Servant Learners: Short-Term Missions as an Effective Strategy

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Abstract
Short-term missions (STM) is a phenomenon that is quickly growing; each year more and more teams are sent out from North America to locations across the globe to share the gospel and do work projects in another culture. However, there are some significant issues with the current execution of STM, ranging from its ineffectiveness in accomplishing helpful projects to its heavy financial cost to the potential negative impact on host communities. In order to push the impact of STM in a positive direction, there are two major shifts in the way it is carried out that must take place. First, the focus of STM must shift so that it is focused on serving host communities and learning from national believers and long-term workers. Secondly, short-term teams must receive careful preparation from sending entities in three significant areas: practical preparation, cultural preparation, and spiritual preparation. If these adjustments are made to the way STM is implemented, it will begin to lead to long-term impact in powerful ways.

Short-term missions, that is. There seems to be an unprecedented enthusiasm for short-term mission trips in all shapes and sizes. And therein lies a problem. What does make an effective short-term missions effort? Based on my experience in Operation Mobilization, let me suggest seven principles for highly effective...
short-term missions, which I believe embody many features of Jesus’ earthly ministry. 1. Clear and Prayerful Strategies. It is precisely this type of strategy that has worked so effectively for the ships Logos II and Doulos, for our teams in Russia and East Central Europe, and especially for our largest land-based work in India (McQuilkin: 1994). The focus is on building a “both-and” approach that uses both the efforts of short-term mission and long-term follow-up. An Effective Textbook Study Strategy. Everyone looks for ways to be more successful. American executives strive to compete with aggressive foreign competitors, teachers seek ways to enrich student learning, and students, like you, search for ways to improve academic performance. So, how can you, like a company president or a college professor, improve your chances for success? First, realize that whether your goal is to improve performance on a widget production line or a sociology final exam, the basic blueprint can be the same: you plan what you need to do; you implement your plan; you revie