

⌘ EFC PARTNERSHIPS

GLOBAL MISSION ROUNDTABLE

LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE FOR GLOBAL MINISTRIES

© *The Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission – 2nd Edition (2009)*

The Code of Best Practice in Short-term Mission

Second Edition

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Mission Roundtable *Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission* is designed as a guide to all short-term mission initiatives (i.e., international visits, ministry experiences, youth teams, etc.) with a duration of up to two (2) years, which are organized by Canadian mission agencies, churches and other globally oriented organizations. Though the Code was initially formed for a cross-cultural context, it can easily be adapted to ministry sojourns in Canada.

The development of the Code of Best Practice was motivated by a desire that God would be glorified through Canadian interaction with others. In doing so, it seeks to underscore the importance of developing morally responsible experiences for Canadian participants and their partnering organizations. As a result, the Code seeks to provide a *standard or benchmark* for short-term mission practice and suggests number elements that should be incorporated as a basic minimum. The Code is *not intended* to establish a legal standard against liability. Adopting the Code, therefore, should be seen as a step in a long-term, ongoing process of developing responsible short-term mission experiences, rather than becoming an end in itself.

Furthermore, the *Code* recognized that not every short-term mission experience provides opportunity for a literal application of every element. On rare occasions, for example, the involvement of a local church is not feasible. However, since local church involvement is desirable, it is included in the *Code of Best Practice*. Where the literal application of the Code's guidelines is not possible, steps should be taken to ensure that an equivalent structure or organization take on the suggested responsibility to guarantee proper accountability.

In addition, the *Code* has a number of underlying core values, which include:

A commitment to being sensitive to others and their "otherness" by adopting culturally appropriate lifestyles and engaging in suitable ministry activities.

A commitment to all the stakeholders in short-term mission events (i.e., the participants, sending local church, mission agency, and host church and/or ministry).

A commitment to partnership and co-operation that provides the possibility of extending a relationship beyond the life of the short-term mission experience.

A commitment to full communication, wherever possible, as early and as fully as possible between the stakeholders.

SECTION 1: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 A Short-Term Mission program will have a *defined purpose* within Christian mission.
- 1.2 A Short-Term Mission program will have *clear and realistic aims and objectives*, which include viability, expectations of outcomes, and consideration of how the program serves the long-term objectives of all those involved.
- 1.3 The *benefits to, and responsibilities of*, the participant, the sending organization, the sending local church, the host organization and the host local church will be clearly defined and communicated.
- 1.4 *Partnerships will be established*, as far as possible, with host local churches and communities. These relationships, in the context of unity love, will be defined in terms of agreed-upon priorities, ownership, and expectations.
- 1.5 *Appropriate sending local church involvement* will be sought. A partnership will be developed, as far as is feasible, between the agency, participant and sending local church.
- 1.6 There will be a *commitment to provide the participant with opportunities for personal and spiritual development* throughout the short-term mission experience.

SECTION 2: PUBLICITY, SELECTION AND ORIENTATION

2.1 Publicity

- 2.1.1 Publicity materials will be accurate, truthful and used with integrity.
- 2.1.2 Publicity will clearly represent the ethos and vision of the sending organization. It will not reflect negatively on the host culture or ministry. It will also define the purpose of the program in the terms of service, discipleship and vocation.

2.2 Selection

- 2.2.1 The *application process*, including timeline, all financial obligations and use of funds, will be *clear and thorough*.
- 2.2.2 A *suitable selection process* will be established, including selection criteria and screening. A pastoral care element will be included, regardless of whether or not the individual is accepted as a short-term participant.
- 2.2.3 It is essential that there is *disclosure of the relevant details* concerning the short-term participant between the church, agency and field.

2.3 Orientation

- 2.3.1 *Appropriate orientation and training* will be given prior to departure and/or after arrival on the field. Team leaders will be briefed on the orientation and training provided.
- 2.3.2 *Preparatory information* will be provided as early and as fully as possible.
- 2.3.3 *Placement decisions and changes* will be made with integrity and *communicated clearly* to all involved.

SECTION 3: FIELD MANAGEMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

- 3.1 *Clear task aims, objectives, and job descriptions* will be developed jointly by the sending and hosting leadership.
- 3.2 Home and field based *communication and reporting guidelines* will be identified, implemented and reviewed.
- 3.3 *Mutually defined lines of authority, supervision, communication, responsibility and accountability* will be established and implemented through regular reporting and/or meetings.
- 3.4 *Pastoral Care and support structures* will be provided, and respective responsibilities clarified with all parties.
- 3.5 *Opportunities for spiritual, personal, and character development* will be provided, promoted and pursued.
- 3.6 *Participants will agree to follow guidelines* on behaviour, relationships and financial management that are appropriate to the host culture.
- 3.7 *Policies and procedures* covering finances, healthcare and insurance, medical contingencies, security and evacuation, acts of terrorism or political violence, stress management and conflict resolution, misconduct, discipline, and grievances *will be established, communicated and implemented as is appropriate.*
- 3.8 Where and when requested, *necessary equipping and training of hosts* will be provided.

SECTION 4: RE-ENTRY SUPPORT, EVALUATION AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 *Re-entry debriefing and support* will be seen as an integral part of the short-term package.
- 4.2 *Re-entry preparation*, including field evaluation, will begin prior to return.
- 4.3 The *mission agency and sending local church* will assist the participant through re-entry, including facing unresolved personal issues, and future opportunities and direction in discipleship and service.
- 4.4 *Evaluation of the church or mission agencies' procedures and performance* will be filled out by the participant. (The agencies' procedures will also be evaluated by local sending churches.)
- 4.5 *On the request* of the host organization, an *assessment of the host organization* will be carried out in an appropriate way by the participant.
- 4.6 The results of *evaluations* will be communicated to relevant managers for the improvement of future projects and the keeping of permanent records. Confidentiality, integrity and accuracy are required.

ADOPTING THE CODE

The Global Mission Roundtable affirms the desire of those involved in short-term mission initiatives (i.e., churches, mission agencies and international organizations) in their quest to develop short-term mission programs to the highest possible level. *The Code* is provided as a tool to assist churches and organizations as they seek to provide morally responsible short-term mission experiences.

The aim of any implementation procedure is not to “police” the Code, but to support its aims of continual improvement, quality, high standards and excellence. Yet implementation must be a meaningful process, so as to avoid mere lip service which undermines any value the Code may have.

There is a formal adoption and implementation procedure for the *Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission*, which is as follows:

1. An agency or church can decide to formally “adopt” the Code, and advise the Global Mission Roundtable to this effect. Forms to complete the process will be provided.
2. There will be two signatories to the Code, one being the person responsible for running the short-term program(s), the other being an executive officer of the church or agency (e.g., chairman, CEO, senior pastor, etc).
3. Those who adopt the Code are encouraged to indicate this on all publicity and materials relating to their program(s), and must provide information about the Code to all participants.
4. Implementation includes the following commitments:

Adoptees will be represented at an annual Global Mission Roundtable Short-Term Mission Forum.

Before signing, active consideration will be given to how each section and element of the Code is presently being addressed by the agency or church.

There will be an active commitment to benchmark in every area of the Code. The Global Mission Roundtable (or its designate) will assist in providing training opportunities to achieve said benchmarks.

A brief report will be submitted annually to the Global Mission Roundtable, describing how the Code is being implemented, with submission of current operating benchmarks. A questionnaire will be provided by the Roundtable for this purpose.

Short-term mission programs come in a variety of forms and are managed by agencies or churches in a variety of ways. The *Code of Best Practice* and the implementation process acknowledge this reality, and are designed to be as flexible as possible. The Code is a suggested framework that provides standards or benchmarks while recognizing organizational and contextual diversity.

For more information, contact:

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The second edition of *A Guide to Best Practice in Short-term Mission*, a resource document that accompanies the Code, is available for \$10.00 Canadian (plus shipping costs). Order your copy at the above address. Please make cheques payable to The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

The Global Mission Roundtable operates on the platform of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.