



## **Episode 002: Standards of Excellence in Short Term Missions**

Don is the VP of the Standards of Excellence for Short Term Missions. He has served with SEND International for 28 years. He served in Russia and Alaska and now serves as the leader of the Short Term Missions Department in the US Office.

### ***How did you become passionate about short term missions (STMs)?***

- Don and his wife received confirmation of their call by going on a short term mission trip to Alaska to work in radio ministry
- During their time in serving in Russia, they hosted many short term mission teams
- Through this they saw the positive and negative impacts of short term missions

### ***STMs are a huge trend in North America. There are many who love them. There are those who think we aren't doing STMs well. What is the value of STMs?***

- There is a lot of bad press regarding short term missions.
- In the early 2000s, 800 mission pastors, missiologists and short term mission practitioners worked together to identify best practices of Short Term missions trips. This led to the development of the 7 Standards of Excellence in Short Term Missions

### ***What are these 7 Standards of Excellence?***

- ***God Centeredness*** – Too often short term missions are more centered on accomplishment, funds, promotion, and tourism. When you seek first God's glory and His kingdom, it will define your purpose for the trip, methods used, and people involved.
- ***Empowering Partnerships*** – An excellent short term mission trip has healthy interdependent and ongoing relationship between the sending and receiving partners with the primary focus on the intended receivers not those going.
- ***Mutual Design*** – An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants

- **Comprehensive Administration** – All the paper work and logistics are handled well, truthful promotion, risk management is done well
- **Qualified Leadership** – Often this is where things can break down, if a leader is not adequately prepared to lead a short term team.
- **Appropriate Training** – A good short term mission trip is marked by a team that is equipped and adequately prepared for the mutually designed outreach. Good training happens before the trip, during the trip and after the trip.
- **Thorough Follow Through** – An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing and appropriate follow-through for all participants.

*“If it is not God-centered, then your short term mission breaks down from the very beginning.”*

***Empowering Partnerships – What do you mean by empowering partnerships and can you give our listeners an example?***

- Primary focus on intended receivers
- Plans should benefit all participants – everyone involved should be empowered and blessed
- “Looking for a win-win-win – the senders, the goers and the hosts should all walk away feeling blessed. If you have that win-win-win, you have a successful short term mission trip.” If any one of the three groups feels exploited, that is not successful.
- It is often the sending church that gets forgotten – What is the blessing for the sending church?
- An Example: On a short term mission to Far East Russia – first team that Don led using these principles– saw team members grown dynamically.
  - One team member’s willingness to share his faith grew
  - A deacon felt lead to preach and is now preaching in his home church as well
  - The hosts were in tears because they couldn’t believe that these North Americans were willing to use their time to come and be with them
  - The sending church started spontaneous prayer groups to pray for their team overseas. They realized that many of the activities being done by their team in Russia could also be done in the city where they were located. This was a real turning point in the life of that church.

*“God measures success in empowered, changed lives.”*

**Mutual Design – What is it and do you have any tips for how to plan a mutually-designed trip?**

- There is an example of a sending church that required the missionary hosts to accept a short term team even though the field had said it wasn't a good time. The sending church dictated dates, activities and size of short term team.
- Emphasize the fact that you want to listen to the receivers – let them set the course even if that means you don't go on a short term mission trip. Listen closely to the national church and long term missionaries.
- Give and take is necessary – everyone comes together and says, “Here are our needs, here are our abilities, how can we fit them together?”
- Tips for doing mutual design – partner with a missionary that is in that culture - they have the expertise and the understanding of the culture. If you begin by building your platform with a long term missionary, it will give you a good understanding of what the field needs and how you can support and benefit the long term ministry.
- Short term missions should complement the long term strategy of the mission field/national church.

*“Short term missions needs to be less like a bunch of articles in a magazine and more like a series of chapters in a novel.”*

**Thorough Follow Through – What is it and why is it so important?**

- Debriefing is the most critical aspect of the short term missions enterprise and is the aspect that most often gets overlooked.
- If you don't do the debrief and follow through you either leave someone in a worse condition spiritual or emotionally than they were if they had never gone on the trip, or you fail to harvest all the growth that happened during the trip.
- Many short term mission participants come back with theological questions, or feel emotionally distressed at what they've seen
- You also have people coming back who are excited who have discovered new gifts, who have seen God do great things.
  - They may be wondering how they can work with immigrants in their home country or how they may go back overseas and a debrief helps them establish their next steps.
  - If no one is there to help lead them, they lose momentum
- Standards Introductory Workshop is offered by the Standards of Excellence to anyone wanting to improve their short term mission trips.

*“STMs can be a huge discipleship opportunity.”*

***What is this organization “Standards of Excellence”? What is it and how can it serve people?***

- It is a network and an accrediting body, made up of agencies, churches and schools – over 100 member organizations that want to learn from one another to improve their short term mission strategies.
- Groups can become accredited in their short term mission program by completing a peer review process – This involves inviting other agencies, churches or schools to look at their STM processes
- Being accredited shows that you manage your short term teams well

***If people wanted to learn more, how might they do this:***

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