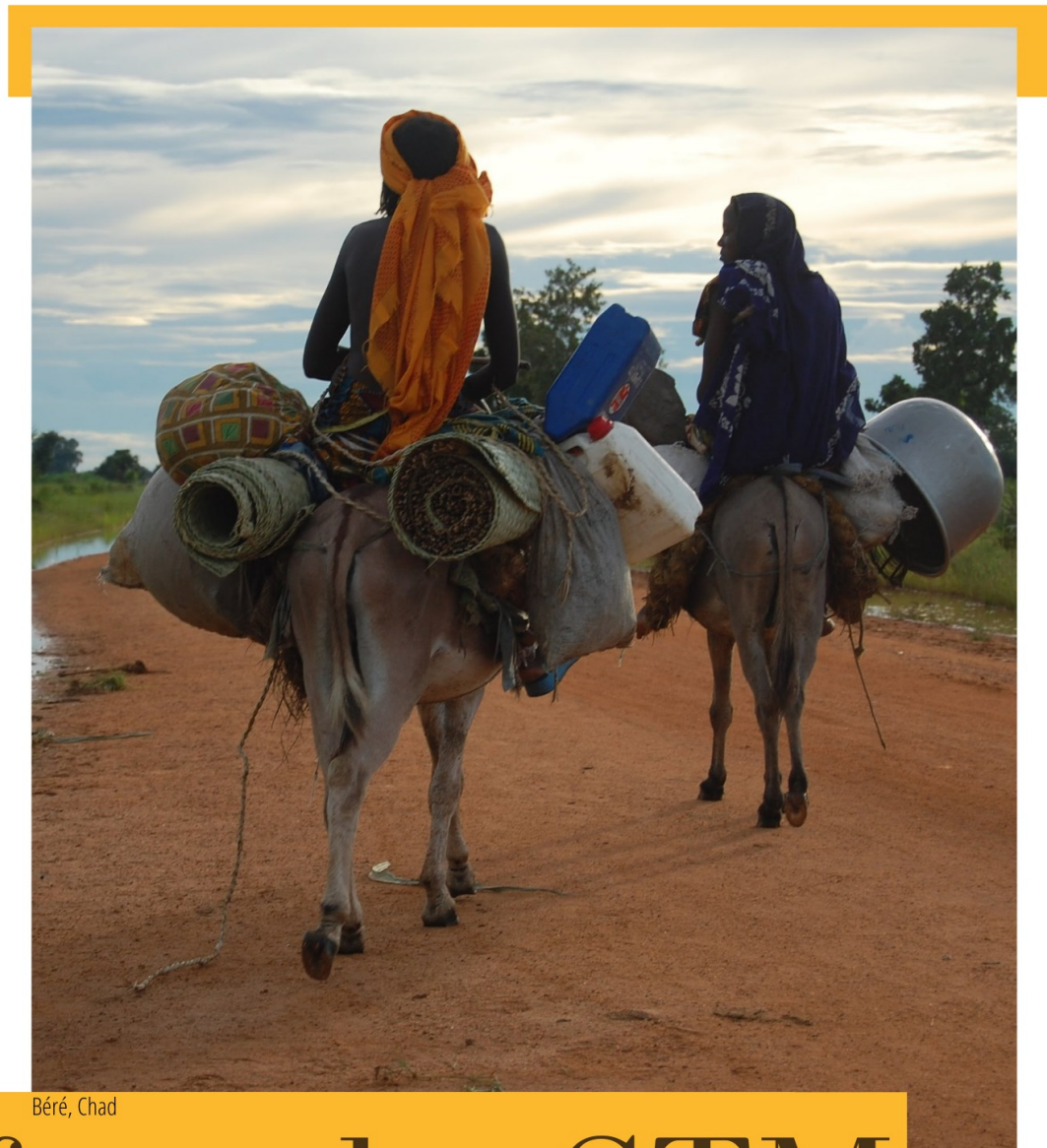
\*When packing your toiletries remember that in many places, the water/sewage system does not have the same filtration system as in the United States. The products you use on your body may go directly into the ground without being filtered. As citizens of the United States, we believe it is our right to exist in a clean, chemical-free environment. Therefore, we should also advocate

for that right in other countries (Pellow 142). In the same way we would be aware of our toiletries if we were hiking in Yosemite National Park, we should be mindful of our toiletries on our STM.

\*\*The average American woman will use approximately sixteen thousand tampons (and applicators) and around thirty-two thousand sanitary pads (Clawson 152). This may seem like no big deal, but understanding where it all comes from and where the product goes at the end of its life makes it a big deal. The cotton requires incredible amounts of pesticides and other harsh chemicals and bleaching to make it bright white, all of which will come in contact with the complex and intimate parts of a woman's body (152). With trash being put into landfills across America, it is significant to note that it will take more than five hundred years for a diaper to decompose (a diaper's journey is similar to feminine-hygiene products), and the human waste left on these products that are going directly into the ecosystem is also a concern (153). Many host countries do not even have a landfill, resulting in worse situations.

When I, Sonya, was a student-missionary living in rural Beré, Chad (technically, all of Chad is rural), I used the typical cotton tampon with a plastic applicator. One day, as I walked through the village, I saw a neighbor child playing from a distance. I thought they had a toy whistle in their mouth, but as I got closer, I realized they had the plastic tampon applicator in their mouth from either myself or one of the two other American volunteers. And the child was playing with it like it was, in fact, a whistle.

We suggest looking into the purchase of a menstrual cup. According to healthline.com, a menstrual cup is a “small, flexible funnel-shaped cup made of rubber or silicone” inserted into the vagina to collect the fluid from a period (Scaccia). There are many benefits to using a menstrual cup, especially while traveling and working in foreign and remote locations. The best is that it can be worn for up to twelve hours, depending on the menstrual flow, and there is no plastic or other waste left behind for a child to play with. We also suggest GladRags cotton reusable pads or Thinx reusable period panties. They are simple enough to be washed and used daily on a vision trip, even in tropical locations. Using these products will cut down on what you need to pack, the trash left behind, and the fear of running out of a feminine-hygiene product.



Béré, Chad

# After the STM

Follow-Up Debrief

Private  
Debriefs

Public  
Debriefs

Long-Term  
Partnership

## After the STM

It is vital to remember that the STM does not end when you pick up your luggage from the carousel at the airport.

### Follow-Up Debrief

This section may be the most essential part of an STM. Research suggests that the follow-up post-STM is what will make a lasting change for the participant (Linhart, Twibell, Hartman, et al.) Because of the often “surreal and experiential nature” of the STM, the participant can struggle to make a lasting transfer and integration of their experience into their everyday life (Linhart 268). The follow-up debriefs should always include the question of what the next steps should be and an evaluation of what could have been done differently (Joplin 19). Further debriefs need to happen to help the participant mentally process the STM and work towards what they want the world to look like.

### Private Debriefs

Private debriefs are internal reflections that are not shared. It can look like summary essays about the STM. You can have general summaries, themes based on social justice, environmental justice, their spiritual experience, etc.

Journal entry suggestions:

What does Jesus look like in the community you were in?

What are the names of 5 new friends (both on the team and from the community)?

What do you want service to look like at home?

### Public Debriefs

*Before leaving for the STM, decide what kind of presentations you will do when you return and whom you will invite: families, classmates, churches, community members.*

Laura Joplin, an expert in experiential education, explains that a public debriefing, in the form of group presentations, etc., can cement the experience and support the participants to develop inclusion and acceptance of each other (19). A successful STM has a mix of both private and public debriefing. Public debriefs can look like: team discussions, sharing journal entries, a class project, or a group presentation (Joplin 19). The chance to work together on a presentation of the STM will help articulate and compare the things learned with what others learned.



In follow-up team public debriefs, you can discuss Tim Dearborn's four F's of everyday experiences after an STM:

1. **Fun:** We like returning to the comforts we enjoy back home.
2. **Flee:** We miss our team and struggle to find people with whom we can share our experiences, so we feel lonely and isolated.
3. **Fight:** We get frustrated with our own culture's selfishness or indifference and fight against conforming to it.
4. **Fit:** We grow tired of fighting and just try to fit back into our own culture. (94-96)

Questions to ask based on the four F's.

1. What have you looked forward to most about returning home?
2. When have you felt alone or different since returning? Has there been anyone with whom it was difficult to share your experience?
3. What has frustrated you about your home culture since returning?
4. What old routines have you slipped back into since returning? What has been hard to continue doing since returning? (Powel & Griffin 157)

### Long-Term partnerships

While you may not be responsible for selecting and choosing the host organization, your work on the ground will go a long way to developing long-term relationships. A healthy STM should focus on long-term "relationships over projects, long-term goals, and sustainable development, honoring the agency of locals, and replacing philanthropy with solidarity" (Twibell 352).

Developing long-term relationships with the host organization will feed into the success of the STM. It will help in the follow-up team debriefs, as you can create action steps for change or support, decide how to recruit others for the return STM, and remind each other of the journey they have taken. Your feedback to the sending organization will help shape the next STM, building upon the relationship you created.



Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

“ Good intentions do not always lead to success. . .one should try to learn from [their mistakes] how to identify, and to preempt and correct, unintended adverse effects. ”

THOMAS POGGE (8)

# Extra Inspiration



Orumcheck, Cambodia

Vocabulary

Technology

Resources

## Vocabulary

**Board of directors-** “Every established non-for-profit organization has a board of directors responsible for setting policy and ensuring fiscal stability” (Fox & Karsh 335).

**Catalytic event-** “Refers to the often painful but necessary experiences that happen to individuals and organizations and serve to jump-start the reconciliation process (Salter McNeil 46).

**Contact Theory-** “Proposes that if diverse groups spend extended time together, their intergroup conflict and the negative effects of racism and ethnocentrism will gradually decrease and possibly even disappear altogether (Salter McNeil 38)

**Developed Country-** This refers to a country with *higher* levels of development and industrialization, based on things like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, economic and political stability, and human health (Karpilo). The term is becoming less common and accurate, it is better to refer to the country as Global North, and less correctly is the term a 1<sup>st</sup> World Country.

**Developing Country-** This refers to a country with *lower* levels of development and industrialization, based on things like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, economic and political stability, and human health (Karpilo). The term is becoming less common and accurate, it is better to refer to the country as Global South, and less correctly is the term a 3<sup>rd</sup> World Country.

**Environmental racism-** “Refers to governmental or corporate policies and decisions that ‘target certain communities for least desirable land uses, resulting in the disproportionate exposure of toxic and hazardous waste on communities based upon certain prescribed biological characteristics.’ It is the ‘unequal protection against toxic and hazardous waste exposure and systematic exclusion of people of color from environmental decisions affecting their communities’ ” (Benjamin Chavez qtd. by Moe-Lobeda 36)

**Ethnocentrism-** “When individuals internalize the culturally contingent values of their own social group and develop a preferential loyalty to their own “in-group” and its culture, along with negative opinions and attitudes toward out-groups –those of other ethnicities” (Priest et al. 443)

**Expats/Expatriates-** Foreigners who live outside their passport country.

**Fundraising-** Finding people to partner financially in support of the STM.

**Local/national-** Someone who lives in the community or is from the country where the STM occurs.

**NGO-** Non-Government Organization. A nonprofit organization that is not connected to a government and is usually for a social or political issue.

**Neocolonialism** – Is similar to colonialism and can look like you “imposing your own culture’s sense of time, place, religion, food rituals, hygiene, education, morals, and even story structures” (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 197)

**Not-for-profit organization-** “An organization of any size that is incorporated under the laws of the state in which it operates and has been granted tax-exempt status, usually under Section 501 (c)(3), by the US Internal Revenue Service. It must have a board of directors, elected officers, and approved financial procedures for managing grants and reporting on expenditures. Known informally as a nonprofit organization” (Fox & Karsh 349)

**Stakeholder-** “A term applied to any party with an interest in a particular program or who may be affected by the program” (Fox & Karsh 354). The stakeholders may include sponsors, participants, host organizations, community members, and the sending organization in an STM.

**STM-** Short-Term Mission

**501(c)(3)-** “501 (c) is the section of the Internal Revenue Code that authorizes and defines most tax-exempt organizations, which must be organized and operated for public purpose. The 501 (c)(3) is the most common type of not-for-profit designation. Contributions to a 501 (c) are tax-deductible” (Fox & Karsh 333).

**\*Service vs. social justice-** “We *serve* when we give water to people in need; we engage in *social justice* when we figure out what those folks don’t have the water they need in the first place, and then work with those individuals and communities, so they have access to clean water in the future” (Powell & Griffin 31)

## Technology

### Smart Phone Applications:

Airlines App for travel updates

*Can I Eat This?*

E-Readers—connected to your local library or another ebook account

*Hoopla*

*Libby*

*Kindle*

Google—make any needed documents available offline for access without Wi-Fi

Docs

Drive

Sheets

Maps- Download local map- drop pins to mark public locations

Music- download playlists ahead of time

Sabbath School Lesson- Seventh-day Adventist church

*Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* – download in local language and English

*SkyView Lite*- for stargazing

*Smart Traveler*

*Time Buddy* keeps track of multiple time zones

*Units plus*- conversion for all types of units

*Whatsapp*

### Trouble Shooting Technology

Google EVERYTHING

Ask a university student

Turn off the phone and back on again

Turn on airplane mode and make sure it is not connected to the local cellphone carrier.

## Resources

Many of these new ideas may have caused you to panic or feel overwhelmed. They suggest making changes to your life that you did not sign up for when you agreed to become a sponsor. We know that Rome was not built overnight, but it was built because a group of people worked together. We simply ask that you commit to running STMs differently. Read for yourself, take steps each month leading up to your trip to make some changes, and engage in conversations about some of these new ideas with participants. The changes will happen, and together we can do our part to make the world a little safer.

The suggestions in this handbook will directly affect the lives of those we work alongside in the host countries. Making a difference in their lives is not “a duty we have or a passion we develop; it is a destiny we were born to fulfill” as a follower of Christ (Clawson 187). We can work together with our vision trip teams to understand the challenges and do what we can to make a difference around us. Have courage; you can make changes!

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**We simply ask that you commit to running STMs differently.**

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### Websites to look at:

DrBronner.com

GladRags.com

Lushusa.com

Nativecos.com

Shethinx.com

Tomsofmaine.com

### Movies

Mauren, Kris, James F. Fitzgerald, Michael M. Miller, Jonathan Witt, Simon Scionka, Tom Small, Magatte Wade, George B. N. Ayittey, Marcella Escobari, Herman Chinery-Hesse, and Robert A. Sirico. *Poverty, Inc.*, 2015.

## Elephant &amp; Mouse Story

“Would you like to know what it is like to do missions with North Americans? Let me tell you a story,” said David Coulibaly, a ministry leader in Mali, West Africa.

Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, “Mouse, let’s have a party!”

Animals gathered from far and near. They ate, and drank, and sang, and danced. And nobody celebrated more exuberantly than the Elephant.

After it was over, Elephant exclaimed, “Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!”

But Mouse didn’t answer.

“Where are you?” Elephant called. Then he shrank back in horror. There at his feet lay the Mouse, his body ground into the dirt — smashed by the exuberance of his friend, the Elephant.

“Sometimes that is what it is like to do mission with you North Americans,” the African storyteller concluded. “It is like dancing with an Elephant.”  
(Adeny)



## Suggested 2-Day Training Schedule

## Day 1

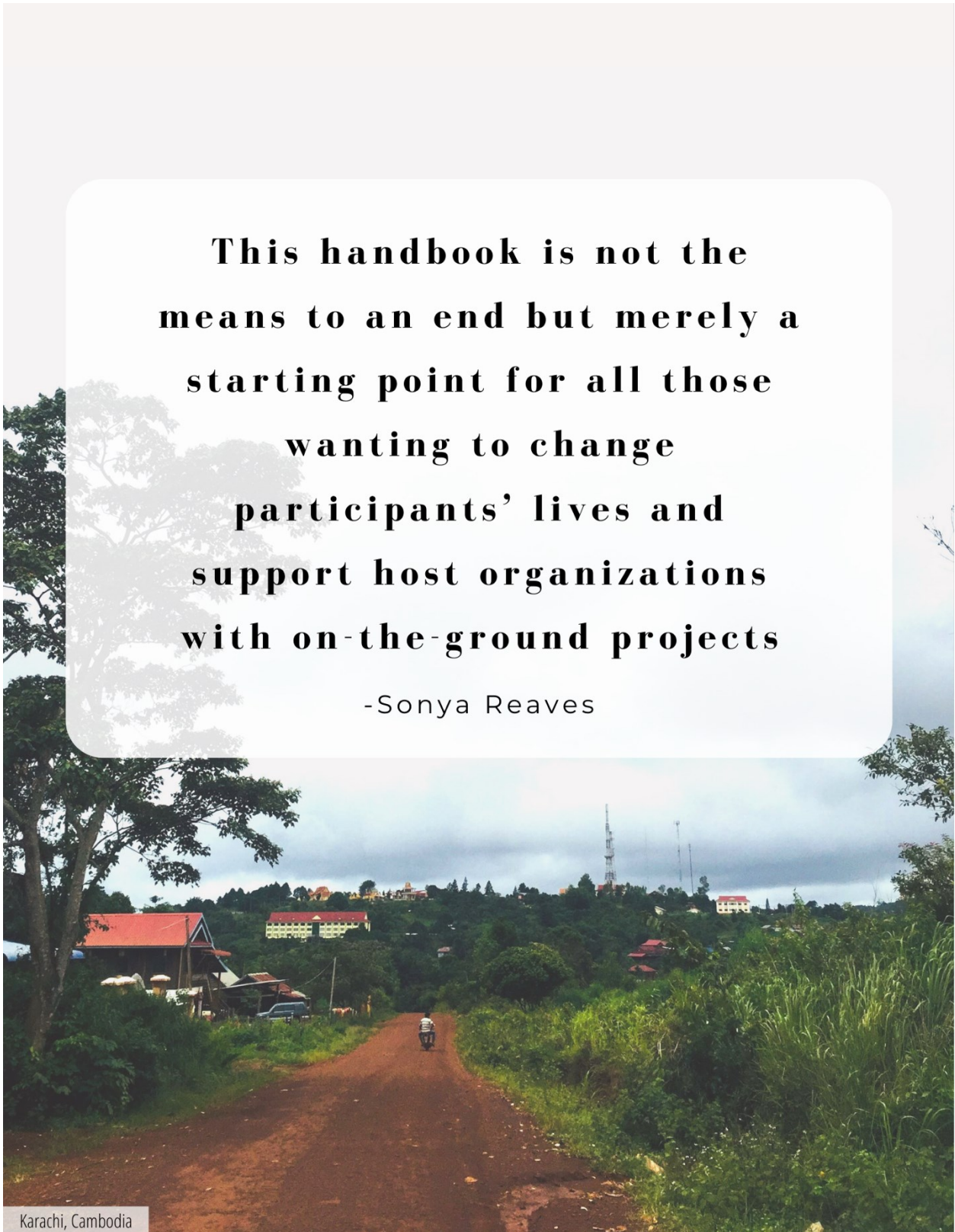
- 9:30 AM Sponsors Arrive/Prayer/Welcome
- 9:45 AM Ice Breaker
- 10:15 AM Leading the vision trip journey  
Mentoring  
Debriefs  
Worship
- 10:45 AM *Helping without Hurting* 101
- 11:30 PM Dismiss for Lunch
- 1:00 PM **Trip Participants Arrive**/Worship-Elephant/Mouse story
- 1:15 PM 30-second trip overviews  
Team Ice Breaker
- 2:15 PM *Helping without Hurting* 101
- 2:45 PM General Info  
Student Leader positions  
Packing  
Sustainability  
Smart traveler-Register  
Photos of kids  
Title IX
- 3:45 PM Team break-out  
Share team expectations  
Cultural research-
- 5:00 PM Pop Quiz/Closing Prayer

## Day 2

- 8:30 AM Arrive at the service location
- Serve!
- 12:30 PM Finish at the project site and debrief

**This handbook is not the  
means to an end but merely a  
starting point for all those  
wanting to change  
participants' lives and  
support host organizations  
with on-the-ground projects**

-Sonya Reaves



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