

**[ TIP 1 ]**

**Get real  
about what  
you can  
achieve**

**[ TIP 2 ]**

**Understand  
you're the  
supporting  
cast, not the  
lead actor**

**[ TIP 3 ]**

**Plan your  
fundraising  
sensitively**

**[ TIP 4 ]**

**Go with the  
right  
attitude**

**[ TIP 5 ]**

**Go to learn,  
not teach**

**[ TIP 6 ]**

**Have a  
long-term  
attitude**

**[ TIP 7 ]**

**Find the  
best  
in people**

**[ TIP 8 ]**

**Pack  
sensitively**

**[ TIP 9 ]**

**Empower  
the locals**

**[ TIP 10 ]**

**Be  
culturally  
sensitive**

# [ TIP 1 ]

## Get real about what you can achieve

Be realistic:

- You can't solve any major problems in a country in 14 days, particularly when you don't know the community. But you can stand with those struggling and encourage them by developing relationships through shared experiences and faith.
- The place you are going to might need a new water supply, but if none of the team members is a plumber, it's unlikely the work will be of very high quality.
- Focus on people, rather than things that haven't been built yet. The most enduring and important aspect of short overseas trips is the forming of relationships with local people.

## [ TIP 2 ]

# Understand you're the supporting cast, not the lead actor

- Let the locals be the heroes. They've been living and working in the place you're going to long before you arrived, and they'll still be there when you go. See yourself as the loyal sidekicks, there to support the locals but not steal their limelight.
- Aim to plan activities that will result in local tradespeople getting work. Yes, you might be able to do the work for free, but it would be far better to empower local, better qualified people who need the work and can ensure the work is done to the necessary standards.
- Your team may have certain skills, but try not to take the attention away from or outshine the fantastic, devoted work that local teachers, nannies, principals, food distributors, nurses and many other professions are doing day in, day out. Instead, use your skills to highlight and add value to what local people are already doing well.

## [ TIP 3 ]

# Plan your fundraising sensitively

The temptation is to assume that the more money you raise, the more positive the impact of your trip will be. Monetary donations may be very helpful to your partner, but it's important to consider what is and isn't appropriate:

- Avoid doing anything that highlights the difference in wealth between your team and your hosts.
- Don't promise your partners money!
- Give only through established territorial channels.
- Support that does not lead to sustainable, local, financial self-sufficiency is more likely to create poverty in the long-term than it is to meet real needs.
- There is also a risk of unintentionally creating dependency when handing out clothes, books and other consumable products. Short-term solutions can hinder local efforts which are trying to build sustainable community development projects and wrestle with the roots of poverty at community level.

## [ TIP 4 ]

# Go with the right attitude

- Paul offers brilliant advice in Philippians 2:5-8 where he encourages readers to imitate the phenomenal humility Jesus showed in leaving his place of privilege and choosing to serve others instead.
- Think about who should do the 'giving'. It may be better for local health workers and teachers to routinely distribute materials as part of their wider provision, rather than your team handing out these gifts directly.
- Always find ways to empower local people.
- Be aware of your wealth privilege. Those hosting may not have ongoing resources to sustain what you have done on your trip. If you are giving donated gifts, why not offer the best you can?
- Don't build anything unless your partners have stated a need for a building, in which case, don't build something out of context with the local community. Whatever you do, don't take on a project you don't have the skills for. Instead involve local professionals and labourers at every step, purchasing local materials to build with and following their lead.

# [ TIP 5 ]

## Go to learn, not teach

- People in poverty are remarkably gifted and resilient in ways that we, with our privileged Western lives, are not. So don't fall into the trap of thinking that poor people are poor because they are less perceptive or less intelligent than you, or on the other hand that they are pleased to be living what we deem 'simple lives'.
- See through an individual's poverty and really look for them as a person – their personality, their strengths and achievements. But also be careful when encouraging someone by saying how much you admire qualities that they've had no choice but to develop because of poverty.
- Use your journal. Many people include personal growth as a goal for these trips, but assume they will achieve it through doing good things, learning and getting to know people rather than just being there. Write down your experiences. Reflect on what you are learning. Growth in spiritual maturity should be key.

## [ TIP 6 ]

# Have a long-term attitude

- Remember you cannot change the world in one trip, but you can make a huge difference to an individual by building a positive relationship.
- Remember that your visit will probably change you more than others, and this will leave a lasting and deeper impact that leads to unforgettable memories.
- Remember that your trip should be the start of the journey, not the end. It should not be a means to an end; it should be the start of a lifelong engagement.

# [ TIP 7 ]

## Find the best in people

- ...in terms of your fellow team members and the people you meet while you're on your trip.
- Encouraging and motivating your team members when they do something great or are feeling low will help maintain a strong morale.
- Don't worry if your trip focuses on getting to know local people rather than doing activities all the time. Sharing stories, laughter, meals and prayer with people are the signs of real 'achievement'.
- Aim to build healthy relationships with others more than to seek new experiences.
- Focus on what people have, not what they don't have.
- See people's strengths and assets. Many societies are made up of people who, despite living in extreme poverty, have developed tremendous resilience and kept hold of a vibrant sense of community. Raising a family of four on a dollar a day is a massive achievement - far more than most of us could imagine overcoming.

## [ TIP 8 ]

# Pack sensitively

- Think about how you dress. In some cultures wearing shorts or not covering your shoulders is highly offensive. Make sure you know what suitable clothing is culturally acceptable to pack.
- Remember that even with plain-looking clothes, branding can stand out and provoke a sense of poverty. Avoid drawing further attention to yourself.
- Think about the activities you'll be doing and dress appropriately and practically.
- Be mindful of what equipment you are openly showing. Taking smartphones, tablets or fancy cameras and gadgets, having large wallets strapped round your waist, or wearing jewellery / accessories can create more comparative poverty than you realise.
- Be vigilant and always take care of your personal belongings.

## [ TIP 9 ]

# Empower the locals

- Get to know the real background, history and experiences of the people, not from what you've researched and seen online, in books, or on official signs or publicity, but from the perspective of those you meet.
- Trust your host! Listen to them and respect what they say, even if you don't understand why things are done a certain way. You cannot know all there is to know about a different culture just by being there temporarily.
- Don't unintentionally make a parent or guardian feel inadequate because their child thinks they should have provided what you have just given out.
- Don't make a child love you more than their teacher, the children's home manager, the missionaries or humanitarians who are already there working every day. Honour and acknowledge their presence and contributions to the lives of those in their community.

# [ TIP 10 ]

## Be culturally sensitive

- Be respectful of people's way of life. You are often seeing only a small part of the whole picture, and your opinions on how certain things are done may be offensive and received as a criticism.
- Be respectful when you are offered food in a person's home. Sometimes the equivalent of two weeks' salary is spent on a single meal for a guest, so a response such as 'I don't eat that' can be very insensitive.
- Respect boundaries and privacy. Don't assume that as a 'special visitor' you are entitled 'access all areas', particularly when you are on hospital wards, in schools, children's homes or people's homes.
- Ask plenty of questions to learn more about the culture before you leave. Remember, you can unintentionally offend by being ignorant of local traditions and attitudes.
- Don't take photos of local people - especially children - or of their homes without permission.
- Don't take photos of police and government buildings or large public sites (eg, bridges and dams) as these can be sensitive areas. Doing so can lead to arrest in many countries. Always check with your host/team leader about local laws and rules if you are unsure.