



SOE.
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

A young boy with dark skin and short hair is sitting on a light blue wooden chair. He is wearing an orange t-shirt with 'Sport Stars' written on it and dark blue shorts. He is laughing heartily with his mouth wide open. The background is a textured, light brown wall.

7 STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

A CODE OF BEST PRACTICE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION
PRACTITIONERS

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THE VISION OF THE SOE
IS TO ASSIST MISSION SENDING
AND RECEIVING ENTITIES IN
PURSUING EXCELLENCE FOR
EFFECTIVE KINGDOM SERVICE.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

The sense for the need of a short-term mission “code” or “standards of best practice” existed in the hearts and minds of several people for many years prior to what became the official Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission.

During the 1990s, certain mission leaders began their own in-house versions of “standards” for STM. During this same period of time there were unrelated spontaneous “hallway discussions” at the National Short-Term Missions conference and Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders (FSTML) conferences about the need for “codes” or “standards” for STM groups. One of the earlier pioneers, Seth Barnes (Adventures in Missions), drafted a set of 11 “standards” for STM projects in the early 1990s. Then in January 1995, Seth Barnes, Art Greenleaf (CBInternational/DELTA Ministries), and Paul Borthwick (Grace Chapel Missions Pastor/Author) met to discuss what a process might look like for drafting standards that all STM practitioners could adopt. In November 1995 they assembled a roundtable of mission executives at Simpsonwood Conference Center near Atlanta - moderated by FSTML Chairman Dennis Massaro (Wheaton College). Also present were Daryl Nuss (Campus Crusade for Christ and NNYM), Roger Peterson (STEM Int'l), Dave Bidwell (Youth for Christ), and several other men and women involved in STM. Up to this point, no process or legal sanction for a set of “standards” had come forth.

The Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission finally began taking shape in 1999, thanks to colleagues in Canada who were developing the Canadian Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission (which they themselves based on the U.K. Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission).

Laura Dill Warner (Perimeter Church, Atlanta and an AESTM board member), attended part of the Canadian process. During the next year she began discussions with colleagues within the broader STM network - especially the FSTML conference network - to see whether something like this might be possible in the U.S.

During a January planning meeting for the 2001 FSTML conference, the FSTML Steering Committee sensed God was directing them to facilitate the process of gathering nationwide input into the development of such a set of standards. God clearly instructed the group that FSTML was not to determine what those standards should be - but rather to be the facilitator, the central “hub” to collect as much input from as many STM practitioners as possible.

From October 2001 to September 2002, FSTML collected initial input from five separate mission networks around the U.S. [Colorado Springs, Minneapolis, Atlanta (twice), and Phoenix]. They received feedback from STM leaders, agencies, churches, host receivers, etc. Those thousands of input items were summarized into 14 paragraphs, grouped together by similar content. This became Standards Draft #1. During October 2002, attendees at the FSTML conference in Atlanta reviewed Draft #1 and created six versions of Draft #2. Those six versions of Draft #2 went to an ad hoc committee (nine conference attendees) who met in Chicago for two days in December 2002.

VISION

The vision of the SOE is to assist mission sending and receiving entities in pursuing excellence for effective Kingdom service.

The committee synthesized the six versions of Draft #2 into Draft #3, which became the prototype of the Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission. Two committee members wrote the initial explanations for each of the Seven Standards; four others took on the task of making recommendations for member adoption levels.

In January 2003, approximately half of the attendees at the San Diego Mission Affinity Network Summit of the National Network of Youth Ministries (NNYM) met to begin the critiquing process of the Seven Standards. (Prior to this meeting, several NNYM-related people had also determined the need for NNYM to help establish standards for STM.) Some of the San Diego attendees, along with the Chicago ad hoc committee, agreed to continue their service on the official Standards Steering Committee [volunteers reporting to the Alliance for Excellence in Short-Term Mission (AESTM) Board].

In October 2003 at the FSTML conference in Atlanta, the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission was formally launched; churches, mission agencies and schools began the official adoption process.

In summary, the resulting standards were developed over three years by God's grace, with input from more than 400 STM leaders across the U.S. and were a product of thousands of hours of work, discussion and prayer. As a result, your organization has the opportunity to adopt the Standards along with others!

ENDORSEMENTS

"I am honored to endorse the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission. The SOE is an extremely well designed pathway to guide those sending short-term teams toward excellence, whether working locally or far from home. The SOE provides member organizations a roadmap to move beyond 'drive by missions' to a quality program with appropriate preparation, thorough follow-up and integrity."

- Greg Parsons

General Director US Center for World Mission
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, CA

"I am very impressed with the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission. I am especially grateful for its focus on "intended receptors". The desire to insure that short-term ministry benefits indigenous long term work is critical. I encourage anyone engaged in short-term mission outreach to adopt and join the Standards of Excellence."

- Dr. Ron Blue

Professor of World Missions and Intercultural Studies
Dallas Theological Seminary
Dallas, TX

"Effective short-term volunteer service should contribute to the long-term transformation of the individuals and communities served. At the same time, it should set a level of excellence and life changing vision for those serving. SOE is to be commended for helping ensure these outcomes."

- Don Stephens

Founder and President
Mercy Ships Lindale, Texas

#1 GOD-CENTEREDNESS

An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom, and is expressed through our:

- 1.1 Purpose — Centering on God's glory and his ends throughout our entire STM process.
- 1.2 Lives — Sound biblical doctrine, persistent prayer, and godliness in all our thoughts, words, and deeds.
- 1.3 Methods — Wise, biblical, and culturally appropriate methods which bear spiritual fruit.

In all our STMs, we center on God's glory, aiming toward his ends. We seek to glorify God through devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ (John 15:5), through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), for the sake of God's glory and fame (Ps. 115:1, 1 Cor. 10:31).

Therefore we are engaged in his redemptive purposes and his passionate love for every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev.7:9). We acknowledge that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him (John 20:21). Christ's mission to the world is our model and STM has the privilege and responsibility of being an instrument of God's redemptive mission (missio Dei) for the people of the world and all aspects of creation within the world.

To participate in STM is to participate in God's movement of passionate love and reconciliation toward the world. We also recognize that STM is a process (not an event) which consists of pre-field, on-field, and post field stages. We therefore pledge with humble servant hearts that our lives will express godliness in actions, words, and thoughts; that we will function out of doctrinally-sound, prayer-dependent methods which are wise, biblical and culturally appropriate; we seek to bear spiritual fruit in the lives of all participants during all three stages of our STMs.

1.1 PURPOSE - CENTERING ON GOD'S GLORY AND HIS ENDS THROUGHOUT OUR ENTIRE STM PROCESS.

We seek foremost God's glory and his kingdom as our primary purpose, and we passionately pursue his redemptive purposes in all that we strive to do, to be and to accomplish within our entire STM process (pre-field, on-field, post-field). Although we openly acknowledge and plan for the needs, goals, and benefits for all participants involved (senders, goers, receivers), we do so in submission to God's glory, his kingdom, and his ends.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

- 1.1.1. How does your STM program's purpose statement demonstrate a focus on God's glory, Christ's mission to the world and God-honoring partnerships?
- 1.1.2. How is your STM program's purpose statement consistent with your organization's overall mission?
- 1.1.3. How is your STM program's purpose statement communicated to all participants (senders, goer-guests, and host receivers)?
- 1.1.4. How do you ensure that each outreach aligns with your STM purpose statement?

1.2 LIVES - SOUND BIBLICAL DOCTRINE, PERSISTENT PRAYER, AND GODLINESS IN ALL OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS.

We seek God's glory and his kingdom as people created in the image of a holy God and wholly devoted to him. The outward manifestation of this commitment is expressed in our doctrine, prayers and godly lives: **Sound Biblical Doctrine**

We pledge to hold fast to the Christian tenets of faith as expressed in at least one or more of the following historically recognized statements of faith:

- The Apostles' Creed (c. 175)
- The BGEA Statement of Faith (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)
- The Geneva Confession of Faith
- The IFES Doctrinal Basis (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students)
- The NAE Statement of Faith (National Association of Evangelicals)
- The Westminster Confession of Faith

PERSISTENT PRAYER

As short-term mission practitioners, we acknowledge our total dependence on God. We therefore pledge ourselves to regular intercession for all participants throughout the pre-field, on-field, and post-field process of every short-term mission (Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2). We also pledge to provide timely, accurate items of specific prayer and intercession to all other participants called to pray for the given short-term mission. We further recognize that prayer is not merely intercession for the needs of the STM, but is also waiting on God, remaining in the presence of God, being still and knowing that “I am God” and faithfully listening to a faithful God while remaining joyful in our hope and patient in our affliction (Rom. 12:12). We further acknowledge Satan’s existence and commit ourselves to prayers pertaining to spiritual warfare (Rev. 12:11, Eph. 6:10-13), adoration and praise, and thanksgiving.

GODLINESS IN ALL OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS

We strive to live godly lives in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. We choose to think thoughts that are always pleasing to God. We choose to use words of love, instruction, and discipline that are right and pleasing to God. We likewise choose actions that are pleasing to God and benefit his glory, his kingdom, and his ends. We further recognize our human inability to achieve total godliness; therefore we pledge to seek God’s forgiveness whenever we fail.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI’s)

1.2.1. Which biblical tenets of faith does your organization affirm?

1.2.2. How does the STM program and each outreach encourage persistent individual and corporate prayer among all participants for all phases of the STM?

1.2.3. How do you screen goer-guests based on the testimony of their lives?

1.2.4. How do you assist and empower goer-guests to study Scripture and grow in their relationship with Christ?

1.3 METHODS - WISE, BIBLICAL AND CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE METHODS WHICH BEAR SPIRITUAL FRUIT.

We seek God’s glory and his kingdom as we mutually design our on-field STM methods and activities:

WISE METHODS

We acknowledge the many and varied methods of mission activities—some good, some bad, some very bad. We pledge to use STM methods that have been mutually designed by sending and receiving partners, and to avoid superficial, irresponsible or inappropriate methods in our mission work. We pledge to heed the guidance of all participant leadership (senders, goers, receivers) in order to choose the best possible STM methods and activities (Prov. 11:14).

BIBLICAL METHODS

We choose STM methods and activities which are grounded in the Word of God. There is a theological and biblical basis to all our STM activities, as we strive for biblical life change in all participants (senders, goers, receivers) as a result of our STM.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE METHODS

STM is always about the mixture and blending of more than one culture. Often the senders and goers are from one cultural grouping, while the receivers are from another. Therefore, we choose STM methods and activities which fit, which make sense, which work within the cultural context of the field and receiving peoples.

METHODS WHICH BEAR SPIRITUAL FRUIT

We desire that all our STM methods and activities produce lasting fruit (John 15:16). We acknowledge that such fruit can be souls, fruit of the Spirit, and any level of kingdom growth or transformation in the lives of any of the participants. Such fruit cannot come forth apart from the vine (John 15:4-5). We further acknowledge that we may not always see the spiritual fruit in the time or in the way we had hoped, and that other people who we may never meet may also be part of the fruit-bearing process; some plant, some water—but God makes it grow and produces the fruit (1 Cor. 3:6).

#1 GOD-CENTEREDNESS (CONT.)

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

1.3.1. What steps do you take to ensure your methods are grounded in the Word of God?

Give examples of biblical principles such as:

- Reconciling the world to God through Christ.
- Exhibiting Christ's love.
- Pursuing justice for the oppressed.
- Confronting prejudices and reconciling people to one another.

1.3.2. What steps do you take to ensure cultural appropriateness in your methods?

1.3.3. How do you assess your methods to see if they are accomplishing your purposes?



#2 EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIPS

An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners, and is expressed by:

- 2.1 Primary focus on intended receptors.
- 2.2 Plans which benefit all participants.
- 2.3 Mutual trust and accountability.

We acknowledge the two primary “sides” of any mission outreach—the “sending side” (senders and goers) and the “receiving side.” As short-term mission practitioners from both sides, we pledge to work together within the framework of an empowering partnership, focusing not only on the interests of the “side” we represent, but also on the interests of the other “side” (Phil. 2:3). We further acknowledge that partnership in Christian mission is a complementary relationship motivated by common purposes and sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God while serving him. We pledge to openly admit any personal benefits we hope to achieve as a result of our partnership, while keeping the intended receptors’ benefits as our primary goal. The ultimate goal of a healthy partnership is not to promote an unforgettable experience for goer guest participants, but to consider the needs and possible benefits to all participants (senders, goers, and receivers). We therefore pledge to establish (formally or informally) trusting and accountable partnerships with each other as the overarching design of our short-term mission efforts.

2.1 PRIMARY FOCUS ON INTENDED RECEPTORS.

Second only to seeking God’s glory and his kingdom (Standard #1), we pledge that the primary purpose of our partnership is for the sake of our intended receptors—and not merely for each other. We acknowledge that anything called ‘Christian mission’ must involve all its participants in the manner that best serves God’s desires for the intended receptors. We acknowledge that if the primary purpose of an STM is for discipleship of the goer-guests, or if the primary purpose is to provide an educational cross-cultural experience (important as these agendas are), that the STM partnership has failed in its primary focus on the intended receptors.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI’s)

- 2.1.1. How do you determine that each outreach’s purpose is for the good of intended receptors?
- 2.1.2. What long-term relationships exist between sending and receiving partners? How do you cultivate these?

2.2 PLANS WHICH BENEFIT ALL PARTICIPANTS.

We acknowledge the six categories of participants in our STM efforts: sending supporters, sending entities, goer-guest leaders, goer-guest followers, field facilitators, and intended receptors. Through our partnership efforts we design everything we do to benefit the kingdom of God within the lives of all six sets of participants (Phil. 2:4).

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI’s)

- 2.2.1. How do you include and seek the benefit of the following participants?

- Sending supporters
- Sending entities

- Goer-guest leaders
- Goer-guest followers
- Field facilitators
- Intended receptors

- 2.2.2. What evidence can you provide that your partnering relationships are empowering, healthy, and interdependent?

2.3 MUTUAL TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

We pledge to be mutually accountable to each other within the context of our partnership, by providing full disclosure of conflicts of interest and timely communication and evaluations with each other. We strive to have no hidden agendas. We strive to help each other do and be what we say we are going to do and be. Our evaluations with each other will be timely, redemptive oriented evaluations, not critique oriented evaluations (the blend of grace and accountability—Phil. 4:5; Gal. 6:1).

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI’s)

- 2.3.1. How do you provide full disclosure of conflicts of interest and/or hidden agendas?
- 2.3.2. How do you promote timely communication among all participants?
- 2.3.3. How do you provide opportunity for all participants to evaluate the working relationship redemptively?

#3 MUTUAL DESIGN

An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants, and is expressed by:

- 3.1 On-field methods and activities aligned to long-term strategies of the partnership.
- 3.2 Goer-guests' ability to implement their part of the plan.
- 3.3 Host receivers' ability to implement their part of the plan.

Within the collaborative context of our empowering partnerships (Standard #2), we acknowledge the need to mutually plan and design every respective short-term mission outreach. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies, beneficial to all participants (especially the intended receptors), and appropriate for all participants to accomplish. We also pledge to carefully screen and prepare all participants so they are likely to achieve the mutual design with humble, servant, teachable hearts.

3.1 ON-FIELD METHODS AND ACTIVITIES ALIGNED TO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES OF THE PARTNERSHIP.

We acknowledge that every one of our STM outreaches is unique, and that each outreach must be mutually designed by "sending side" and "receiving side" partners using methods and activities which are in alignment to the long-term vision and strategies of our partnership as described in Standard #2.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

3.1.1. How do your STM goals/plans align with the host receivers' long-term strategies?

3.1.2. Are host receivers aware of your STM program's values and goals? Have they agreed to support them?

3.1.3. With whom and how do you communicate the long-term host receiver goals?

3.1.4. How do you mutually design and regularly review ministry methods and how do you communicate with the long-term host?

3.2 GOER-GUESTS' ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THEIR PART OF THE PLAN.

We commit to screen, select, and train goer-guest participants, who will place themselves in a learning, humble, servant, teachable position; who will submit to the leadership authority of the sending entity, goer-guest leaders, and field facilitators; and who are capable of doing the task as designed, based on the mutual design of Standard #3.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

3.2.1. How do you ensure goer-guests are selected with the outreach plan/methods in mind?

3.2.2. How does your training equip goer-guests in skill competencies to implement their part of the plan?

3.2.3. How does your training prepare goer-guests to humbly serve, seek unity, submit to field facilitators and follow conduct guidelines?

3.3 HOST RECEIVERS' ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THEIR PART OF THE PLAN.

We commit to see to it that host receiver participants are involved, who will place themselves in a learning, humble, servant, teachable position; who will submit to the appropriate leadership authority; and who are capable of doing the task as designed, based on the mutual design of Standard #3.

KEY QUALITY INDICATOR (KQI's)

3.3.1. How do you determine host receivers' ability to implement the outreach plan?

#4 COMPREHENSIVE ADMINISTRATION

An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 4.1 Truthfulness in promotion, finances and reporting results.
- 4.2 Appropriate risk management.
- 4.3 Quality program delivery and support logistics.

We acknowledge that our pursuit of integrity, accountability, honesty, and careful administration will prevent unnecessary waste, difficulty and danger—and ultimately bring more potential for godly success (Prov. 15:22; 21:5). Therefore, in all our STMs we pledge to provide proper and orderly set-up and administration (1 Cor. 14:40) in order to glorify God and to be good stewards of time, talents and funds. While recognizing that there are always risks associated with travel and ministry, we further pledge to evaluate risks and to keep them within a mutually determined acceptable level in light of our call to be instruments of God's redemptive plan for the world. Our goal is to minister Christ's love courageously but wisely (Matt. 10:16; 2 Tim. 1:7). Finally, we pledge to responsibly implement our portion of the mutually designed program and to support logistics while remaining receptive to the Holy Spirit's direction and changing circumstances.

4.1 TRUTHFULNESS IN PROMOTION, FINANCES AND REPORTING RESULTS.

We pledge to be short-term mission practitioners of truth, transparency, and integrity with all people to whom we relate in all of our dealings. This includes (but is not limited to) our promotion, advertising, recruiting, screening, training, budgeting, financial reporting, arrangements and contracts made with outsourced suppliers on both the sending and receiving sides, and in post-field reporting of on-field results.

We pledge to exercise honest and accurate financial controls and accountability to provide reasonable assurance that resources are used to accomplish the purposes for which they are intended. We pledge that our fundraising appeals and trip promotion will not create unrealistic donor expectations of what will be accomplished with the donor's gift. We pledge to provide timely reporting of fundraising progress to goer-guests and acknowledgment of gifts to sending supporters.

We further pledge:

- To do what we say we are going to do—and repent if we fail to do so.
- That our promotional materials will be accurate, and used with integrity.
- That our publicity will clearly represent the ethos and vision of the sending organization. It will define the purpose of the program and not reflect negatively on the host culture or ministry.
- That our application process will be clear and thorough including timeline, all financial obligations, and use of funds.

- That a suitable selection and screening process will be established that includes a pastoral care element, whether or not an individual is accepted as an STM participant.
- Disclosure of all relevant details concerning the STM goer-guests to the sending entity and field facilitators.
- That placement decisions and changes will be made with integrity and communicated clearly to all involved.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

- 4.1.1.** How do your promotional materials accurately communicate your organization's vision, outreach plans, the application process and positively represent the host culture?
- 4.1.2.** What financial controls and policies do you have in place? How are they communicated?
- 4.1.3.** What plan do you have for reporting to all participants after the outreach (i.e. testimonies, activities, and finances)?

#4 COMPREHENSIVE ADMINISTRATION (CONT.)

4.2 APPROPRIATE RISK MANAGEMENT.

We acknowledge that there are always risks associated with travel and ministry. We also acknowledge that Christian mission is spiritual warfare which involves a very real demonic enemy (Eph 6:12), and that sharing the gospel is always costly to those who respond to God by saying, "Here am I! Send me!" Even so, we pledge to do everything reasonable to provide appropriate risk management and as much safety as possible for all participants, striving to minister Christ's love boldly (Acts 1:8) and wisely.

We pledge to:

- Consider inherent and potential risks of the STM outreach design and field.
- Develop crisis response plans, adequately inform participants of potential risks and train our leaders and all other participants as appropriate in crisis management.
- Develop policies and procedures covering insurance, medical contingencies, security, evacuation, terrorism or political violence, behavior and dress guidelines, misconduct and grievances, stress management and conflict resolution.
- Communicate and implement these plans, policies and procedures as appropriate.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

4.2.1. What policies and procedures do you have in place for insurance, immunizations, medical emergencies, security, evacuation, kidnapping/ransom, terrorism, political instability, misconduct, grievances, conflict resolution, etc.?

4.2.2. How do you determine risk factors for each specific outreach?

4.2.3. How do you ensure participants are informed of risks, receive safety orientation and are trained as appropriate in crisis management before and during the outreach?

4.2.4. What crisis management and communication procedures are in place in the event of a crisis?

4.3 QUALITY PROGRAM DELIVERY AND SUPPORT LOGISTICS.

We pledge to reliably implement the mutually designed program (Standard #3) with sensitivity to the Spirit and any necessary adaptability to changing circumstances. We pledge to carefully organize and carry out the supporting logistics and arrangements to optimize ministry effectiveness and the health and safety of participants.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

4.3.1. How do you ensure timely support logistics (can you get things done on time)?

4.3.2. How do you ensure you can handle the quantity of details/people/teams/etc.?

4.3.3. How do you ensure support logistics optimize ministry effectiveness, health, and safety?

4.3.4. Give an example of an adaptation you made to changing circumstances with sensitivity to the Spirit.

#5 QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP

An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 5.1 Character — Spiritually mature servant leadership.
- 5.2 Skills — Prepared, competent, organized and accountable leadership.
- 5.3 Values — Empowering and equipping leadership.

We acknowledge that the leadership we recruit and develop plays a pivotal role in the success of our mutually designed short-term mission efforts. In all our STMs, we strive to recruit, train and provide sending entity leaders, goer-guest leaders and field facilitators who possess the character, skills and values needed for the particular outreach, location and team dynamics. We seek to recruit servant leaders who demonstrate spiritual maturity, faith, giftedness, competence and diligence for leadership (Rom. 12:8; Heb. 13:7). We strive to prepare accountable leaders who possess proficient cross-cultural and organizational abilities and who can effectively implement the mutually designed outreach in submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Finally, we seek and develop leaders who value empowering and equipping others and are committed to an interdependent team approach to ministry.

5.1 CHARACTER — SPIRITUALLY MATURE SERVANT LEADERSHIP.

We pledge to recruit and develop competent servant leaders who are spiritually and personally wise and discerning, who possess Spirit-led flexibility and sensitivity and who are working within their spiritual gifts. We further pledge to develop leaders who understand that mutually defined lines of authority, supervision, communication, responsibility and accountability will be established and implemented.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

5.1.1. How do you assess personal character (i.e. wisdom, discernment, flexibility, sensitivity, spiritual giftedness, responsiveness to authority) as you recruit leaders?

5.1.2. How do you help leaders develop in character?

5.2 SKILLS — PREPARED, COMPETENT, ORGANIZED AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP.

We pledge to recruit and train competent leaders who have the gifts, skills and abilities to lead people in the context of cross-cultural situations and other situations likely to be encountered during the STM. We further pledge to select and develop leaders who demonstrate organizational skills with people and tasks, and who are willing to be held accountable by others. We also pledge to use only those leaders who are willing to prepare themselves (spiritually, physically, emotionally and factually) for the mutually designed STM.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

5.2.1. How do you assess personal skills and competencies (i.e. cross-cultural leadership, organizational ability, accountability, communication skills) as you recruit leaders?

5.2.2. How do you train and develop skill competencies in leaders?

5.3 VALUES — EMPOWERING AND EQUIPPING LEADERSHIP.

We pledge to recruit and train empowering leaders who value equipping and developing others and are committed to an interdependent, team approach to ministry. We seek and develop leaders who provide other participants with guidance, mentoring and opportunities for growth enabling them to test, develop and exercise their unique gifts and abilities within the mutually designed STM.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

5.3.1. How do you determine a potential leader's philosophy and style of leadership?

5.3.2. How do you train and develop leaders to empower and equip others?

#6 APPROPRIATE TRAINING

An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by:

- 6.1 Biblical, appropriate and timely training.
- 6.2 On-going training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field).
- 6.3 Qualified trainers.

In all our STMs, we strive to employ biblical, appropriate and timely training for all participants (senders, goers, receivers) which equips them to implement the mutually designed program (1 Cor. 9:25-27; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We acknowledge that relevant training will benefit all STM participants, fostering understanding, growth and spiritual fruit while helping to prevent offense, damage and poor stewardship. We further acknowledge that training should take place during each stage of the STM (pre-field, on-field and post-field) by qualified trainers and that regular evaluation of training results should take place. Although training is unique to each mutually designed outreach, there are some training 'norms' (below) that usually apply to all participants (goers, senders, receivers).

6.1 - BIBLICAL, APPROPRIATE, AND TIMELY TRAINING.

We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants (senders, goers, receivers), emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context. The outcome of such training should result in a clear understanding of how to correctly do the task or assignment while maintaining effective relationships with other participants. We further pledge to have our participants agree to follow all guidelines, policies and training the given STM requires.

SENDING SUPPORTERS

Our STM assures that sending supporters are trained for one or more of six primary sending supporter roles:

- 1) Prayer supporters - how to intercede for given goer-guests and all aspects of the STM during the pre-field, on-field and post-field stages.
- 2) Financial supporters - how, where and by when to provide financial support.
- 3) Logistical supporters - how to make arrangements during the pre-field process to provide any needed logistics help during the STM process.

4) Emotional supporters - how to provide moral and emotional encouragement.

5) Communication supporters - how to call, write, or produce communication to the other 'back home' sending supporters and all others with whom the goer-guests need to stay in touch while on-field.

6) Re-Entry supporters - how to meet with the returning short-termers and ask 'intelligent questions' in an emotionally safe environment; how to help steer goer-guests to appropriate referrals or assistance if there are unresolved issues or certain unmet needs

GOER-GUESTS

Our STM assures that goer-guest leaders and goer-guest followers are trained in six primary areas:

- 1) Cross-cultural training - such as cross-cultural theory, communication, simulation games, simulated settings; host culture/people specifics; language training and rehearsal; re-entry training.
- 2) Personal preparation - such as biblical basis for mission; purpose of outreach; MISTM theory (see pg. 15); goer-guests' responsibility to all participants; personal spiritual preparation; team covenant development; team building/team spiritual preparation; prayer and spiritual warfare training; debriefing; follow-up training and integration.
- 3) Logistics training - such as airline or other round trip travel arrangements; travel documents; prescriptions, immunizations, health, and hygiene; on-field housing, transportation, food, dress and site orientation; packing; risk and liability issues; customs and immigration; policies [cancellation, dating, smoking/ drinking, photos and video, begging, etc.].

4) Intended activities preparation - including training for and rehearsal of the mutually designed on-field activities.

5) Financial preparation - such as budget development, fund-raising plans, money management and funding deadlines.

6) Additional items unique to the given STM.

HOST RECEIVERS

Our STM assures that field facilitators and key intended receptor leaders are trained in ten primary areas:

- 1) Logistical support for goer-guests.
- 2) Program delivery support for goer-guests.
- 3) Identifying our strategic field activities leverageable through goer-guests.
- 4) Blending our field-supplied leadership with their sending entity-supplied leadership.
- 5) Risk management and security issues for goer-guests.
- 6) Cross-cultural training (grasping the goer-guests' world-view).
- 7) Recruiting from goer-guests for field needs.
- 8) Outcomes follow-up.
- 9) Relational issues.
- 10) Reinforcing issues or concerns and other pre-field training during on-site orientation (such as cultural issues, appropriate conduct, purpose and philosophy of the outreach, explanation of risk management/security issues and other items agreed to in the mutual design of the outreach).

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

6.1.1. How do you include biblical/spiritual issues throughout your training process?

6.1.2. What training do you provide for sending supporters (those who offer prayer, financial, logistical, emotional, communication and re-entry support)?

6.1.3. What training do you provide for goer-guests in cross-cultural sensitivity, personal preparation, logistics, on-site activities, finances, etc.?

6.1.4. What training do you provide for host-receivers in logistics, field activities, leadership issues, risk management, cross-cultural/relational issues, etc.?

6.2 - ON-GOING TRAINING AND EQUIPPING (PRE-FIELD, ON-FIELD, POST-FIELD).

We pledge to provide such training during the entire STM process:

- Pre-field - many of the items listed above.
- On-field - ongoing training, re-entry training, debriefing.
- Post-field - debriefing and follow-up.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

6.2.1. When and how is pre-field training provided?

6.2.2. When and how is on-field training provided?

6.2.3. When and how is post-field training provided?

6.3 - QUALIFIED TRAINERS.

We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable in the items listed above, and who can provide effective training and facilitate beneficial learning. We pledge that our training program will implement timely and thorough evaluation of the STM training as a means of improving our training program.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

6.3.1. Who trains your goer-guests? Who trains your leader(s)?

6.3.2. What training and materials are provided for your trainers?

6.3.3. How are trainers selected and what criteria are used?

#7 THOROUGH FOLLOW-THROUGH

An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing and appropriate follow-through for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 7.1 Comprehensive debriefing of all participants (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- 7.2 Thoughtful and appropriate follow-through for goer-guests
- 7.3 On-field and post-field evaluation among sending and receiving partners

We recognize that thorough debriefing and follow-through is a crucial aspect of STM. As in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), we seek to help all participants invest and multiply the STM experience God has entrusted to them. Therefore, in all our STMs, we strive to provide relevant debriefing in each stage (pre-field, on-field, post-field), including on-field re-entry preparation for goer-guests and post-field follow-through for all participants as appropriate. We acknowledge that thorough follow-through will help participants process the STM, apply lessons learned and promote continued personal growth (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, cross-cultural, relational and other growth). We also acknowledge that thorough follow-through can help participants integrate the entire STM into life for kingdom purposes, solidify transforming life change, and provide opportunity for continued personal commitment to Christ and the people of his world. We further acknowledge the importance of assessing our mutual efforts with one another and therefore pledge to implement timely evaluation of the planning, programming and implementation of the outreach to help identify unresolved issues (if any), to amend such issues and to enhance our partnership's future STM efforts.

7.1 - COMPREHENSIVE DEBRIEFING OF ALL PARTICIPANTS (PRE-FIELD, ON-FIELD, POST-FIELD).

We pledge to provide appropriate and thorough debriefings throughout every stage of the mutually designed outreach to help all participants process the pre-field training, on-field implementation, events throughout each day and any post-field challenges. We pledge to provide re-entry preparation for goer-guests prior to leaving the field to facilitate balanced re-entry into the home culture, preparing them for adjustments and challenges they may face. We further pledge that our debriefing will be designed to enable participants to better apply lessons learned, to nurture their continued growth and to bear spiritual fruit.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

- 7.1.1. How do you help goer-guests process their pre-field training experiences?
- 7.1.2. What re-entry preparation is conducted for goer-guests prior to leaving the field?
- 7.1.3. How do you help goer-guests and host receivers process their experiences while on the field?

7.2 THOUGHTFUL AND APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-THROUGH FOR GOER-GUESTS.

We pledge to provide post-field follow-up for all goer-guests to help cement life change and to cultivate ongoing growth and commitment to Christ and his world. We pledge to encourage the goers, the receivers and the senders to intentionally take steps in Great Commission involvement in the years ahead. We will continue to provide on-going re-entry assistance to goer-guests, and as appropriate, we will

offer specific suggestions and resources for their on-going discipleship.

KEY QUALITY INDICATOR (KQI's)

- 7.2.1. What post-field debriefing is done with goer-guests?
- 7.2.2. What post-field evaluation is done with goer-guests?
- 7.2.3. How do you use the information gathered through post-field debriefing and evaluations to continue helping the goer-guest with re-entry and any follow-through steps in their on-going discipleship?

7.3 - ON-FIELD AND POST-FIELD EVALUATION AMONG SENDING AND RECEIVING PARTNERS.

We pledge to candidly evaluate our mutual efforts among sending and receiving partners for all phases (pre-field, on-field, post-field) of the outreach to enhance future programs. We further pledge that the results of evaluations will be communicated to relevant leaders for the improvement of administrative processes and the keeping of pertinent permanent records. We also pledge confidentiality, integrity and accuracy in the evaluation and record-keeping process.

KEY QUALITY INDICATORS (KQI's)

- 7.3.1. What post-ministry evaluation is done by the host receiver related to the efforts of the sending entity?
- 7.3.2. What post-ministry evaluation is done by the sending entity related to the efforts of the host receiver?
- 7.3.3. How do you communicate evaluation results from one to the other?
- 7.3.4. How do you implement suggestions from evaluations for improvement?



**DEFINITIONS
AND
TERMS**

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

Several terms have been extracted from *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission by Peterson/Aeschliman/Sneed*, Minneapolis, MN: STEMPress, 2003. ISBN 0-9711258-1-3. Used by permission.

Field Facilitators — field missionaries or national host leaders who serve as on-field liaisons for the on-field STM arrangements. Field Facilitators have management and communication responsibility for the STM receiving-side (field administration, field set-up, field program support, field logistical support and field follow-up). Field Facilitators mutually design every short-term outreach in conjunction with the Sending Entity(s).

Goer-Guests — those who go to the field to serve; specifically includes two subsets: all of the Goer-Guest Leaders and all of the Goer-Guest Followers (i.e., all of the individuals or team members who are being sent).

Goer-Guest Followers — individual short-term missionaries or team members who do not have major leadership responsibilities.

Goer-Guest Leaders — any short-term mission leaders sent to the field by the Sending Entity(s). They go to the field like Goer-Guests Follower, but have certain leadership responsibilities with respect to the STM project. Note that almost all Goer-Guest Leaders will often need to submit to other leadership — either other Goer-Guest Leaders or Field Facilitators.

Host Receivers — the on-field persons who receive short-term missionaries; specifically includes two subsets: Field Facilitators and Intended Receptors (i.e., everyone at the on-field location: full-time missionaries, other expatriates, national pastors and local leaders, local nationals and any local organizations which they represent such as churches, civic organizations, NGOs, etc.).

Intended Receptors — the people on the field who will receive the Goer-Guests’ service or mission activity. Intended receptors can also be other aspects of God’s creation (animals, natural resources, etc.) as well as aspects of human creation (civic or corporate structures, oppressive systems, etc.).

MISTM-Grid — a visual tool providing an overview for virtually all STMs. The MISTM-Grid (Maximum Impact Short Term Mission) combines the three sets of STM participants (Participant Trilogy) on a Y-axis and the three STM time periods (Process Trilogy) on an X-axis. The result is a 9-cell matrix or ‘grid’ which shows certain ethical responsibility all participants may have with other participants throughout the entire STM process. © 1999 R. Wayne Sneed / Roger P. Peterson. Revised 2001, 2002, 2003. Used by permission.

MISTM		PRE-FIELD	ON-FIELD	POST-FIELD
SENDER	SENDING SUPPORTERS			
	SENDING ENTITIES			
GOER-GUESTS	GOER-GUEST LEADERS			
	GOER-GUEST FOLLOWERS			
HOST RECEIVERS	FIELD FACILITATORS			
	INTENDED RECEPTORS			

MISTM Grid © 2003 by Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission. Used by permission. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

On-Field — time period when Goer-Guests are on-site with the Host Receivers for their intended mission outreach. It exists from the moment of arrival to the moment of departure.

Participant — anyone involved in the STM outreach; does not mean Goer-Guests only! When used on this website, it refers to Senders, Goer-Guests and Host Receivers (see Participant Trilogy).

Participant Trilogy — the three sets of people always involved in any STM endeavor: Senders, Goer-Guests, and Host Receivers. (Based on 3 John 5-8 and Matt. 10:40-42, Senders, Goer-Guests, and Host Receivers are assumed to be equal participants in any short-term mission endeavor.)

Peer Review (PR) — a process in which an adoptive member's STM program is reviewed by other SOE members as a step toward reaching or maintaining Accredited Member status. The purpose is to encourage, motivate, and challenge the reviewee toward excellence in all their short-term mission efforts.

Peer Review Team (PRT) — a team of key STM personnel from at least three different SOE organizations who agree to review an adoptive member's short-term mission program. The team must include an experienced facilitator (recommended/approved by the SOE office) and two or more additional reviewers who are associate or accredited SOE members. PRTs can be formed locally (within a given city or region) or nationally. PRTs meet at the location of the reviewee's choosing and help provide constructive feedback, peer mentoring, relationships, and accountability.

Post-Field — time period after the on-field portion of the outreach ends. Post-field continues indefinitely for all participants, with perhaps the greatest impact in Goer-Guests and Intended Receptors. Practitioners (STM Practitioners) — Sending Entities, Field Facilitators and other associate support groups which intentionally perform some aspect of short-term mission.

Pre-Field — time period before the on-field portion of the outreach begins. Pre-field begins at the moment of outreach conception, regardless of who, where, or how the outreach was conceived.

Process Trilogy — three consecutive time periods through which a short-term mission outreach progresses: Pre-Field, On-Field, and Post-Field.



STM Process Trilogy © 2003 by Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission.
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Resource Providers — groups and organizations that provide training, networking, products, or other support services to STM efforts.

Senders — those who send short-term missionaries; specifically includes two subsets: all of the Sending Supporters and the Sending Entity(s).

Sending Entities — organizations which provide the Pre-Field and Post-Field administrative structure for Goer-Guests. Sending Entities have management and communication responsibility on the STM sending-side. Sending Entities mutually design every short-term outreach in conjunction with the Field Facilitators. Sending Entities include churches, mission agencies, schools, and other Christian organizations that send short-term missionaries anywhere in the world.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS (CONT.)

Sending Supporters — Individuals, families, organizations, or others who voluntarily support a short-term missionary in one or more of the following ways:

1. Prayer support
2. Financial support
3. Logistical support
4. Emotional support
5. Communication support
6. Re-entry support

(Adapted from *Serving as Senders* by Neal Pirolo, San Diego CA: Emmaus Road, International, 1991, ISBN 1-880185-00-8)

Standards Introductory Workshop (SIW) — an SOE-sponsored 10-hour seminar designed to help short-term mission leaders and mobilizers make their mission trips better. We'll look at all Seven Standards and how these are key elements of successful, God-honoring mission trips. The workshop is taught by experienced SOE trainers, are interactive, and use case studies and small group discussions. You'll discover the benefits of The Standards and begin applying them to your specific ministry context! Attendance and participation in at least one SIW is required by one staff member or ministry partner.

STM — Short-Term Mission

SOE Approved Conference — a national, on-going conference held in the U.S where an entire track or the entire conference is devoted to short-term missions. Attendance and participation in at least one SOE Approved Conference every three years is required. Some of these SOE Approved Conferences will also host the Standards Introductory Workshop so you can fulfill both training requirements in a single conference.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

By adopting the Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission and displaying the SOE Seal, you demonstrate that your short-term mission projects strive for the highest Christian and moral purpose. You also join an impressive network of organizations that represent the very best of those practicing STM.



BASIC MEMBER

FREE

- > 1 Free webinar of choice
- > Receive monthly e-publication – The HUB
- > Network with like-minded peers

**Membership not eligible for discounted trip listings on ShortTermMissions.com*

SOE
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

\$150 / Year

- > All webinars free
- > Discounts on conferences, resources, and services
- > Discounts on trainings – online and in-person
- > Discounted trip listings on ShortTermMissions.com
- > Listed on SOE Website
- > Display SOE Associate Logo
- > Peer Review Coaching

Your Commitment

- > Commit to The 7 Standards
- > Apply The 7 Standards
- > Attend a Standards Introductory Workshop (SIW)
- > Attend an SOE-approved conference every 3 years

SOE
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

ACCREDITED MEMBER

\$250 / Year

- > All Associate Benefits +
- > Contribute to content developed by SOE
- > Opportunities to serve on webinars and workshops
- > Expanded Coaching
- > Featured Articles in The HUB
- > Promotional Opportunities
- > Peer Review audit
- > Recognizes highest level of excellence in short-term missions

Your Commitment

- > Be an Associate Member
- > Continue all Associate commitments
- > Comply to The 7 Standards
- > Model The 7 Standards
- > Be peer reviewed by SOE and an Accredited Member

SOE
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

RESOURCE PROVIDER

\$350 / Year

- > Listed on SOE website
- > Highlighted in The HUB
- > Featured articles in The HUB
- > Network with like-minded peers
- > Opportunities to present in webinars, conferences, and workshops

Your Commitment

- > Support The 7 Standards

THE 7 STANDARDS

1. GOD-CENTEREDNESS

An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom, and is centered on God's redemptive purposes for all nations and modeled after Christ's mission to the world.

2. EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIPS

An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, ongoing relationships between sending and receiving partners sustained by a willingness to grow together while serving God.

3. MUTUAL DESIGN

An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefits of all participants and uses methods and activities aligned with the long-term strategies of sending and receiving partners.

4. COMPREHENSIVE ADMINISTRATION

An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants in order to glorify God and to exercise good stewardship of time, talents and funds.

5. QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP

An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leaders for all participants who possess the character, competency, and commitment needed for each particular outreach.

6. APPROPRIATE TRAINING

An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants to be effective in the mutually designed outreach with biblical, timely, and relevant training suitable for the planned service and culture.

7. THOROUGH FOLLOW-THROUGH

An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing and appropriate follow-through for all participants because these are crucial elements for achieving significant lasting change.



NOTES



MAKING MISSION TRIPS BETTER.

“I have followed with interest the effort to bring to our attention to Standards of Excellence in short-term missions. This has been borne out of the concern that many church and mission leaders have had about the short-term mission movement. If those who engage in short-term missions take the Standards of Excellence (SOE) seriously, they will be much more likely to gain the support of missiologists and other church and mission leaders. The emphasis of SOE in avoiding or overcoming unhealthy dependency is enough to get my attention. I heartily encourage them to develop the standards of excellence! “

Glenn J. Schwartz

Executive Director, World Mission Associates
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Author: “When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement”

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