



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Evaluating Your Mission Trip

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How do you know if your mission trip was successful? Is it based on how many people received Christ? Number of lives rededicated? Impact on the goer? The project was completed? They invited you back?

The Problem of Goals

Most people determine success based on whether or not they accomplished their goals. The problem with this is that we often have unrealistic or inappropriate goals in mind—if we have any written goals at all! Throw in the complications of cross-cultural ministry, and we might find our goals are in direct conflict with the goals of our host.

The Problem of Values

The other difficulty of determining the success of a mission trip is the criteria that we use for *determining success*. God's Kingdom is far different from our own and measures success in a different way. Our kingdom speaks of "return on investment", but Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep to go after the single lost sheep. We discriminately assign value to things in order to prioritize, yet God gives humanity just one price—the life of His Son. Our kingdom tells us that we can do anything we put our mind to if we just work hard enough. But Jesus says in John 15:5 that we can do nothing apart from Him.

Defining Success

So what does success look like according to God's Kingdom? Hebrews 12:1-3 seems to be telling us that the manner in which we run is what is most important. In Philippians 3 Paul tells us that he presses on for the prize. Interestingly he does not elaborate on what the prize is or what specifically will make him a winner. The emphasis is on persevering! *Success in God's Kingdom is based on how closely we follow Jesus!*

So what does this mean for a short-term mission trip? It means we measure success based on our process and not just our product. But even then, we need a standard. How do we know if our process is right?

7 Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission

An STM trip done well exhibits seven main traits—or standards! These Standards are *God-Centeredness, Empowering Partnerships, Mutual Design, Comprehensive Administration, Qualified Leadership, Appropriate Training* and *Thorough Follow-Through*. To determine success of your trip, don't leave it up to a gut feeling. You should do an actual evaluation! While a process-oriented evaluation can be a bit subjective, we've developed an STM Quick Audit which is designed to bring some objectivity.

Before planning another mission trip, sit down with the assessment tool and see what you can learn. If you find areas in which you'd like to improve, contact SOE. We can help you address these areas, all while helping you develop a road map for repeatable, excellent mission trips.

