SHORT TERM MISSION TEAMS

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Category: Mission

Short term mission teams are an important aspect of the life of an organisation like Wycliffe Bible Translators. Most people who become involved in mission long-term start off making a short term visit to the field with a summer team of some sort.

But though they are now considered more or less a normal part of the mission scene, short-term teams are somewhat controversial. My colleague Phil has just posted a fascinating piece reflecting on the pluses and minuses of short-term mission.

> *Dear friend*
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> *Iâ€™d like to introduce myself. My name is Phil and I am a member of in the UK. This summer I will be visiting you with 20 friends from my church to bless, encourage and teach people in your community.*
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> *We would be happy to lead Bible studies, childrenâ€™s groups, menâ€™s and womenâ€™s fellowships plus give leadership training to you and your leaders. Of course we can also provide some manual help, carry out repairs to your building or, depending on the state of it, put up a new one.*
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> *We are all willing and enthusiastic volunteers who really want to bless you during this period.*
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> *All we will need when we are with you are places to sleep, if you could arrange that we would really appreciate it. We are happy to buy food and cater for ourselves, but obviously, will need somewhere to prepare and cook the meals. Oh, and we will want to take one day off to visit the local town and buy souvenirs.*
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> *Yours in Christâ€¦*
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> *Donâ€™t start by thinking about what itâ€™s like in some African village to have a visit like this. Think what it would do in your church. Whatâ€™s this saying? You canâ€™t take care of your own people? You donâ€™t know enough to teach the people? You donâ€™t have a different group for the children, they go with the adults, so should you start something for my visit? What about the building, if someone else builds it is it yours? Then how to look after a group of 20 people in a different culture? And when you welcome guests isnâ€™t it polite to offer a meal, so thatâ€™s 21 people to cater for?*
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> *We go with great and honourable intentions for short-term missions, but sometimes we can be a negative impact on a community. Thatâ€™s not really what we want is it? I donâ€™t think itâ€™s wrong to go and visit, but how about we go with the attitude of learning rather than teaching. Instead of assuming we can do it better, go and find out what life is like there and just be a friend. Being part of Godâ€™s family itâ€™s good to go and visit the extended family from time-to-time and to be an encouragement. But, letâ€™s be a little more sensitive about the way we do things. (read more)*

In Wycliffe we work hard to make sure that our Engage teams (although not actually missions trips) have as positive impact as possible both on the people who participate in the team, but also on the people they go to visit. It was exciting to read this report from a translator who is currently hosting an Engage team in Cameroon.

> *"Praise the Lord for help with the first two weeks of the Engage Team. The children's clubs in Bambalang went well. They were well attended, and the children received the message well. In the second week, part of the team assisted in the three day teacher training workshop held in Ndop. There were 30 participants from 9 languages, and the technical and general logistical support that the team provided was invaluable. The workshop would not have been possible without them. This is the final week and the team are running a further four day children's club. They have also been using the 'Sabre' based recorded scriptures around the local compounds, playing the Christmas Story. We are excited at being able to teach consultant-approved memory verses from translated scripture. Pray for the club, for a good debrief in Mbingo and for safe travel to Yaounde and onward."*

If you would be interested in knowing more about the Engage teams, why not visit the Engage Facebook page?