

Slave Labor is Cheap (and fun): How to be a servant. How to use a servant.

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Translation and literacy work requires highly technical skills that are not typically associated with short-termers. However, short-termers can be mentored and trained to be an effective partner in this work. Using them effectively requires preparation and a change of mindset. Requirements need to be made of the short-termers when initial interest is shown to ensure commitment on their part. From the time plans are put in place, investment needs to be made in mentoring and training them. This mentorship and training continues as long as they are interested to the point of their becoming long term coworkers. In order to use short-termers effectively, projects need to be planned based on specific tasks. Although the long-term project is above the abilities and training of short-termers, most of the specific tasks can be done by them. In order for them to act as coworkers or assistants, the mind set of the literacy worker or translator as well as the short-termer needs to be that they are an essential part of the team and that their input is valuable.

Last year I was talking with a missionary involved in a similar kind of ministry about how indispensable our short-termers are. She said I should talk to a mutual friend who two or three times had someone come to help; however, just as she had them trained to the point that they were going to be really useful, they left. I think many of us have had this experience, and once you have had a few of these experiences you feel you are better off just doing the work as best you can yourself. I hope this discussion will help you change your perspective. We have short-termers who come for as little as a few weeks, some for as long as four months and others have been working with us for four years. They all share one thing in common: we keep them very, very busy.

Short-termers have become a standard part of most missions programs. As linguists, Bible Translators, literacy workers, etc. we typically only use short-termers if we are in areas where we function much like traditional missionaries. In these cases we use them to meet one time needs (examples: caring for children, Scripture in use outreaches, etc.).

As a consultant I travel almost non-stop and typically have short-termers accompany me. The first 7 years I used short-termers in the typical ways – cataloging storybooks, doing lots of typing, illustrating alphabet cards, caring for child, cooking, etc.

The past three years have lead to a huge shift in how we use short-termers. I would like to take credit for having these great, new insights, but all credit goes to God. The story is a long one and has lead to a change in perspective, not only of short-termers, but how God works through us in general. This is not a testimony time, however, so I will try to stick to the facts that relate to this article. In 2005 I had planned a 3 month trip to Asia which included workshops in two countries with eleven different languages. The rigorous schedule was dependent on external factors: a graduate in secondary education who was to do teacher training seminars, and another recent graduate who had been based in Asia for the previous 6 months. We were to be leaving in a few weeks, and translators and teachers were already traveling to meet us. In the same week both people canceled. It was too late to cancel workshops; yet it was impossible for me personally to conduct them all. In the aftermath God convicted us that He never puts a task before us that He has not already equipped us to do.

We had a young woman (Kristy) who was working on a degree in education and accompanying us on trips to help with the children. We called Kristy and asked her how she would feel about shifting ministries. God had been burdening her without our knowledge about this very thing, so our phone call was an answer to prayer for her. The second young woman (Carla) who cancelled emailed a week or so later and said she realized she should come. By then the ball was already rolling, in a good way, and Carla's experience with us was significantly different than it would have been. The way we had planned the workshops, humanly speaking, I think Carla would have only come with us to the one workshop. Instead she has continued to travel and work with us.

The rest of this paper may seem like a carefully laid out plan, but it was not. We did not have time to develop a plan. We simply brought the short-termers along and trained them as best we could. The trip was so successful, however, we looked at what God had caused to come about and why it had worked and have replicated it ever since. The remainder of this paper is about how He has provided short-termers to meet our inadequacies and what He has taught us so far about effectively using these tools that He has provided.

You should first know two characteristics of our short-termers. None of them when they traveled with us the first time were planning to do translation, literacy or linguistics work long-term. However, every one of them was actively seeking the Lord's will and willing to go wherever He led. Though what I share with you will help you to use other kinds of short-termers successfully, I think the extreme effectiveness of the ministry is due to these characteristics.

Pre-Trip Requirements

The first process is pre-training and continuing contact. We have required reading assignments for short-termers before they travel with us. If this is their first trip with us, they have to read "Don't Waste Your Life" by John Piper and "Foreign to Familiar" by Sarah Lanier. If this is their second trip, they have to read "Cross-Cultural Conflicts" or "Cross-Cultural Connections" by Duane Elmer. If we plan on having them work on literacy projects, they have to read "Local Literacies: Theory and Practice" by Glenys Waters. If they are going to help with translation work, they have to read our translator training manual and learn how to use the search engines on either Bible Works or E-Sword. If they are going to help with linguistics, they have to have at least taken a basic undergraduate linguistics class. These requirements not only prepare them to be able to minister but also involve and excite them before we arrive in the country.

As an organization we have been ramping up our internship program, and as part of that process we are now requiring all official interns to research and write a paper on the people and cultures where they will be ministering.

Investment & Mentorship

We see ourselves as investing in our short-termers the same way they are investing in us. Each trip we plan a Bible study to do together (We've done "Experiencing God;" by Blackaby, "Living Beyond Yourself" by Beth Moore,). On Wednesday nights we do the Bible study together, Friday nights are games/movies and pizza nights, and Sunday we have prayer and debriefing. Each one shares something new, striking or impactful from their week. It may just be seeing children or monks begging or roasted crickets for sale. Sometimes it is the details from checking a particular verse or how the testimony of one of our national coworkers impacted them. When we eat together we make a

deliberate effort to explain our day's work, including explaining the technical issues in ways they can understand. It still surprises us, but they - even those doing child care - really do enjoy having us explain the importance and implications of determining bound versus free morphemes. It helps them understand the part their work plays in the bigger picture.

When we return from a trip we maintain contact. We have a short-terminer email group and all share instant messaging addresses. It is rare that a day goes by that we do not hear from at least one of our short-terminers, and many days we hear from most if not all of them.

We are taking 6 short-terminers to Myanmar and then on to India in January; three have traveled with us before and three have not. We also have a new consultant-in-training joining us in India two months into the trip. To help prevent the forming of an in-group and an out-group, as well as to help them know the others a little before they have to share a room with them for four months, this year we created our first short-terminer social network. Everyone has posted pictures and mini-biographies. It's been a good way to share news and discuss such mundane topics as chicken versus tuna as well as more important things like what you will find surprising about Asian culture.

Treat short-terminers as family, as younger siblings in the Biblical sense. Part of my job is to train them to, Lord willing, be missionaries one day themselves. This includes everything from how to make yam chips (how to enjoy the unique offerings of the culture where God has placed you) to how to deal with loneliness as a single woman on the field. We involve the short-terminers that have come multiple times in planning our trips, the dates, the work load, division of labor, mechanics of traveling, etc.

They are not outsiders but part of our family and our team. Recently one of our short-terminers was married, two of the other short-terminers were her bridesmaids and three others came and helped. There are two problems with this. The first one is that we all miss each other when we are apart almost more than we miss our own families when we are overseas. The second is that we enjoy working together so much that the short-terminers keep coming back which makes it difficult to have room to bring new people.

I think you hit the nail on the head in the last paragraph of "Investment and Mentorship." 1) Viewing you guys as family instead of as employers or coworkers made a huge difference in my trips - in attitude, in enjoyment, and, I think, in getting along (not that we ever fought or anything, but families better understand and deal with each other's quirks). 2) Exactly - I do miss you guys and the other girls TERRIBLY when I'm home. You all become my family when we're overseas, so I don't miss mine as much. But when we're home, it's hard to share memories, experiences, burdens, and excitements (I never would have believed that I would get excited over a little program that can sort words and count them!) with people who are very much loved, but cannot completely understand.¹

This is key!!! It really makes a difference. Everyone feels like they are part of a team, and sometimes the more technical discussions help paint the bigger picture for everyone. And we really are family, so we share a lot from the everyday things to the deeper personal discussions

¹ I distributed the draft of this article to some of our short-terminers and asked for their input. Some of their comments seemed to make the point better than what I had written or at least give it authority, so I have included them in the final draft. This quote is from Kristen Montgomery who has traveled with us to Asia four times and on her own one time. Her last two trips she has come to work on literacy projects and now she conducts her own workshops.

or Bible Studies. And I really miss everybody when we're home. As much as my family and friends may love me and have interest in the ministry God has called me too, they don't really understand what happens overseas. And it's so encouraging to have different people to stay in touch with who can relate.²

Change in Approach: Task-basing projects

Not only has the way we treat and view short-termers changed, but the way we treat and view our work has changed. Before, we would look at our work and say that an untrained volunteer cannot do a Bible translation or a literacy primer. That is true: they cannot; but we have changed – and are still changing – our perspective of our work from a large, technical PROJECT to a long list of tasks that can be done with little or no training and a few tasks that require our assistance. There are tremendous benefits to this new system:

- By assigning tasks that become gradually more technical, training is conducted a little at a time rather than as a large investment at the beginning. Project mentoring saves the consultant from having to commit a significant time block to training.
- It allows the short-termer to be productive from the very beginning of their time with us.
- If the short-termer leaves, we are not left with a huge time investment on our part but little to no return for that investment.
- The training is more meaningful for the short-termer when it is integrated with the task they are doing, and retention is significantly improved.

I know for me personally, if I would not have had the short term experience I've had with you guys, I would have never thought about literacy/ Scripture in Use/Linguistics. It always just sounded way too technical for me, and was not anything I thought I was particularly interested in. Well... boy was I wrong! It's really allowed me to see and participate in so many areas of a ministry that I knew little to nothing about and to develop skills and interests I didn't know I had.³

The Task Basing Projects was excellent. Before you started training me to do them, I probably would have said that writing primers was an area that needed someone who was highly trained, having attended years of school. But I eventually came to realize that while writing primers is challenging, it is not really all that hard... but that is because you took the time to explain each little step along the way. Had you told me that you were going to teach me how to write a primer, I more-than-likely would have been nervous and intimidated by such a huge project. Instead, each little step was easy and not terribly outside of my comfort zone (except for the first you're-on-your-own workshop!). I don't think that I ever really viewed it as "training" - it was just something you were explaining to me that I found interesting. Low-and-behold, after lots of little "this-is-what-I'm-doing's" and "you-can-edit-this-for-me's," I can pretty much do most of the steps of writing a primer - and I actually enjoy doing it! It's amazing

² This was written by another short-termer Carla Bieber. She took a basic linguistics course I taught at her college. Her first trip with us she helped with linguistics workshops. She primarily does data entry and searches as well as typing up and editing notes and papers from the workshops. Her second trip with us she received the literacy training I had given Kristen. She and Kristen now work as a team developing primers and she continues to help with linguistics workshops.

³ Carla Bieber

*how God works!*⁴

*Thanks for all of the credit for thinking outside of the box instead of saying that we just really didn't know what we were doing and were desperate. But seriously, we are not always on the right track, but when we all work together we end up there, and usually have a lot of different ideas to consider by the end. And I really have to echo Kristy's comments about the Task Basing Projects. It really made things seem manageable. If I would have been told all of the pieces at the beginning I would have been completely overwhelmed. But because you broke things down and gave us the info we needed for that part, it never seemed all that intimidating (for the most part) and was actually really enjoyable.*⁵

Philosophy and Approach to Task-basing Projects

Most things written regarding short-termers are written for the benefit of the short-termers or for those leading groups of short-termers. They are not written for the benefit of those using the short-termers. Most of what we have studied that has helped us in using short-termers is secular in origin, geared toward helping business people do their jobs more effectively. The concept of studying workflow management is not usually considered as part of consultant training; but since beginning this study on our own, we have found what we have learned has been more useful on a daily basis than any of the specific consultant training we have received. We have made some fundamental shifts in how we operate which I am going to outline in the form of questions:

- 1) What is the purpose of this project? If it was wildly successful what would it look like?⁶
- 2) "I would give others totally free rein to do this as long as they. . . – what?"⁷
- 3) If I had nothing to do but work on this project, what would be the next thing I would need to do? What is the next action?
- 4) Is there any way someone else could do this specific task? (variation: Is this one of those things that eat up 80% of my time but only give me 20% of my return? If so, could someone else do it?)

1. What is the purpose of this project? If it was wildly successful what would it look like?⁸

We often think in terms of product rather than of a desired outcome. Is printing a New Testament the purpose of our project? Probably not. More likely it is something like: nationals using New Testament in churches; selling out of the NT; requests for a second edition; new Bible studies starting; people having personal devotions and witnessing; etc. This may seem like a minor detail, but it changes our priorities and, in turn, how we can use short-termers. A number of years ago we shifted from a product focus (write a primer and train teachers) to an outcome focus (help people be able to 2 Timothy 3:16 the Scripture) within our literacy department. This tremendous change in focus has led

⁴ Kristen Montgomery

⁵ Carla Bieber

⁶ Allen, David pp 62-70

⁷ Allen, David p 66

⁸ Allen, David pp 62-70)

to the development of new products and widened the field where we can use short-termers.

This is an important step in using short-termers not only because it broadens (or narrows) the arenas in which we can use them, but because it also helps them understand our priorities and allows them to think independently about how to achieve them. It gives them and us a much clearer perspective of how they fit in the bigger picture of this ministry. This brings me to one of the most significant questions I never asked myself before:

2. “I would give others totally free rein to do this as long as they. . . – what?”⁹

It can be very difficult to trust someone else to do even part of this work when by nature our personality has to detail oriented in order to be able to do the work. Some have said I am “a bit of a control freak,” and as my personality type tends to be attracted to this kind of ministry, there are probably many of you who have been described in the same way. Letting others do things when they did not do them like I would have was very difficult. Rarely, however, was what they did bad; it was just not what I would have done. By defining the parameters “I would give others totally free rein to do this as long as they. . . – what?”, I was able to do two things: 1) clearly define for the short-termers the guidelines of their work and remove the fear of “stepping on my toes” and 2) force myself to let go and value their work and creativity.

What I found was that when I was working on multiple primers in a language family they all started to sound the same. Using short-termers meant the nationals could read about tigers instead of monitor lizards for a change. They also found new, creative, better ways to do things. Sometimes I had to twist my head around and squint real hard to be able to see, it but in the end we usually found something more workable for everyone. Many of the developments that have so dramatically increased the speed at which we can do primers were the result of interaction between our short-termers and our technical developer. The short-termers had not gone to graduate school and been trained the correct way to develop a primer. They were simply given specific tasks and a final desired outcome. This allowed them to think more freely outside of the proverbial box. They need a list of words with only these 5 letters in them; they had all this data in Toolbox; why could it not find the words for them? The technical developer felt this was an excellent idea. He had not considered this application for it before. In fact, he could do better than that: if it could find words with only these 5 letters, then it could find sentences with only these 5 letters. With lots of added hours contributed by short-termers, they could run the seemingly endless possibilities and determine which letters to teach first, not simply based on frequency counts, but on usefulness.

With diligent nationals and our committed short-termers we can draft a primer in about 2-4 weeks now. We are planning that with online collaboration, improved communication with our national workers and a continuing flow of dedicated short-termers, in the next 2-5 years we will only have an initial two week workshop and a final “clean-up” workshop and complete our primer work in a year. Long term (2011 is our goal with full transition by 2015), if communication continues to improve, we will not need the second workshop.

Asking this question about every project has created a great freedom for myself and the short-termers. It has also created an incredible level of trust between us. They trust me to be transparent and to stand behind their work. I trust them to do a quality job within the parameters I have set.

⁹ Allen, David p 66

3. If I had nothing to do but work on this project, what would be the next thing I would need to do? What is the next action?

This single concept has revolutionized every aspect of our life and work. Specifically, it breaks projects into single actions tasks. The developer of this idea, David Allen, likens this to making widgets. If you have a “cranking widgets” job, you have little stress - you do not go home at night and worry about widget cranking. The general concept is once you have defined your desired outcome and delineated the parameters for achieving it, the job should be reducible to clearly defined tasks (cranking widgets).¹⁰

“The next action is the next physical, visible activity that needs to be engaged in, in order to move the current reality toward completion.”¹¹ This approach forces you to think through the actions you need to take and clearly define them. David Allen recommends that every time you do a next action on a project you define the subsequent next action and put it on your “Next Actions” list. I have had to adapt this slightly for short-termers. I have tried to define every next action step for a project so that the project can move forward smoothly and with little additional effort on my part. Because these steps are repeated for every primer the process of defining them all is not wasted.

4. Is there any way someone else could do this specific task?

“I’m about to introduce you to the theory and practice of what I believe to be the forgotten Prime Minister of All Productivity Hacks: *asking for help.*”¹²

A variation on this question is based on the Pareto principle: “Is this task one of those things that eat up 80% of my time but only give me 20% of my return? If so, could someone else do it?” Once you have outlined the desired outcome and parameters, you have tremendous freedom to involve others in a project. Once you have outlined all the necessary actions that need to be taken to accomplish your objective, you will most likely find that about 80% of the work is simply “cranking widgets” and could be done by others. Some of the tasks will take a more intelligent or well trained widget cranker than others, but 80% or more of the tasks will not need to be done by you.

I realized that the 80% of my work that led to minimal incremental benefits could either be entirely abandoned or easily outsourced. My main company gets basically the same 10 support requests over and over again; responding is a pretty brainless job. And I’m not the only guy in the world who can code Ruby well. However, I am the only guy in the world who can do interviews with the press about the company I started, or plan our strategy for the next year.

*. . . And I try always to bear the 80/20 concept in mind before tucking into any task that might take more than a few moments. If it’s not in the 20%, I simply refuse to do it myself. And, much to my surprise, nothing ill has come of it.*¹³

¹⁰ Allen, David p 5

¹¹ Allen, David p 34.

¹² Norbauer, Ryan

¹³ Norbauer, Ryan

Sometimes it seems that we are afraid to reduce our highly skilled, technical work to widget cranking, because then we will not seem as important or necessary. What value am I if I reduce my job to something that anyone can do? I will re-quote a sentence our short-termer said, *“Before you started training me to do them, I probably would have said that writing primers was an area that needed someone who was highly trained, having attended years of school. But I eventually came to realize that while writing primers is challenging, it is not really all that hard.”*¹⁴ Hearing that is not very comfortable for someone who earned their PhD so that I could do this work; it is not very comfortable for someone who is used to being told how smart they must be in order to do this job. Perhaps this is more honesty than we are comfortable with, but sometimes we do not ask others to help us because we believe our own press. If we can train short-termers to do 80% of our work, then maybe we are not as brilliant, dedicated and indispensable as everyone says we are.

. . . To me, the far more interesting aspect of my recent embrace of outsourcing is . . . why did it take me so long to even consider doing it?

The reason, I think, is that that the biggest barriers to truly taking advantage of outsourcing are not cost or logistics but psychology. Making good use of outsourced help requires being able truly to open yourself to the possibility of asking for help, getting over your delusions of importance, surmounting any weird hang-ups you might have about entitlement or your worthiness to get assistance, and having the creativity necessary to identify the ways in which you can open your workflow up to external aid.

. . . This all took me admitting a harsh fact to myself. For most of our day-to-day operations, my company could get on just fine without me. I’m simply not that important.

*And I suspect that neither are you, no matter what your business or your role in it. Very few businesses have such special internal processes that there isn’t some outside firm experienced in and willing to do that work, oftentimes more cost-effectively. Are you clinging to some of those straight-forward widget-cranking tasks merely to be able feel useful—so you can point to some concrete bit of “work” at the end of the day, rather than those bigger issues that are so often impossible to quantify? I certainly was.*¹⁵

Let me say two things in our own defense. First of all, few people other than you could reduce your job to something anyone could do. I should re-quote the rest of the sentence from our short-termer to give you encouragement. *“But I eventually came to realize that while writing primers is challenging, it is not really all that hard... but that is because you took the time to explain each little step along the way.”*¹⁶ Second, it allows you to focus on the 20% of your job that no one else can do.

¹⁴ Kristylen Montgomery

¹⁵ Norbauer, Ryan

¹⁶ Kristen Montgomery

What is the part of your work (whether personal or professional) that only you can do? And what if you could somehow force yourself to do only that work? . . . That's exactly what outsourcing has become to me. It allows me to identify ratholes from the outset of a project and assign them to someone else (if I'm not willing to let go of them entirely,) so I won't have the opportunity to defect from the important work towards those yak-shaving tasks later on. I no longer have the excuse of checking our support inbox a hundred times a day when I don't want to confront the bigger issues that have to be confronted for things truly to progress.¹⁷

Much of what this approach is based on has been written for helping executives to outsource their work. The most extreme example of this is "The 4-Hour Workweek" by Timothy Ferris. Most of us do not have the finances to do what he did, but in a way we have been doing it all along. Most of us who live in the third world hire someone to help us wash clothes by hand, do dishes by hand, run errands to the market, stand in line to pay bills, etc. When we do this we have been outsourcing the monotonous work of living in the third world to others. This has many positive side effects: we contribute to the local economy; we open our home to our neighbors; we get free language practice, etc.

We began this quest by outsourcing more of our work to our national colleagues. We turned over much of the primer and storybook formatting in InDesign in India to our office worker there. We started sharing more information with our national area coordinators so they could push projects forward instead of us. Our first breakthrough moment was when I was handed a primer that had been corrected on the computer, with no indication of what changes had been made. Reformatting the primer using the new text for various reasons would be impossible. I sat down and started checking the two versions against each other letter by letter. My husband said, "One of the Chiru-speaking Bible college students could do that faster than you; it will take you days." He was exactly right. I spoke to one of the students, she was glad to do it and she had it back to me within 24 hours. At first she would not take any money, but eventually I convinced her to take the equivalent of a day's wage for an office worker and she was thrilled. Since that time, when we are overseas we are constantly asking ourselves, "Is there anyway to hire someone to do this?"

We have transitioned into having this same perspective with volunteers and short-termers. I now "outsource" to volunteers formatting of Bible study materials, our expense reports, and art work for Bible Stories. I hire a teenage girl from our church to do all my shredding, copying, filing and a lot of my typing and cleaning. I even "outsource" yard saling. One of the ladies in our church loves to go to yard sales. I give her a list of items and what I am willing to pay, and she joyfully shops for me all summer long. My husband, our technical developer, has outsourced to volunteers much of our organization's programming, entering archived and new reports, formatting text for publishing, all typing of text and corrections and even some punctuation and other editing.

In a matter of a few months, I've gone from being an obsessively micro-managing perfectionist entrepreneur who reserved even the most miniscule tasks for himself, to someone who gets assistance on an almost daily basis from no fewer than fourteen outside sources. . . And a wonderful thing has happened. I find myself robbed of all those enticing excuses to avoid doing

¹⁷ Norbauer, Ryan

what I ought to do, and I'm actually spending time on things that matter instead. I can honestly report that nothing I've ever tried has so radically transformed my ability to bring the big plans I have for my little universe actually to bear upon reality.¹⁸

It is not overstating to say that without short-termers, I would need to reduce our literacy projects by more than 50-70% and our linguistics workshops by more than 50%, if we could conduct them at all in the framework which we now use. I am not where I would like to be, because I am still not staying on top of my workload. I do not believe it is because of over-committing, though some of it may be. I believe it is because I have not invested the time in training people or studying the tasks sufficiently to determine how I can hand more of it off to short-termers and volunteers.

Summary

The kind of work we do requires highly technical skills. Often when people come to help short term, we look at it more as us helping them rather than them helping us. We know the value of long term investment in them: they will encourage more involvement back home; they are more apt to come back long term; and we enable them to have an experience they might never have had otherwise. But does it have to be limited to this? Are short-termers limited to building projects and caring for children, or can we mentor them to extend our own work?

At this point in our ministry we would have to significantly reduce the number of workshops to which we are committed if it were not for short-termers. Using them effectively requires preparation and a change of mindset on our part. These are what we have learned are the key ingredients for maximizing their contribution:

- 1) Plan the projects carefully. A short-termer may not be able to write a primer but with minimal training they can format, enter data, write drafts of review exercises, extract possible sentences and words, etc. The key is to plan your projects based on specific tasks. Once this is done, you will find that much of your project can be done by dedicated short-termers.
- 2) Setting the bar high enough. The most important part of having effective short-termers is developing a personal relationship before they come to help. We have different pre-field reading requirements based on age and experience, but all have cultural books they have to read before coming to the field. For returning short-termers and interns we have them start the reading list for full-time consultants – gearing it to the specific area where they are assisting. Keep them busy. Plan twice as much work as they can possibly do. This is extremely important for keeping particularly teenage and college workers happy and excited.
- 3) Invest in their training. Be flexible; what you may plan to have them do may not be a good fit once they arrive on the field. Re-evaluate regularly to be sure they are being challenged and yet feel they understand the task(s) given to them. Build their skill set. Start by training them to do the particular task you have assigned them, and then build this as you see opportunity and ability. This training includes spiritual training and ministry training, not just job training.
- 4) Treat them as family/team members. Often short-termers are treated as outsiders, temporary visitors. As a result they do not feel invested in the work. Treat them as family: include them in family times and the decision making as other family members would. Treat them as

¹⁸ *Norbauer, Ryan*

colleagues: explain to them why certain decisions are being/have been made; encourage them to give input; involve them in projects and ministries other than your own; help them to build relationships; and express specifically the value of the work they are doing.

By planning projects from the beginning for significant input by others and changing our mindset about what it means to have short-term involvement, we can use their help to significantly impact our work and ministries.

What can short termers do?

If the missionary you are going to help is prepared then you will only need to do what they request in order to prepare yourself. However, many missionaries are afraid to have short-termers or do not know how to use them effectively. If you contact the missionary you are to work with and do not receive much input here are some things you can do:

- If the missionary doesn't suggest reading material then ask them directly if there are any books they would recommend you read in preparation for coming to the field.
- Read books on the country and people with whom you'll be working (I can recommend at least a general cross-cultural book for almost every area of the world, so email me if you're uncertain).
- Read a good cross-cultural book or two. "Foreign to Familiar" by Sarah Lanier is a good basic introduction. "Cross-Cultural Conflicts" or "Cross-Cultural Connections" by Duane Elmer would be a good follow up especially if you are considering long term ministry.
- Don't allow the shortness of your trip to be an excuse for lack of preparation. If you will only have two weeks in your new culture, that makes each hour far more valuable. How horrible to waste hours or days because of a cultural snafu that you could have avoided.
- Seek mentors! Find someone who has had a successful (life changing) short-term trip and talk with them. Get some advice. Talk to a missionary(s) you admire. Ask what they wish they had known, or what they knew that was the most useful when they first arrived on the field.
- If the missionary doesn't offer to do sharing times, Bible study or some other mentoring/feedback times, ask for them. Ask them how they think you are doing, are there things they see you should work on or change. A lot of times people are not comfortable giving unsolicited advice because they do not know how you will take it. Make them comfortable sharing with you. Get them talking about when they first came to the field. Ask them questions. If they have young children offer to take them for a day or evening so they can get some time alone as a couple. This will endear you to their hearts forever and relieve some of the time pressure they may feel at taking time to just sit and fellowship.
- If they have a hard time keeping you busy watch what they are doing. What pieces could you do? Give them a copy of this paper and see if it can help them come up with more for you to do 😊. Offer to do them whether it's formatting a bulletin, preparing handouts for a Bible study, cutting out flannel graph material, running errands or walking the kids to school. BE A SERVANT! If you seem unwilling to do "menial" tasks the missionary make not feel free to give you other tasks.
- Often the most important things you can do to help the missionary are "menial" tasks. You may not be able to teach a Sunday School lesson in Spanish but you can set up the room and help

kids stay focused on the lesson. Watch for ways to be the assistant and take the pressure off the missionaries. Again, this will probably help them see other ways you can help.

- Learn basic life skills if you don't already know them. We find ourselves teaching young people how to cut vegetables, hand wash clothes, remember to turn off the lights, get themselves ready by the appointed time (it's wonderful when they are ready ahead of time and can help others!). If you haven't been taught these things in your own home either ask your parents to teach you or find someone else to teach you. This way you will be a blessing and not a burden on the missionaries.
- Ask if there is anything you can bring with you for the missionaries and allow enough luggage allowance for it. Most fields will have things that they can not get or are too expensive. Things you many not think of maybe scarce on their field: peanut butter, aluminum foil, certain spices, Ziploc bags. Ask and bring it if they give you a list (we have people ask and then not bring it so instead of a blessing it's a disappointment). Ask if you can bring anything that will make feeding an extra person easier (packaged tuna fish or chicken, pre-prepared foods like cake or muffin mixes, etc.)
- Remember you are there to serve, not to be served!

Recommended Resources:

Allen, David (2001) *Getting Things Done*. Penguin Group, New York, NY.

Friedman, Thomas (2005) *The World is Flat*. Douglas & McIntire Ltd., New York.

Norbauer, Ryan (Sept 25, 2007) *Enlightened Outsourcing* (consulted 2007)

<http://www.43folders.com/2007/09/25/enlightened-outsourcing-1>

Additional Reading:

Ferris, Timothy (2007) *The 4-Hour Workweek*. Crown Publishing Group

Wikipedia (14 October 2007) *Pareto principle* (consulted 2007)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_principle

Connie is the Literacy and Linguistics Coordinator for Bibles International. She has worked with Bibles International since 1993. As an MK she served in Brazil and the Philippines, and as an adult she has worked with over 32 language groups throughout S.E. Asia, South America and Africa. She and her husband, Birch, have twin eight year old boys. She enjoys the balancing act of many women - wife, mother, teacher, ministry – as well as managing short-term teams and equipping others for service.

Appendix

The following are some projects that are broken down step-by-step to demonstrate how this works.

Gudschinsky Primer:

We do Gudschinsky primers for preliterate groups with no existing teachers and minimal opportunity for training large groups of teachers.

Who	Task	Training
Short-termer		Before workshop read “Local Literacies: Theory and Practice” and do In-Design tutorial
Nationals	-write 5 common fables -complete key word list	
Short-Termer	type word list & fables	
Nationals	correct word list & fables	
Short-Termer	make corrections to list & fables	
Short-Termer	format stories at end of primer	
Consultant	provide orthography list and guidelines for syllable and word structure	
Short-Termer		Consultant explains how languages restrict word and syllable patterns; examples are given from English (no [ng] at beginnings of syllables, only at end) along with the knowledge that there are more restrictions on these languages (tone makes up the difference).
Short-Termer	generate CVC list	The software for the CVC list is very simple; either I train them or, more recently, repeating short-termers show new short-termers.
Nationals	edit CVC list	Show them that some are words and some are not; cross off any that are not words and put the gloss beside any that are.
Short-Termer	type edited CVC list	
Nationals	correct CVC list	
Short-Termer	make corrections to list	

Who	Task	Training
Short-Termer	enter key word list and fables into Toolbox	I have had little opportunity to use Toolbox. There is one short-termer in particular who has mastered it very well. Our technical developer taught her how to use Toolbox to get the kinds of information we need for writing primers. The short-termer has done any further training of short-termers in how to use it. Others do a lot of the data entry and she runs most of the lists and searches.
Short-Termer	run letter frequency count for the fables and combined count for all the vocabulary collected to this point	Consultant explains frequency counts by giving example of Wheel of Fortune. (What letters does everyone always pick first? Why? It is because they are the most frequently used letters in English; typically those letters form the most words we can use.) Explain the idea of functors, but that as much as possible, they should not introduce them until letters are taught
Short-Termer	generate list of words matching frequency counts	Technical developer or our trained short-termer teaches tech or short-termer how to use Toolbox to find words and sentences with designated letters.
Consultant & Short-Termer	generate sentence ideas using word list from letter frequency count	Have short-termer sit with consultant while they do this. Consultant provides cognitive scaffolding for the short-termer including the values of picturable words and sentences, interest level and repeating themes.
National	write sentences using picturable words	Consultant teaches national how to do this with short-termer present to also learn the procedure. Teach the importance of naturalness of sentences: do not translate; write how you would say it to a friend. "Visualize the scene in your mind and then write what you would say. Write any other sentences using the picturable words that you might think of; often these will be better sentences than the ones we wrote." Ask frequently, "Would you actually say it that way?" or "How would you tell this to your son?"
Consultant & Short-Termer	1. select sentences to use in primer	Consultant talks through process with short-termer: what kind of sentence is good as a cornerstone sentence? what kind of supporting sentences can be used?

Who	Task	Training
Consultant & Short-Termer	2. develop word building drills, contrast drills, etc	Consultant goes through the process of determining which drills need to be included in the first lessons talking through the process with the short-termer Have the short-termer try duplicating some of the drills on their own with other lessons.
Short-Termer	3. format sentences into primer	
Short-Termer	4. update & edit Lesson Plan	Consultant trains short-termer regarding what information goes into each part of the form, and short-termer maintains it as lessons are added. Teach them how to use it to plan lessons ahead as well as how to update it once lessons are actually completed.
Short-Termer	5. add graphics to illustrate sentences & make list of artwork which will need to be done by native artist	Have other short-termers teach how to use graphics software to get illustrations.
Short-Termer	6. add sentences (and therefore words) to Toolbox	
Short-Termer & Consultant	7. draft possible sentences for next set of lessons	Short-termer develops sentence ideas. Consultant reviews, makes suggestions, shows other possibilities & paths to follow, and helps when stuck.
National	8. write sentences, continually edit primer and word list	
Short-Termer	Steps 1-8 above are repeated as many times as necessary until primer is completed	
Consultant & Short-Termer	choose functors from first lessons and develop lessons to teach	Depending on the short-termer's interest and aptitude, explain what functors are and why they need to be taught based on their grammatical function. Have the shorter-termer work to find other functors through out the primer and write meaning based exercises to teach them..
Short-Termer	design review lessons	Review Waters pp 229, 238-246 and review lessons done for other primers (ideas like crossword puzzles, search a word, etc.).
National	edit and translate review lessons	

Who	Task	Training
Consultant	check new lessons as they are written and make suggestions for modifications	Consultant explains reasons for modifications to short-termer.
Consultant	examine primer to see if there are additional grammatical or orthographical issues which need to be taught.	
Final Stage		
Short-Termer	edit & format teacher's introduction for primer	
National	translate teacher's introduction	
Consultant	review primer for any final changes or additions	
National	review primer for any final changes or additions	
Short-Termer	make any final changes or additions	
	Additional Task	
Short-Termer	color artwork from local artist & insert it into primer	Do InDesign tutorial and learn how to use whatever graphics editing software they have installed on their computer.
	If Short-termers re-enlist	
Short-Termers	draft primer - work together with other short-termers and with the consultant to continue developing primer, emailing translator or field coordinator for input	Technical Developer teaches them online collaboration.
Nationals	email sentences and corrections	

Bible Storybooks & Teacher Training

We have models of a series of progressively difficult Old Testament Bible Storybooks. Most of our translation projects have produced them either for literacy materials, Scripture in Use materials or Sunday School/Bible Study materials. We either use short-termers to do all the formatting and editing of the actual storybooks, or we outsource it to nationals.. We have a general teachers' training manual, as well as a resource guide for each book with activities for every story at each reading level. As each book is published we conduct teacher training.

Who	Task	Training
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Who	Task	Training
	First Workshop	
Short-Termers		Before workshop: read general teacher training manual and specific resource guides. We request that they keep a list of recommended changes and suggestions for additional activities.
Short-Termers	produce samples for each type of activity in the manual for each language	Consultant goes over activities with the short-termers to be certain they understand what needs to be done. Give them frequency counts for letters and lists of high frequency words for each language. Give them the overall word list and help them break the words into syllables.
Consultant	conduct teacher training workshop	
Short-Termers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - observe teacher training seminar - act for the consultant as a teacher's aid 	Discuss manual and seminar with consultant as issues arise.
Short-Termers	in final days of seminar, teach specific activities for a story using two activities geared appropriately to described reading level	The final day of the seminar the students are required to teach one of the stories to the reading level of a group they are already teaching. They have to include one pre-reading activity and one during- or post-reading activity. The consultant works with the short-termers to explain the assignment and help them prepare if needed. They then model the final assignment for the class the day before the others are due.
	Second Workshop	
Short-Termers	teach activities first few days; begin teaching entire stories last few days, working in a team with another short-termers	This is a task that the consultant intends to step back from almost completely and have the returning short-termers be the primary responsible parties by their third to fourth teacher training workshop exposure.

Linguistics

We require that short-termers working in the area of linguistics have taken at least a basic introductory linguistics course. This makes them familiar with the terminology and basic concepts involved in doing linguistics work. We do have linguistics graduate students that do short-term missions trips with us or that we arrange to do short-term trips for us. They will be given more technical projects or independent research.

Task	Training
Short-Termers	

Enter language data into Toolbox	The Short-Termer does the Toolbox tutorial. The Technical Developer gives further training in specific aspects of the software as needed.
Type notes and prepare documentation from linguistics workshop and discussions.	
Add data collected from workshops into Toolbox each night so it is ready for workshops the following day.	Same as above
during the workshop the short-termer does Toolbox searches for morphemes, environments, etc. as needed and directed by the consultant	Same as above
Type up consultant summaries and papers from workshops, act as editor for the national documents produced such as working papers, official write-ups/documentation and national literature resulting from workshops	This necessitates some general writing abilities which they should have received training in during college
Input text (primarily translated Scripture) into Toolbox, process back translation generated by language data, format resulting back translation for consultant research	The Short-Termer does the Toolbox tutorial. The Technical Developer gives further training in specific aspects of the software as needed.
Graduate Student	
Research specific areas of specialty in a language	Graduate school
Proof language write-ups	Same as above
Write basic language descriptions	Same as above
Find holes in linguistic study or in the linguistic description. Because the student is not as close to the data they can observe details we have missed or things we have overlooked. Because they are currently involved in linguistics study they are more up-to-date on current theories and research so it is more common they contribute possible alternative theories or additional related data and papers of which we were unaware. They are particularly good at updating terminology used in linguistic descriptions.	Same as above

Translation Workshops

We are far more specific in the kind of short-termers who are involved in translation workshops, as we are at close to maximum capacity for mentoring relationships in this area. They must have or be obtaining a degree in Biblical Languages and have aspirations of becoming a Bible translator.

Task	Training
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Before the workshop: preparatory side studies (ex. tabernacle study, researching certain plants which may include collecting illustrations, etc.), certain word comparisons, specific word studies, or researching semantic domains.	Consultant explains the kind of information the intern needs to compile and how to present it.
Record questions asked by the consultant for consultant notes	Need to have knowledge of word processing software and training by technical developer in how to format notes for merging.
Search for passages that illustrate the same word the consultant is checking	Need training by technical developer in how to do searches in Bible Works or E-Sword.
Edit and review translation tools developed by our consultants	
Materials and Tools development: Prepare translators' tools as they are capable such as worksheets for preparing to do a translation, various Scripture in Use materials within the specifications given, do research for tools the consultant is developing	We are training our consultants to keep a running list of work they could have a graduate student do for them. They regularly submit descriptions of projects they would like to have done and we assign them according to the abilities of the short-termers who have applied.
During the workshop the intern presents the studies he/she did before the workshop at the appropriate point, and the consultant then applies the information to the translation questions	