



Short-Term Programs Handbook

Foreword

Welcome to the Word Made Flesh Servant Team, Discovery Team or Internship program! We are excited to have you join us, as we seek to serve God among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. Much of this experience will be about paying attention and leaning into what you are learning. We know that God is at work in incredible ways around the world. So, we invite you to pay attention and watch for ways God is transforming people, including yourself!

We, as a mission, are committed to you throughout this experience as you grow in your faith and develop a deeper intimacy with God. To enable us to serve you better, we have put this handbook together to answer questions that you might have. This handbook is yours to use as a resource. Most of your questions will probably be answered by reading through the information. **Please bring it with you on your Servant Team, Discovery Team or Internship.**

In this handbook, you will find sections that highlight the history and mission of Word Made Flesh, as well as, the purpose and goals of the Short-Term Programs. As you continue reading, you will find the expectations Word Made Flesh has for Short-Term Program participants. You will find some important information and how to prepare for your time overseas: immunizations, insurance, packing, reading lists, etc. Please read the information thoroughly, as well as, the country appendix for field specific details.

Thank you for your willingness to set aside time, to learn, to grow, and see for yourself the work God is doing! Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions. We would love to hear from you both during your preparation and after your return.

The WMF Community

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Who We Are

WMF Charter Documents

Preamble

We are a community of Christians united in obedience to Jesus Christ for service among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. We submit to a Kingdom spirituality, which addresses the realities of a broken world. We seek to respond to the needs of the world by embodying and announcing the coming of the Kingdom of the Triune God. We seek to reconcile the church with the poor by prophetically expressing the cry of God for the poor and the cry of the poor for God.

History

Word Made Flesh was founded in 1991, as a non-profit organization existing to serve among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. In 1994, Word Made Flesh opened its first children's home in Chennai, India focusing primarily on pediatric AIDS care. Word Made Flesh has since established communities in Bangkok, Thailand; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Chishnau, Moldova; El Alto, Bolivia; Freetown, Sierra Leone; Galati, Romania; Kathmandu, Nepal; Kolkata, India; Lima, Peru; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Vision Statement

Word Made Flesh is called and committed to serve Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. This calling is realized as a prophetic ministry for, and an incarnational, holistic mission among the poor. We focus our energy to make Jesus known among the poor while reconciling the church with the poor.

Identity Statement

We are called by Jesus to birth communities that practice the presence and proclamation of the Kingdom of God among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. These Kingdom communities are formed in majority world urban centers. We celebrate the praxis of mutual submission with local Christians and churches. Our means is community. Our message is prophetic. Our method is incarnational. We exist that Jesus, the Living Word, be made flesh.

Philosophy of Ministry

Word Made Flesh is united in philosophical commitments, which are expressed in seven missional starting points:

- **Jesus and the Kingdom of God** *Hebrews 12:28, 13:8*. We are an ecumenical community of Christians united in obedience to Jesus for service among the poor. Our service flows from intimacy with Jesus and is guided by the values of the Kingdom of God.
- **The Most Vulnerable of the World's Poor** *Matthew 25:40, James 2:5*. We respond to the needs of the world by building community among those who lack sustainable access to resources and availability to opportunity.
- **Community** *Genesis 1:27, Mark 6:7, John 13:35, I Corinthians 12, Acts 4:32, Philippians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17*. Community, a tangible sign of the Kingdom of God, is our starting point for theological, ecclesiological and missiological activity. Solidarity with the most vulnerable of the world's poor fulfills our community.
- **Incarnational, Holistic Mission** *John 1:14, 20:21, II Corinthians 5:18-20, 8:9, Luke 4:18-19, Matthew 25:35-46, James 2:15-16, I John 3:16-18*. We do not minister to the poor; we are in

mission *among* the poor, identifying with them rather than integrating the poor into our reality. Identification is central in the ministry of reconciliation. Our purpose is for the redemption of the whole person toward the redemption of society. We participate in holistic transformation, desiring to facilitate regeneration and restoration.

- **Simplicity** *Matthew 10:7-10, I John 3:16-18*. We posture ourselves in simplicity with open hands, dependent on God.
- **Partnership in Mission** *Revelation 5:9-10, Galatians 3:28*. In our praxis of mutual submission, mission is dependent on partnership with local Christians and churches. Mission unifies us.
- **The Urban Context** *Isaiah 60, Matthew 9:35-36, 21:10, Luke 13:34-35, Revelation 20-22*. Our eschatological hope for the restored city calls us to give ourselves to the redemption of urban settings.

Lifestyle Celebrations

Word Made Flesh is united in an intentional spirituality that is expressed through nine core values:

Intimacy: We celebrate intimacy with Jesus to be our highest calling and our created purpose.

Obedience: We celebrate obedience as our loving response to the grace of Jesus.

Humility: We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

Community: We celebrate community as a means for discipleship and service.

Service: We celebrate service as an expression of our fellowship.

Simplicity: We celebrate simplicity as a privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

Submission: We celebrate submission to Jesus, each other and the poor.

Brokenness: We celebrate brokenness as our responsibility in ministry among the broken.

Suffering: We celebrate suffering as a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus.

Introduction to WMF Short-Term Programs

1. Discovery Teams

This program is designed for groups of six to fifteen for three - six weeks. Groups must come together from an organization (i.e. congregation, university, etc). Discovery Teams are heavily awareness focused, with less emphasis on direct service due to the difficulty of building relationships within the timeframe. The goals and objectives are similar to those of the Servant Team program.

2. Internships

Internships are reserved for individuals or families who are discerning long term service with WMF or who have a focused project. The timeframe and content of Internships are flexible. The goals, objectives, and components of an Internship will be tailored to the context, but will be based on those of the Servant Team. Families with children are welcome to apply.

3. Servant Teams

The Word Made Flesh Servant Team is designed to be a four-month commitment to Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. It is an opportunity for participants to learn about the values of the Reign of God through community living, discipleship, internship, research and ministry. In the context of cross-cultural ministry, the Servant Teams will serve in urban centers of the majority world.

Short Term Programs Philosophy

As North Americans, we may be less aware of the injustice and poverty the majority of the world suffers. In the context of a lost and dying world, there is a need for the church to redefine its spirituality. We must come to grips with the reality of the poor. The poor are crying for God and God is crying for the poor. Recognizing that Jesus is the only answer to the needs of the world, we must take an active role in the solution. As the church, we are the instruments of God through which the person of Jesus Christ is expressed.

Objectives

The Servant Team's primary purpose is to facilitate a deeper intimacy with Christ. In celebrating the person of Jesus Christ and learning to love Him more, we are able to experience greater love for one another.

The Servant Team exists for discipleship. With Christ as the example, we will disciple one another in community.

The Servant Team exists to serve the most vulnerable of the world's poor. Service is the result of intimacy with Christ. As a body, we will participate in outreach to the suffering.

Goals

To celebrate the person of Jesus Christ. The Servant Team exists to draw those involved into a deeper love and more intimate knowledge of Jesus. It is by loving God that we are able to love one another and the world. This service is not the end we seek; the end is Christ Himself.

To clarify and contextualize a Biblically based worldview. Our worldview is distorted by our economic status and the narcissism of our society. Scripture speaks of a worldview shaped by the values of humility and love – the values of the Reign of God. As believers, we will place emphasis on understanding what Scripture has to say about who we are and to whom we belong. Clarification of our worldview will enable us to develop a more secure and concrete foundation to build our faith. Contextualizing our worldview will be necessary for us to maintain a consistent and biblical

understanding of our faith, regardless of our geographic location.

To develop a foundational philosophy of Christian ministry.

Ministry is a natural out-flowing of relationship with Christ. By understanding our relationship with God, the immutable, and our relationship to God's unshakable Kingdom, we will begin to develop a foundation for living. Once a foundation for living is established, we will have a foundation for ministry. Our motive for service must be realized before we can take part in formal ministry.

To re-interpret our spirituality in the context of a dying world. Through exposure both to God's Word and God's world, we are faced with the reality of the poor and our need to engage. It is a reality that cannot be ignored as a majority of the world faces cruel poverty and injustice. We must be committed to a response that is centered in bringing God's redemptive love, through our own brokenness and humility, to His lost and suffering children.

To develop a firm relationship with local churches. An important part of community living is the church. We will seek to understand through the study of Scriptures how and why the Lord has established the church as the body here on earth. Understanding our place in the church will be a starting point to developing a collective and personal understanding of the theology and philosophy of the church.

To learn to function in culturally appropriate ways in the majority world. We acknowledge that we are entering the Majority World as outsiders. As such, we can never fully identify with or understand the conditions of those among whom we serve – the poorest of the poor. It is arrogant for us to believe that we have all the answers. Therefore, we will seek to enter into each situation with a posture of humility that will place us in a position of continual learning from the poor.

Short-Term Program Components

Community

The Servant Team will live and function as a community. Community is our means of ministry. It is through community that the values of the Reign of God are established in our lives and service. One of the problems we face, however, is that as North Americans coming from a background of individualism and independence, we do not have a very clear understanding of what it means to live in community. This will be one of our main focal points in discipleship, living and ministry. As our community begins to take shape, we will have to learn how to live with and value each other's differences and varied personalities.

Ministry

As a participant in WMF short-term programs, you will have certain ministry responsibilities. Your Servant Team Coordinator, teammates and those you minister among will come to depend on you to follow through on the things you agree to do, so come prepared to serve wholeheartedly, and with integrity. Ministry will not simply be the things we do, it will also be the very essence of the lives we live with each other and among friends who are poor.

Discipleship

A central aspect of the Internship and Servant Team will be corporate discipleship. This will take a variety of forms in ministry, discussion, Bible study, prayer, book studies, reflection, etc. Meetings during each week will serve to facilitate learning from one another and strengthening our community. All of our discipleship will center on five fundamental points.

1. The culture of the Kingdom of God
2. The Kingdom of God and the poor
3. The poor in Scripture and society
4. Evangelism and social responsibility
5. Commitment to a simple lifestyle

With these points as a foundation, we will approach learning in the areas of theology, Christology, crossing cultures, community development, missiology and apologetics.

Internship

One component will be active involvement in Christian Ministry, with local non-government organizations (NGO), or in an aid/relief program. This experience also serves as a springboard for a personal research project that each Servant Team member will be asked to submit.

Service Among the Most Vulnerable of the World's Poor

The opening line of Word Made Flesh's preamble clearly states why we exist as an organization. It is important that we make it clear that Short Term Programs, as a part of Word Made Flesh, will involve itself with our friends who are poor and people serving those who are poor. This **does not mean** that WMF believes that the spiritual lives and physical needs of other groups are less important to God. WMF believes that it is God's heart to welcome all members of society into the Reign of God regardless of wealth and class. Therefore, we will spend ourselves on behalf of the marginalized, the oppressed and those who face daily the injustices of poverty.

Simplicity

While we cannot expect to completely understand all the issues facing those who are poor, one of the aspects of the short-term programs is to build within ourselves a lifestyle of identification. This will

include simplicity, a discipline as well as a celebration of our freedom in Christ. Finding all of our sufficiency in God, we do not need to be bound by possessions. Please allow yourself to be open and flexible to seeking a needs-based lifestyle free of the luxuries that so easily bind and hinder us.

Servant Team Treasurer

Occasionally, one team member will be asked to be team treasurer. Team members may accept or decline this appointment. The responsibilities of the treasurer include transporting the Servant Team money overseas using American Express traveler's checks or cash.

Role of the Servant Team Coordinator/Short-Term Programs Coordinator

The Servant Team Coordinator's role will be that of teacher, facilitator, leader and friend. Servant Team Coordinators are full-time paid staff members. They are trustworthy individuals who have been chosen by Word Made Flesh to facilitate discipleship, internship and cross-cultural experience focusing on serving Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. They will provide leadership and organization to the Servant Teams through their experience and lifestyle. They are responsible for your well-being and safety. As a Servant Team member, you will be expected to respect their service to you by reporting your activities to them. In times when they make a decision, you will be expected to honor their judgment. If there is a disagreement over a decision, feel free to talk it over with the Servant Team Coordinator. Remember, they are there to serve you and offer themselves to facilitate your growth as we all wrestle with our responsibilities as Christians to those who are poor.

Debriefing

Four to six weeks after the close of the Servant Team you will have the opportunity to schedule a phone debriefing with someone from the WMF International Office. The goal of the debriefing is for team members to have a chance to talk about their experience for the purpose of reflecting and processing.

Language

We place a high emphasis on language acquisition while overseas. You will spend time with a tutor or in a language class. Most of the people you are ministering among will not know English, learning the language is a necessity. Not only is it helpful for sharing Jesus with them but it also displays an appreciation for the culture and helps break attitudes of western arrogance.

Required Resources

During your time as an Intern or on a Servant Team, you will be reading and discussing the content of various books. You will need to purchase these resources for yourself. You will find the list of books you need in the field appendix. Also located in the field appendix is a suggested reading list. Although these books are not required, they are tremendous resources concerning the various issues you will be dealing with overseas among the poor. Many Interns and Servant Team Members have discovered that they wanted to read more during the Servant Team than they ever did at home.

The Servant Team Project

As Servant Team members, each of you will be asked to submit a project. This is an opportunity for you to do concentrated research focusing on a specific issue facing our friends who are poor within the local community. It could involve the examination of causes of poverty, at-risk communities, motivations for action, Scripture, cultural implications, what is being done already, available resources and a plan of action. You will have the freedom to express your project in a way that reflects your abilities and interests.

This project is intended to have two purposes:

1. It will function as a potential tool for Word Made Flesh. These projects will be reviewed and possibly shared between WMF fields.
2. The projects provide a platform for you to express what you are learning about God's heart for the poor in practical terms.

Project Guidelines

If creating a written project, it must be a minimum of five pages. If creating a non-written project you must include an artist's statement identifying your work and educating audiences on your project. It can be as short as a couple of sentences, but it should be no longer than a page.

Projects may be written/created in partnership with other team members or may be written/created on your own. Team members should plan to take a couple of hours each week to research and explore topics.

Servant Team members can be reimbursed for any project expenses up to \$25 per team member from the onsite field budget at the approval of the Servant Team Coordinator. Reimbursable expenses could include time at the email lab, supplies, or taking a resource to a meal.

Servant Team projects are due before the completion of the Servant Team. A hard copy of the project should be given to the Servant Team Coordinator and an electronic copy should be sent to the WMF USA office.

If possible, please send the project to the WMF International Office.

Short-Term Program Values

Contemplation and Action

We ask each member of our community “to be.” It is much more important for us to be than for us to do. We need to **be** people of God. Only then will we have the vision and strength to be people who **do**. Through Scripture, prayer, solitude, silence, service and community life, you will gain a rooted understanding of the nature of God. The doing will flow out of the being, but the being is the priority!

Adaptable

Life in a foreign country is not always comfortable or predictable. At times we will have to alter our wants and desires to what is most appropriate for our team and/or the culture in which we live. Versatility is incredibly important! Team Members will dress appropriately, eat the food, attempt to speak the language, will not impose culture on others, and will not take demeaning or exploitative photographs.

Persevering

There will be many times when it would be easier to quit, but the Lord has called us for a purpose. It will be important to hold steadfast to that calling. When we are sick, we will need to remember that God is in control. When we do not want to wake up in the morning, we should be persistent. When we are tired of our working environment, we should strive to change our attitude to see the good.

Stable

A healthy, well-balanced mentality is important. Many things that we will experience will be upsetting. You will long to see the justice. You might even question the goodness of God. Stability does not mean stoicism. We will all experience emotional fluctuation from some of our greatest consolations to some of our deepest desolations. It is important for us to be aware of ourselves. Please be willing to express your reactions to injustice, your brokenness and your sadness. There will be much that we do not understand, but God is good and just and we are called to trust in God for the things that we do not understand.

Resourceful

It is our desire to reflect a lifestyle that is respectful of our friends who are poor. We need to be good stewards of resources given to us. Many things that are common in North America are luxuries here. Please be aware of how you can identify with the people whom we long to serve by conserving resources.

Respectful

Each Intern and Servant Team Member is expected to respect teammates, staff, and the culture of the country of service.

Teachable

None of us will ever arrive. No one will ever reach a point where there is nothing else to learn. Many times we will find that as we come to teach, we are the ones who become the students. Be mindful of the know-it-all attitude. We all still have many lessons to learn.

Humble

We will need to find power in powerlessness and significance in the insignificant. Following the example of Christ, we will make ourselves low and not be proud so that the Lord might claim all the victory through our lives. A posture of voluntary humility is the posture of Jesus, whom we seek to embody in

our lives.

Participatory

We want to learn from each other. We ask each team member to commit to participating in conversations and shared life together. It will be necessary for you to try to share hurts, fears and pain, as well as hopes, victories and lessons learned. We want to learn from you--please teach us!

Preparation

You are responsible for getting your passport, visa, immunizations, books and other travel necessities for your Internship or Servant Team. The costs of these items are solely yours and will not be reimbursed to you by Word Made Flesh. The following websites may be some helpful resources for you as you prepare to go overseas:

The U.S. Department of State

www.state.gov

The site has information on travel warnings, passport and visa information, as well as travel tips.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs

www.travel.state.gov

This site delivers information on passports, foreign entry requirements, and travel warnings and advisories, as well as helps to find contacts for assistance overseas.

Center for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/travel/

Phone: (404) 332-4555

You may visit their website for detailed and current information about immunizations and health precautions in your country of service.

Passports

You must have a valid passport to enter your country of service. There are no exceptions. If you do not have a current passport, you will need to get one right away. We recommend traveling with at least 6 months validity on your passport at all times.

Reading Materials

Pre-departure

- **Book List:** Advance preparation of your heart and mind for your time overseas is very important. In the field specific appendix you will find a list of pre-departure reading assignments. After reading the required books, we ask that you write a one- or two-page paper on each. This should include reflection on the content and how the book impacts your life and thought. **Please do not summarize the books; we are interested in your personal insight.**
- **Country Research:** We strongly encourage you to do some research on the country you are going to before departure. Begin to learn and practice the language if you can. Look up information on the Internet, and read through books and travel guides on your country of service.

We recommend the Oxfam Country Profiles, which describe the social, economic and environmental context of the country. These books focus on the real lives of ordinary people, often people who live in poverty, and the major development issues that affect them. Each profile provides basic information but also challenges conventional thinking about the majority world.

- **Scripture:** Begin to open your hearts to what God wants to teach you through The Word concerning those who are poor. Keep a notebook of your thoughts, questions, reactions and

feelings. This will serve as a helpful tool for you and serve as fuel for discussions with the team in the future.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Job 5:15

Psalm 41:1

Psalm 68:5-6

Psalm 109:6-16

Psalm 146:7

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 17:5

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 21:13

Isaiah 3:14-15

Isaiah 58:5-11

Jeremiah 22:3, 16

Ezekial 16:49

Amos 5:11-12

Matthew 11:2-5

Matthew 25:34-43

Luke 4:18-19

Luke 6:20

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

Galatians 2:10

James 1:27

James 2:5-6

3 John 5-8

1 John 3:16-18

Reading During the Experience

In addition to the books you are required to read before departure, we ask that you bring several books with you overseas. These books will be read and discussed as a group during the experience. Carefully read the appendix for your field to find out which books you must bring with you overseas.

Visas

Carefully read the appendix for the field you are going to for details about your visa. Do not procrastinate on the Visa process as it can take time and is essential for your travel!

Ticketing Information

Because we have a high volume of administrative responsibilities, Word Made Flesh has determined that the published dates for the Servant Teams will be final as far as our legal and programming responsibilities are concerned. If a team member decides to change his/her ticket dates from the published team dates, he/she must do so on his/her own, and the Word Made Flesh office will not be held responsible.

Insurance

We are unable to provide overseas coverage for team members. We advise you to obtain a policy that would give you additional coverage above your general insurance policy (if you have one).

If you do not have a current insurance policy, an overseas policy is adequate. We require some form of medical coverage and the proof of your policy. There are many plans that should be available in your local area or through a large insurance agency. An overseas plan is usually inexpensive and should cover accidents, sickness, emergency evacuation, lost baggage, etc.

Listed below are some agencies providing short-term overseas insurance policies.

Note: We do not recommend or endorse any particular policy or insurance agency. We have included these as a reference. You should compare different rates and what different policies have to offer to find the one that best fits your needs.

Adams & Associates International

P.O. Box 5845

Phone: 1-800-922-8438

Columbia, SC 29250-5845

Fax: (803) 252-1988

Email: aai@aaintl.com

Website: www.aaintl.com

Baptist Life Association

8555 Main St. Phone: 1-800-227-8543
Buffalo, NY 14221-7494 Fax: (716) 633-4916
Email: blamail@baptistlife.org Website: <http://www.baptistlife.org/>

Good Neighbor Insurance LLC

620 S Winthrop Toll Free: 866/636-9100
Gilbert, AZ 85296 Fax: 480/813-9930
Contact: Jeff Gulleson
Email: jeff@gninsurance.org Website: www.gninsurance.com

Overseas Insurance Consultants

P.O. Box 657 Phone: 1-800-474-2601
Alpharetta, GA 30009 Fax: (770) 663-0628
Email: ovrccinsur@aol.com Website: www.otpplan.com

Wallach & Company, Inc.

107 West Federal St. Phone: 1-800-237-6615
P.O. Box 480 Fax: (540) 687-3172
Middelburg, VA 20117-0480

World Outreach Ministries

P.O. Box 966 Phone: 1-800-641-4614
Joplin, MO 64802 Fax: (425) 920-1679
Website: <http://www.internationalhealthins.com/>

Stewardship Group

P.O. Box 911 Phone: 1-866-935-5858
Belleville, PA 12004
Contact: Preston Sharp
Email: preston@stewardshipgroup.biz

College Credit

College students are encouraged to apply for college credit for their time in ministry while in the Internship and Servant Team program. Previous team members have been able to receive college credit. Students with majors such as Christian Ministries, Social Work, Sociology, Missions or Biblical Studies can typically apply for a directed study program that can satisfy some needed internship/practicum credits toward your major. Please contact your advisor or a school administrator to see if this can work for you. We would be glad to send your school a letter signifying the work that you would do overseas and how it could accomplish the goals of a particular social work/ministry course.

College Loans

Interns and Servant Team Members who must pay on their student loans while overseas may want to apply for a forbearance with their loan company. We do not necessarily recommend such a course of action but will be happy to write a letter that describes the social work/ministry that Interns and Servant Team Members will be involved in overseas. We will not complete multiple forms for the forbearance nor will we change the letter to suit the needs of a particular loan company. Participants who wish to have this letter may contact the Director of Staff Development.

Training

Unlike other mission agencies, Word Made Flesh does not conduct training sessions with their short-term teams before departure. There are two basic reasons for this:

Word Made Flesh does not believe that the classroom can be separated from its application on the field. Interns and Servant Team members will learn, in part, by doing and then clarify their learning through discussion/reflection with other team members, reading and prayer.

Logistically, Word Made Flesh cannot facilitate training in the United States because of our size and overseas commitments.

Part of the Internship/Servant Team training will take place in the first few weeks while overseas. This will be a time of developing community, worship and prayer, and understanding the dynamics of the team.

Personality profile tests may be administered and evaluated within the first month or two of the experience so that Interns and Servant Team members can better understand themselves and their fellow team members.

Appearance

Your appearance is the first impression others have of you. In our society, we tend to place a great deal of value on how we look. This is obvious in the great sums of money we are willing to spend just to be “in style.” But what is it exactly that we want others to see? While overseas, or anywhere for that matter, we should desire that others see us as humble messengers of the Gospel. Rather than spending lots of money for the latest look, we need to be willing to go to great lengths to ensure that our appearance will communicate our intended purposes.

This may mean that you will have to dress much differently than the way in which you are accustomed. What is seen as perfectly modest to us could very well appear as “loose” or immoral to someone from these cultures. This is especially true of the Christian communities within these cultures. Those who do not meet the social standards of modesty lose their credibility. Be prepared to submit to the cultural standard of dress.

Carefully read your field’s appendix for more details on what clothes to bring.

Photography

While on the Servant Team, you will be seeing and experiencing things that you will not want to forget. One of the best ways to save valuable memories is to take pictures. However, we must be aware that there is a high potential for offensiveness when taking pictures.

Taking someone's picture is a private matter. It is an invasion of privacy to take pictures of people or their private lives without their permission. We will experience many things that are different from our normal lives and it is natural to want to remember and share with friends and family back home. However, this **will not** be done at the expense of others’ dignity. We must maintain a posture of humility.

A rule of thumb is: When you want to take a picture of something or someone, ask yourself, “Would I want someone else taking this picture of me or of my things?” Even if the answer is “Yes,” there will be times when it is still inappropriate to take pictures.

We must be aware of any actions that would hinder our witness. If we offend someone by the simple

act of snapping a shutter, we create a barrier that would take time and hard work to remove. We do not want to distance ourselves in any way.

The bottom line is that you may only take tasteful pictures of people with whom you are in relationship. Building a relationship takes time, and the time spent could have redemptive results – plus the picture will mean more to you. As you build relationships, you will become sensitive to what is and is not “tasteful.” If you are uncertain of what is appropriate in the moment, please do not hesitate to ask the field staff.

Technology

In general, we ask that team members limit the amount of technological devices they bring with them. These devices can be a distraction for you personally integrating into the field and building relationships, as well as, bring attention to you in public. WMF does not take any responsibility for stolen, lost, or broken items - these items are brought at your own risk. Having cameras to capture memories or mp3 players for music is fine but please be aware of when you are using them and how much. Many of our friends do not have access to these items so we seek to live simply in the area of technology. Please do not bring your laptop unless you have permission to bring this for a specific purpose – you will have access to computers and Internet in each field. Read the field appendix for details about technology specific to your country of travel.

Those Who Beg

We will often be confronted with the reality of poverty through the lives of those who beg and those who live on the streets. How do we respond? Jesus says, “I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat...” Consult Matthew 25 to see where this leads. Jesus also says, “Give to the one who asks,” but it may not be right to give specifically what the beggar asks of us. In Acts 3, Peter and John did not give what the beggar was asking. They gave beyond.

These are just two ways to begin thinking about in this complex issue. Though it is difficult, we cannot ignore the question of how to respond redemptively to those who beg or children living on the streets. We will wrestle with this issue together as children of the Kingdom who are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, including the least of these.

General Living Conditions

Our standard of living will be as simple as possible in keeping with the WMF Lifestyle Celebrations. Our places of residence will be relatively clean and sanitary, but never luxurious. Though we, as outsiders, cannot fully identify with those who are poor, we do not want to isolate ourselves from those among whom we minister. To be consistent in our community’s pursuit of incarnational ministry among the poor, we will choose to live well below our means. This will involve the deliberate sacrifice of many of the luxuries we take for granted.

In saying this, we do believe that the health of team members is a great priority and want to ensure that team members remain healthy throughout the trip. Therefore, rest assured that our physical needs, including housing, will be met. Please see your field’s appendix for more in-depth information.

Safe Drinking Water

Team members will always have access to safe drinking water. In countries where the tap water is unsafe, either bottled water will be purchased for the teams or the water will be boiled and run through a purifier.

Food

Team members may have the option to cook their own meals. Most of the time, however, team members will eat at other's homes or in local restaurants. When eating in restaurants, we ask that you control your voice level and speak quietly. North Americans generally tend to speak in a louder voice than people in other cultures.

While overseas, you will be introduced to new and unfamiliar foods. Though many of us are accustomed to throwing away unwanted food, many people do not have this option. We ask that you eat what you are served, especially in private homes. Many hosts will make sacrificial efforts to prepare special dishes for you, so please respect their hospitality.

Travel

Traveling overseas is a bit different from traveling in the States. We will be walking or using public transportation most of the time. Using public transportation tends to be a bit crowded and sometimes uncomfortable, so be prepared to disregard your concept of personal space. Again, we ask that you be prepared to speak quietly while walking on the street and using public transportation.

Jet Lag

Jet lag occurs when you travel through more than two time zones in one day. The symptoms include fatigue, weakness, sleepiness and irritability. The more time zones one crosses in a single trip, the more of an effect the time changes will have.

Several factors go into how much jet leg is going to affect a person. These include how many time zones are being crossed, which direction the traveler goes, the time of day of the travel, whether one is leaving for a trip or returning home, or whether one is a morning person or a night person. If the traveler goes from east to west, there may be fewer problems than with travel from west to east. Staying up later does not seem to be as great of a problem as beginning the day earlier. Those who are "night owls" will do better traveling west, while those who are "early risers" will do better traveling east.

If staying in the new time zone for a period of time, adjust to the new time zone as quickly as possible. Change your watch to the new time as soon as possible. If practical, begin changing meal patterns, sleeping periods and activities to the new time zone one to three days before arriving at the new time zone. Upon arrival, get into the local schedule. Get as much sunlight as possible to help the brain get into the new time zone. If going west to east, get the light exposure in the morning; from east to west, in the afternoon.

Optimize your travel to decrease fatigue, which worsens jet lag. Get adequate sleep before the trip. While flying, be sure to drink adequate fluids and avoid caffeine. Get some exercise (walk the aisles as possible or stretch in the seat to reduce muscle fatigue and walk in the airport between flights). Use a pillow or other back support to reduce back fatigue. Take a nap if flying east (use a sleep mask), but avoid napping if flying west. Using earplugs or a personal audio player can reduce fatigue from noise.

Melatonin is produced by the pineal gland in the brain. It helps regulate sleep patterns and is often used for jet lag. A three-milligram tablet is most effective when used for jet lag. Melatonin is an over-the-counter medicine. One tablet should be taken at bedtime one day before travel. If one is flying overnight overseas, one tablet should be taken at the usual bedtime on the day of departure. Subsequently, the number of tablets depends on the number of time zones being crossed. If you are traveling to Romania, taking the medication at the local bedtime three days after arrival should be adequate. When traveling to Southeast Asia, it is probably wise to continue to take melatonin for a 7-day period after arrival.

Guidelines for Behavior

Word Made Flesh exists not only as a formal mission organization but also as a community of believers. Our emphasis on community is intentional, as we believe this context best promotes mutual growth spiritually, mentally and relationally.

One characteristic of every flourishing community is that its members agree to abide by a common set of guidelines. These guidelines are for your protection and exist to help maintain the integrity of Word Made Flesh, its members and its vision. They are also in place that together we may celebrate the freedom we have in Christ through relinquishing our own rights and submitting to one another for His sake.

Community Standard

All Word Made Flesh staff members have acknowledged in writing their commitment to the following Word Made Flesh Community Standard. We ask that Servant Team Members abide by the same standard.

Preface: The Word Made Flesh Community Standard is outlined to communicate the expectations of all Word Made Flesh staff. As a ministry, Word Made Flesh values the individual placed within the community. The consequences of personal sin are detrimental to the individual and extend to the community. Therefore, by signing the Word Made Flesh Community Standard, I step forward in solidarity with the Word Made Flesh community to preserve its integrity and foster holy living.

- *As a follower of Jesus Christ placed within the Word Made Flesh community, I intend to know Him intimately; to love Him with all my heart, mind, soul and strength; and to seek first His Kingdom. (Luke 9:23; John 17:3; Jeremiah 22:16; Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Luke 10:27; Matthew 6:33)*
- *In faithfulness to our Lord Jesus, I joyfully submit to a community standard based on the Scriptures and expressed in a Kingdom lifestyle. (Hebrews 12:28-29; Hebrews 13:8; Ephesians 4:1-6)*
- *I will not willfully enslave myself to any form of substance abuse, any form of indiscretion concerning sexual integrity, or any form of perversion or vulgarity in my words or actions. (I Thessalonians 4:1-9; Colossians 3:1-17; Ephesians 4:17-32; Galatians 5:16-26; I Corinthians 6:9-20)*
- *I commit to a posture of truthfulness, humility, purity, holiness and openness in all areas of my life. (John 4:24; Ephesians 4:15; James 4:10; Philippians 2:3-8; I John 1:7, 9; Romans 12:1-21; Micah 6:8)*
- *I relinquish my perceived rights or freedoms for the good of the community and submit to the interpretation of these rights and freedoms to my brothers and sisters in the Word Made Flesh body. (Ephesians 5:21; Romans 14:9-15:3; I Corinthians 8:9-13; I Corinthians 9:19-23; I Corinthians 10:23-24; I Corinthians 12:12-26)*
- *I make myself accountable and agree to submit to the authority of Scripture and the Word Made Flesh community if I betray trust and fail to live a life of integrity based on the Word Made Flesh Community Standard. (II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 13:1-4; I Peter 2:13-17; I Corinthians 4:2).*
- *I am willing to confess and repent of willful sin or shortcomings and welcome discipline when I fail to abide by the Word Made Flesh Community Standard. (Psalm 32:5; II Corinthians 7:10-11)*
- *I am aware that failure to comply with the Word Made Flesh Community Standard may result in my dismissal. (Proverbs 3:11-12)*

Romantic Relationships

Because we will be outside of our comfort zones, we will find our small community to be a place of refuge and encouragement. Our experience will be intensive as our hearts become broken for the poor. One result of this is the experiencing of strong emotions. In the context of a community made up of members of the opposite sex, it is not unusual to begin to express these strong emotions in the form of affection for another team member.

A romantic relationship with someone who is beginning to grow and understand God's heart, the same way and at the same time as you could be a wonderful thing and even result in a lifelong future together. However, it could also result in a disaster for the team experience and hinder the building of community.

We do **not** allow Servant Team members to have romantic relationships with either team members or nationals during the Servant Team due to the potential harm it could cause to the community. We ask that if during the Servant Team you and another person begin to develop feelings for one another, that you "put it on the back burner" until the completion of the team. There will be plenty of time to pursue a relationship after the Servant Team experience.

Maintaining Sexual Purity

Information from *The Missionary Team: Extending God's Kingdom Together*

About half of all missionaries are subject to very strong sexual temptations. Some fall into sin. Only by a miracle of God do many survive. Many think that it could never happen to them. However, when they are on their own where nobody knows them, lonely and under long-term stress, Satan presses harder against them.

Falling into sin is usually an imperceptible slide, not a sudden fall. It may begin with looking at films with sexual scenes, looking at unseemly photographs in magazines for a few seconds – these things numb our minds to the dangers of sexual sin. Our society has lost its hatred of sexual sin: Christians also are influenced by this permissiveness. Our hearts are master deceivers (Jer. 17:9), and make us think that we are doing nothing wrong.

Beginning an illicit relationship is easier than you may think. A person may be thrown together with the opposite sex for legitimate reasons. Then those people find reasons to spend more time together in some mutual interest. In time, they can find that some deep personal need is met by being together – whether that is spiritual nourishment through prayer, Bible study, counseling or just companionship. The next stage is where two people begin to touch each other. This stirs up romantic and sexual feelings. Powerful emotions deceive and blind the conscience to what is going on. Finally, actual fornication or adultery takes place.

Steps to Guard your Purity

Information from *The Missionary Team: Extending God's Kingdom Together*

- Recognize that you are vulnerable. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Do not say, "That could never happen to me." It could happen to anyone.
- If you are married, keep cultivating your relationship with your spouse. Build up your marriage with love.
- Personally, before God in prayer, make a conscious deliberate commitment to the Lord, "I commit myself to sexual purity." Renew this commitment regularly – even hourly under temptation. Submit to God, and the devil will flee from you (James 4: 7).

- Study, memorize, meditate on and obey God’s Word. This purifies our heart, and is a sure weapon against sin (Ps. 119: 9, 11).
- List all immoral practices in which you have been involved, including those things which may not be considered sin but which have influenced or influence your mind toward the flesh and not to God. This can include films, magazines, looking longingly at people of the opposite sex, etc. Then make a conscious decision to put these things to death. Stop doing them (Col. 3:5). “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Ro. 13:14).
- Cleanse your mind “...let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7: 1). (Col. 3: 17; Phil 4:8)
- Develop an early warning system. When you sense that there may be a temptation, at once cry out to God for help and take immediate avoidance action.
- Avoid danger zones. Decide ahead of time how you will handle different situations. Try not to travel alone to other regions.
- Make yourself accountable to someone of the same sex and openly and honestly share your life. Illicit attractions disintegrate when they are confessed – this discipline helps keep us vigilant. You could be mutually accountable. Ask hard questions of one another, and pray for one another.

Interpersonal Relationships

Our community will be extremely valuable to us as we begin to minister among the poor. Therefore, we will want to posture ourselves in a position of humility with one another. There will be differences in opinion, and personality clashes will be inevitable. We must be willing to submit our differences and problems and celebrate our unity in Christ.

Another major concern is our appearance to the surrounding community. In South Asia, there is no place for public displays of affection between members of the opposite sex. In our culture, even when we are not romantically involved with another person, it is often acceptable to show varying degrees of public affection. We must avoid all appearances of evil, and so we will guard ourselves from actions that would hinder our witness.

In Romania, since the fall of communism, Western values (both good and evil) are flooding into the country. Many Christians have responded by rejecting Western values. This means that we must be cautious in how we relate to one another. Since we are foreigners, all eyes will be upon us. Our lifestyles will be our strongest witness, so we must be cautious. For example, a man and a woman alone together can be seen as derogatory to our community. We must sacrifice what seems to be normal to us for the sake of others (1 Cor. 10:24, 33).

Resolving Conflicts

Information from *The Missionary Team: Extending God’s Kingdom Together*

- **Anticipate problems.** Keep in touch with everyone’s opinions and feelings. Try to deal with issues before they become disruptive.
- **Acknowledge the problem - do not ignore it.** Otherwise, it could cause further difficulties. Clarifying an issue can be the means of building a relationship, even though it may focus on something negative for the moment.
- **Examine your heart** to see if your bias is for or against the person. Do not cease to confront just because you like someone, or use confrontation as a means of punishing someone you dislike.
- **Make an appointment** to discuss it when everyone involved can prayerfully concentrate. Seek the Lord in prayer; then outline the problem clearly. Do not mix several subjects together.

- **Assess the sources of disagreement:** inaccurate information, different methods, goals or principles. Try to find common ground from which to build a way forward. Have other previous problems contributed to bad feelings?
- **Do not attack people – concentrate on the problem.** Avoid personal accusations. Affirm the other person and demonstrate a caring attitude.
- **Try to see the other person’s viewpoint.** Restating the other’s position in your own words before replying can help.
- **Accept personal responsibility for your own errors.**
- **Ask a third person to be involved if necessary.**
- **Look for a solution that both can accept and which will advance the Lord’s work.**
- **Promise to make the solution work.**

The Servant Team/Short-Term Programs Coordinator and Field Director are a resource for you during times of conflict. Please do not hesitate to ask for help, advice, and mediation as needed to work towards resolution and reconciliation.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Illegal Substances

We **will not** permit the use of alcohol, tobacco products or illegal substances. Each of us may come into this experience with different convictions, especially concerning the use of alcohol. However, as a matter of personal and corporate integrity, we ask that each Intern and Servant Team member abstain from the consumption of any of these products.

Respect for the Culture

This will be a part of our lives every day. Part of the incarnational ministry and lifestyle we seek to practice involves submission to culture. There are too many intricacies to this concern to discuss them specifically here. As individual circumstances and potential problems arise on the field, we will address them as a community.

General Medical Information

The purpose of this section of the handbook is to assist with your preparations for serving with WMF and help you stay healthy and treat minor illnesses while you are serving among the poor.

This section contains information and advice that can help prevent some illnesses that you may be exposed to. There is also advice for dealing with simple illnesses common in the countries in which WMF host Short-Term Programs. The intention of this section is not to replace the role of medical care, however. It is to help you to be informed, try the simple treatments and know when to seek medical help. If you have any pre-existing health conditions or take prescription medication, the advice in this book may not be correct for you. In this case, you will need to take extra care to talk to your doctor before you leave about what treatments are suitable for you in these situations.

We all should use extreme care in self-medicating. In many countries, a wide array of medications is available over the counter, and the temptation is to become complacent. Two things to keep in mind are:

1. About 25 percent of the medicines sold in the majority world have substandard levels of the medication indicated (WHO). Even if it is cheap, it is pointless and dangerous to take a medication that will not be effective. Look for pharmacies that appear to store their medicines responsibly (sunlight, heat and damp), and don't always opt for the cheapest brand.
2. Medications can have dangerous side effects and interactions if used incorrectly. Be cautious in self-medicating or just taking what the pharmacist recommends if you are not familiar with the drug. Ask for and read the package insert of the medications that you buy.

The quality of medical care we are used to is not always available overseas. In some countries doctors are poorly trained and are not always bound by the code of ethics that we would expect. The other members of your field will have experience with local doctors. Also refer to the list of doctors recommended by the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers in this booklet. When you see the doctor remember to tell him/her what you have tried already.

Vaccinations

As soon as you decide to go overseas, you should start thinking about what vaccinations you need. There are vaccinations available for several diseases that are common in the majority world. As a foreigner who has lived all your life in a country with good hygiene and sanitation, you will not have any immunity to many diseases epidemic in these countries, whereas local people will have developed some immunity from exposure. (See Chart in the General Medical Section)

Different areas require different vaccinations, so it is a good idea to check with a doctor who is familiar with travel medicine in order to get the correct vaccinations. Also remember that vaccinations can be very expensive. The money you spend on getting your vaccinations can save you a lot of pain, sickness and money in the long run so is quite worth it. Get an International Traveler's Vaccination book and keep it up-to-date. See the chart outlining recommendations for all countries where WMF have staff at this time. Use this chart to help you decide what you need now and to check on what you need if you go to visit another field. This information changes regularly, so keep up-to-date by checking the following websites:

- www.mdtravelhealth.com
- www.cdc.gov
- www.who.int

Chronic Illness

If you suffer from a chronic illness, such as diabetes, you should carry an identification card or tab, which will inform others of the condition in case of an emergency. A worldwide directory of English-speaking physicians is available from:

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers
250 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Most major hotels also have lists of English-speaking physicians.

Glasses and Contact Lens

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take along an extra pair. It may be wise to purchase all the solutions you need for your contact lenses before traveling, as these may not be easily available.

Prescriptions

Have an adequate supply of any medication you take regularly, especially prescription drugs, and carry a note from your doctor stating the need for such medication. It is important to have your prescriptions filled before you leave since some drugs have different trade names in other countries.

Traveler's Diarrhea

Traveler's diarrhea is a common problem facing people who travel overseas. It can affect from 20 to 70 percent of travelers. While all age groups are at risk, it seems to be most common in the young and young adults.

For the majority of travelers, this is short-lived (fewer than three days) and is more of a nuisance than a serious health problem. Only 4 percent of travelers need to seek medical attention for this problem. The major symptoms are cramping and diarrhea. Below are things you can do help reduce your risk for traveler's diarrhea:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or, as an alternative, hand sanitizer/hand wipes. Hand sanitizer is only of value if your hands look clean. It does not replace soap and water. If uncertain about water born infections it can be used after hand washing.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles.
- Avoid ice, as it is usually made with tap water.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked foods and fruits or vegetables you have peeled yourself. "Boil it, peel it or forget it."
- Do not eat dairy unless you know it is pasteurized.
- Be cautious of swimming in fresh water.
- Be aware that the use of stomach acid blockers will actually put you at a higher risk for traveler's diarrhea.

Symptoms usually appear after you have been on your trip for about a week or so. If you are unfortunate enough to become ill with this condition, here are some suggestions:

- Maintain adequate fluid intake for the duration for the diarrhea.
- Drink clean water and fruit juices, and eat salted crackers, but avoid milk products.
- Don't eat solid foods for 12-24 hours to allow the GI tract to rest.

Non-prescription medications that will help include:

- Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto Bismol) and loperamide (Imodium AD) are available at most drug stores and can usually take care of minor problems.

- Bismuth subsalicylate is taken as two tablets four times per day. This should not be used if you have sensitivity to aspirin, a history of gout or are using blood thinners.
- Loperamide can help reduce the symptoms of diarrhea. There are two important times when NOT to use it: if you notice blood in the stool or if the diarrhea is accompanied by a fever. This usually indicates a different type of infection that can get worse if a medication such as loperamide is used. If the diarrhea persists, if you notice blood in the stool or if you have a fever, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Malaria Risk in WMF Countries of Service

Consult www.cdc.gov for more information on doses and contraindications. It is recommended that you consult a suitably qualified doctor before taking anti-malarial medication, especially for the first time.

ARGENTINA

No risk in the city of Buenos Aires. Non chloroquine-resistant malaria in border areas with Bolivia and Paraguay only.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Chloroquine

BOLIVIA

No risk in city of La Paz or El Alto. Malaria risk, predominantly due to *P. vivax*, exists throughout the year below 2500 m in the departments of Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz and Tarija, and in the provinces of Lacareja, Rurenabaque, and North and South Yungas in La Paz Department. Lower risk exists in Cocha-bamba and Chuquisaca. Chloroquine-resistant *falciparum* malaria occurs in Beni and Pando, especially in the localities of Guayaramerín, Puerto Rico (the locality in Peru not the country) and Riberalta.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

BRAZIL

The coastal states from the "horn" south to the Uruguay border, including Iguassu Falls, are not risk areas. Malaria risk, from *P. vivax* (77%), *P. falciparum* (23%), is present in most forested areas below 900 m within the nine states of the "Legal Amazonia" region (Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Maranhão (western part), Mato Grosso (northern part), Pará (except Belém City), Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins. Transmission intensity varies from municipality to municipality, but is higher in jungle areas of mining, lumbering and agricultural settlements less than 5 years old, than in the urban areas, including in large cities such as Pôrto Velho, Boa Vista, Macapá, Manaus, Santarém and Maraba, where the transmission occurs on the periphery of these cities. In the states outside "Legal Amazonia", malaria transmission risk is negligible or non-existent. Multidrug-resistant *P. falciparum* reported.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

INDIA

Malaria risk exists throughout the year in the whole country below 2000 m (6,561 feet), including cities, with 40% to 50% of cases due to *P. falciparum*. There is no transmission in parts of the states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Sikkim. *P. falciparum* resistance to chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine reported. The cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, are risk areas.

- Prophylaxis for travel to / residence in these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

NEPAL

No risk in Kathmandu or typical hikes. Malaria risk, at altitudes lower than 1,200 meters (3,937 feet), predominantly due to *P. vivax*, exists throughout the year in rural areas of the Terai districts (including forested hills and forest areas) of Bara, Dhanukha, Kapilvastu, Mahotari, Parsa, Rautahat, Rupendehi and Sarlahi, and especially along the Indian border. Chloroquine resistant *P. falciparum* reported.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

PERU

No risk in Lima, coastal areas south of Lima and the highland tourist areas (Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca). Risk in all departments except Arequipa, Moquegua, Puno, and Tacna. Risk in Puerto Maldonado. Risk of *P. vivax* (78%), *P. falciparum* (22%), is high in 21 of the 33 sanitary regions, including Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Cerro de Pasco, Chachapoyas, Chanca-Andahuaylas, Cutervo, Cusco, Huancavelica, Jaen, Junín, La Libertad, Lambayeque, Loreto, Madre de Dios, Piura, San Martín, Tumbes and Ucayali. *P. falciparum* transmission reported in Jaen, Lambayeque, Loreto, Luciano Castillo, Piura, San Martín, Tumbes and Ucayali. Chloroquine resistance reported.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

ROMANIA

No risk.

MOLDOVA

No risk.

SIERRA LEONE

Malaria risk, predominantly due to *P. falciparum*, exists throughout the year in the whole country. Resistance to chloroquine reported.

ALL TEAM MEMBERS TRAVELING TO SIERRA LEONE ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE MALARIA MEDICATION THE ENTIRE TIME THEY ARE OVERSEAS.

- Prophylaxis for residence/travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone

THAILAND

There is no risk in cities and the main tourist resorts (e.g. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Phuket, Samui). Malaria risk exists throughout the year in rural, especially forested and hilly, areas of the whole country, mainly towards the international borders. Chloroquine resistant *P. falciparum* is present. *Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone.* Resistance to mefloquine reported from areas near the borders with Cambodia and Myanmar.

- Prophylaxis for travel to these areas: Doxycycline or Malarone.

Understanding Malaria

Malaria is caused by a parasite that is usually transmitted from person to person via the bite of an infected mosquito. It can however be transmitted by an infected blood transfusion, and from mother to baby during pregnancy. There are four species of the malaria parasite, *Plasmodium*. The two most common are *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium falciparum*. *P. vivax* causes malaria that is debilitating but not usually fatal. However, *P. falciparum* causes rapidly progressing and often fatal disease.

Taking the proper precautions help to reduce the risk of acquiring malaria (see recommendations). The first line of defense is avoidance, which is important in preventing malaria as well as other mosquito-borne infections, such as Dengue. Many suggestions for avoidance commonly made to travelers will not be practical for WMF staff or teams (accommodation with screens and air-conditioning). However, don't despair and do nothing – pay strict attention to things you **can** do.

Infection with the malaria parasite causes fever, shaking chills, muscle aches and pains, headache, malaise and general flu-like symptoms which can occur at intervals (but not necessarily). Anemia (pale skin and tiredness) and jaundice (yellow skin and whites of eyes) can occur because the parasite kills red blood cells. Symptoms such as confusion, seizures and unconsciousness are very bad signs

associated with *falciparum* malaria. Malaria can act like many other illnesses so do not assume that you do or do not have malaria. You need to get a blood test to know for sure. Most people develop symptoms 10 days to 4 weeks after infection but it can be as long as one year later. If you become unwell, always let your doctor know that you have travelled to an area with Malaria.

Mosquito Precautions

When possible, avoid areas with malaria. If you cannot avoid, stay in accommodation that will protect you: (screens, fans, air conditioning, away from standing water). Sleeping outside presents the highest risk.

If your accommodation does not protect you, protect yourself:

- Take anti-malarial drug prophylaxis (especially children and pregnant women). These have to be started before entering a malaria area and continued after your return. Duration depends on drug.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants and light colors, treat your clothes with Permethrin,
- Use insect repellent with between 35 and 50 percent DEET (also OK for kids and pregnant women)
- Use Permethrin-treated mosquito net for sleeping, have Permethrin-treated curtains,
- Spray the bedroom with knock-out spray before going to bed, and bathroom before taking a shower, use a fan, use mosquito coils, and use electric vaporizers or mats

Treated nets and clothing retain their repellent qualities for up to five washes. Permethrin-based products such as Permanone can be obtained from hardware, camping, sporting and military surplus stores.

Things That Do and Don't Help

- Studies have found that using a combination of methods to repel mosquitoes is most effective (e.g. Permethrin-treated curtains, fan and a coil).
- Mosquitoes are attracted to dark colors.
- Ultra-sound repellent devices and electric zappers are not effective at preventing bites.
- Permethrin-treated curtains, clothing and bed nets are most effective as they not only stop the mosquitoes from getting to you but kill them when they land on it.
- Permethrin-containing repellents are highly effective and have shown little toxicity.

A Note on the Chemicals Mentioned

DEET between 35 and 50 percent is safe for use by adults, children older than 2 months and pregnant women. DEET has been thoroughly studied and used extensively and no serious illness has arisen. Concentrations lower than 35 percent require more frequent application and concentrations higher than 50 percent show no added benefit. Do not put on broken skin, under or on clothing or on children's hands. Do not breathe in the aerosol or ingest the substance. Permethrin has little potential for toxicity when used on clothing or bed nets. When using "knock-out" spray to clear the bedroom or bathroom, spray 5-10 minutes before use of room and allow the spray to settle. Cover equipment such as toothbrushes, pillows, bedding, cups, utensils and other eating cooking equipment to avoid ingestion and unnecessary exposure of skin.

Alternative to DEET

Picaridin is an alternative to DEET. It has been recommended by the World Health Organization as the best protection against malaria. Check to see if your repellent has this ingredient listed instead of DEET.

Malaria Prophylaxis and WMF Staff

As of 2004, the places where WMF currently has staff at risk for malaria are Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Chennai (Madras) and Kolkatta (Calcutta), India. Malaria is also a problem in parts of the countries of Bolivia, Brazil, Nepal, Peru and Thailand, but not in the areas where the WMF staff are based in these countries. **WMF staff, servant teams and visitors to in India and Sierra Leone should take malaria prophylaxis** (see next paragraph) and carry presumptive self-treatment (see later paragraph). **Those working in Bolivia, Brazil, Nepal, Peru and Thailand should be prepared to take the appropriate prophylaxis when traveling to malaria-affected areas within country.** For very short trips, or where you think you will be staying in air-conditioned accommodation with screens and not spending much time outdoors, the risk may be low enough not to warrant prophylaxis. Below are lists of the malaria-risk areas in these countries at the time of writing (but keep up-to-date by checking on the CDC and WHO websites).

Be aware that most prophylaxis needs to start 1-7 days before you travel to the area to be effective (depending on the drug) so plan ahead. If you forget to start pre-travel, still take it but realize that you are unprotected for the number of days you should have taken it pre-travel. It is of great importance that you continue your prophylaxis for the prescribed time *after* you leave the malaria-risk area (can be 1-4 weeks depending on the drug). Remember that the drug doesn't kill any parasites in your blood, it only stops them multiplying; therefore, if you stop taking it while the parasite is living, you will get malaria. Many people get malaria after they return because they are not diligent at finishing the course – finish strong!

Often the correct medicine is available at a reasonable price in country, but buy from a reputable pharmacy, as up to 25 percent of medicines in developing countries have substandard levels of the active ingredient, according to WHO. Make sure you are taking a drug on the list of anti-malarial drugs recommended for the country where you are going (see below).

Alternative Intro to Anti-Malarial Drug Prophylaxis

Anti-malarial drugs used for prophylaxis need to be tailored to the type of malaria in your area. The drug *does not* stop you from getting the malaria parasite in your blood if you get bitten by a mosquito that carries malaria (good reason to still use precautions). However it *does* stop the parasite from being able to multiply and cause the disease. Over time, malaria parasites have become resistant to many anti-malarial drugs (i.e. in areas with resistance, the drug will *not* stop the malaria parasite multiplying in your blood). Many areas are now resistant to the traditional anti-malarial drug Chloroquine and some areas to both Chloroquine and Mefloquine [Lariam] (a newer anti-malarial).

Prophylaxis for Sierra Leone and India

In Sierra Leone, there is predominantly *falciparum* malaria (the type that can be fatal) throughout the country, year round. In India, about half the recorded cases are *falciparum* malaria (the type that can be fatal) throughout the country in all areas below 2000m. This puts you at HIGH risk.

You can lower the risk by using as many precautions as you can. However, in these areas, the mainstay of prevention is taking prophylaxis due to the rapid onset and fatal nature of *falciparum* malaria. Both India and Sierra Leone have Chloroquine-resistant strains of malaria, so do not use this drug for either prophylaxis or treatment. Malarone (Atovaquone/Proguanil), Doxycycline and Mefloquine are options for these countries. Discuss with your travel doctor (please go to someone who is experienced, e.g. a travel clinic) about the best prophylaxis for you as each has different contraindications, side effects, treatment regimes and costs. You and your doctor can find the drug most suited to your individual needs. **Tropical and Travel medicine experts agree that the risks from *falciparum* malaria far outweigh the disadvantages of taking anti-malarial drugs.**

Long-term (many years) prophylaxis is often not well-adhered to for a number of reasons, including forgetting, cost, concern about the side effects and becoming apathetic about the risk. Due to the high

prevalence and risk of fatality of *falciparum* malaria, we encourage you to remain vigilant about your malaria prophylaxis. Some ideas to help you are:

- Make sure you budget for your anti-malarial drugs
- Choose drugs that suit your budget
- Explore cheaper sources of the drug (e.g. Your field of service or neighboring countries: Mefloquine is much cheaper in Thailand than America).
- Doxycycline is very cheap throughout most of the majority world
- If you are having side effects, see a doctor to explore reasons or help you choose a different drug. Most good travel doctors will give you their email so you can contact them while you are away.
- Always take as directed (e.g. always take Malarone and Doxycycline with food in the morning as they can cause nausea, vomiting and burning in your esophagus).

If you are careless and have a bad experience, you will be unlikely to continue with your prophylaxis. Never take other medications with anti-malarial drugs before checking with your doctor. Read about malaria regularly to keep you from becoming apathetic.

Malaria Treatment

It is *always* recommended to seek medical advice when you think you may have malaria. Malaria can mimic the symptoms of many other diseases common in malaria-risk areas. Find a reputable clinic in your area that can do a quick test or look at a sample of your blood under a microscope to determine if you have malaria. Find the clinic *before* you get sick! The malaria parasite will be easiest to see in your blood during a shaking chill (not a fun time to be finding a clinic). Many places will treat you as if you have malaria until proven you do not (because of high prevalence, rapid onset and fatal nature).

Since this is the case, it is a good idea to carry your own treatment with you and treat yourself presumptively *if medical care is not available within 24 hours*. Malarone (Atovaquone/proguanil) four tablets (1g atovaquone/ 400mg proguanil) all at once, daily, for three days consecutively, can be used for treatment *if you are not* taking Malarone as a prophylaxis. Discuss this with your travel doctor to determine if this self-treatment is right for you as there are contraindications for some people. Therefore, don't use your medication to treat others.

It is *very* important to still seek medical care after self-treatment. One reason is in case you do not have malaria (often typhoid fever, dengue fever and other serious diseases can look or feel like malaria). The other is that malaria parasites are often not completely eradicated by malaria treatment as they hide in the liver and come out again to make you sick. Follow-up treatment is needed to completely kill the parasites in the liver. Don't endure a prolonged or reoccurring illness or fever – get medical help.

Children and Pregnant Women

Travel to or living in malaria-risk areas is not recommended for pregnant women or very young children related to the high risk of fatal malaria in these groups and the few prophylaxis options available. If you are planning on being in India or Sierra Leone while pregnant or with children less than 2 years old, or are planning a pregnancy in these areas it is advised that you consult a doctor experienced in tropical and travel medicine before doing so. An unplanned pregnancy in these areas should be managed by immediate medical advice from a qualified doctor as to the risk of remaining in the area.

Malaria during pregnancy can be more severe than in non-pregnant women and can increase the risk for premature birth, stillbirth, and miscarriage. Therefore, **if you choose to live in or go to a malaria risk area during pregnancy prophylaxis is essential**. Although the available options for use during pregnancy are more limited, there are options that have been shown to be safe in pregnancy so please consult a travel doctor as to what medication is recommended for you.

Infants and children of any age can get malaria. Infants especially, because they have immature immune systems, are at higher risk of serious illness. Therefore, children **living or traveling in high malaria-risk areas should always take anti-malarial drugs for prophylaxis**. Anti-malarial drugs excreted in the breast milk of the mother are not sufficient to provide protection to breast-feeding infants. For children there are several options but options for infants can be limited. Discuss this in detail with an experienced travel doctor. Overdose of anti-malarial drugs can be fatal so store anti-malarial drug out of reach of children and be precise about measuring the correct dose. Many of the drugs have a bitter taste and so can be difficult for children to take. Some are available in child friendly forms. You may have to be creative in disguising the medications for you children. Some ideas are mixing it with something sweet such as honey.

Disease Prevention

Hygiene

Practicing good hygiene is the number one way to prevent disease. Hand washing is the first line of defense for avoiding many communicable diseases. Be diligent about washing your hands thoroughly, especially after using the bathroom and before eating. Using alcohol based hand sanitizer can be a good way to do this if no water is available. It is very important when using water-less hand wash that you rub your hands together for 30 seconds to effectively remove the microbes.

Other good hygiene practices such as regular bathing and hair washing are also important (don't laugh...when the water is cold you are tempted to skip). Also washing clothes and bedding regularly and airing bedding pillows and mattresses in the sun (again, easy to skip if you are busy as it is hard work!).

The poor among whom WMF works are often plagued with parasites such as fleas, lice and scabies. Chances are that you will experience what this is like during your time with WMF.

Fleas

Fleas live off the host by feeding off blood. Since humans don't have fur, the fleas like to live in clothing and seek the warmest places (often you get bitten along waist band or sock line). Wash your clothes often.

Lice

Lice also feed off the host blood but live in the hair and lay eggs on the shaft of the hair. Lice don't jump but transfer from head to head by contact (either touching or sharing bed, hat, brushes etc). Use lice shampoo to kill the live lice and be diligent about daily combing out of all knits (the eggs). Only use the shampoo as directed, not on open sores and only when lice are present (it can't kill what is not there). In order to comb out the knits, wet your hair and then rub in hair conditioner (if possible) and then comb with a fine comb, then rinse. This works better than combing dry hair.

Scabies

The scabies mite burrows under the skin causing itching and red burrow marks, most commonly between fingers and around the wrists, elbows and waist. They are transferred by long periods of skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. A handshake for example will very rarely result in transfer. It can take up to 8 weeks for symptoms to develop. Treat by using anti-scabies lotion as directed on the packet and repeat after 7 days later to kill any mites that hatch after the initial treatment. It takes about 7-14 days for the itch to go away, sometimes longer.

Nutrition

Maintaining good nutrition is also important for staying healthy. It is all too easy to forget about a healthy diet when you go overseas. There are many excuses from being too busy, not having enough time or not liking the local food. Remember the guidelines for good nutrition, especially about eating a variety of fruit and vegetables daily. Also remember if you are not eating meat to make sure you have protein substitutes such as nuts, soy (tofu), eggs, dairy and/or a mixture of grains (rice and beans, corn and beans etc).

Food can also be a source of disease so be careful about what you eat, especially when you first arrive and you are not used to the local microbes and unfamiliar with the local food. You should expect to have loose stool and even traveler's diarrhea in the first few weeks after you arrive as your body gets used to a change in diet and local bacteria. Even when you have been there a long time though

remember you are at risk from food born illness – your body never adapts to typhoid, cholera, Hepatitis A, Giardia, ameba etc.

Please discuss with WMF staff at your destination about what precautions you should take as some countries require more than others. When eating out, be cautious of: ice in drinks, fruit and vegetables that you cannot peel yourself and food that is at room temperature (e.g. street stalls and buffets). At home, wash the outside of all food and soak fruit/vegetables in a sink full of water with a cap full of bleach for 15 minutes then rinse with boiled/clean water.

Mental Health

Be aware that in addition to moving away from your support network and into another culture, the work you have chosen is tough emotionally and mentally. It is easy to suffer emotional and mental stress. Some tips to help you with mental and emotional health are:

- Keep in touch with your support network at home
- Don't be afraid to share your thoughts and feelings about your experiences with others and in writing
- Develop regular devotional and prayer habits
- Take time to do things you enjoy
- Know the signs and symptoms of burnout and depression
- Seek help quickly if you are not feeling yourself mentally or emotionally

If You Get Sick

In order that you preserve your health for optimum service to the poor and ongoing wellbeing for yourself and your family, we recommend that staff and team members seek competent medical help when they are seriously ill or have recurrent mild illnesses.

Often it is possible to treat yourself for minor or common illnesses. All WMF fields have a copy of a useful book *Where There is No Doctor* that outlines treatment for illnesses in simple terms. Use this book and other resources available to you (including veteran staff and local medical facilities) if you get sick.

Keep in mind the following order of escalation of medical care:

Self-treatment > local medical care > competent local medical care > international standard care in nearby or home country > tropical/travel medicine or infectious diseases specialist.

Don't spend a lot of time at any one level with unsatisfactory results!

Guidelines for when to escalate medical:

- Serious illness
- Deterioration in mental health
- After 3 months of frequent illnesses (either repeatedly suffering from the same symptoms or a series of different symptoms over this time) either self treated or treated by local health care worker
- Being diagnosed and treated for an illness by a health care worker or self diagnosis and treatment with no or little improvement within a month
- Health care worker unable to find a diagnosis and effective treatment for your illness within 2-4 weeks.

Vaccination Chart for WMF Field Staff and Short-Term Programs

The following is a list of immunizations that were recommended to us. **Please consult with your health care provider or public health clinic regarding vaccinations.** It will be your responsibility to cover the cost. Please note that some of the immunizations are given in series and require time between shots, so plan accordingly.

The boosters below are recommended for all Short-Term Program Members. These are **recommended** but not required. Please discuss options with your doctor.

- **Tetanus/Diphtheria Booster:** Only if you have not had one in the last ten years.
- **Polio Booster:** This may need to be updated if you have never received it as an adult. Check with your physician.
- **Measles Booster**
- **Rabies shots**

International Certificate of Vaccination

Your healthcare professional should give you a yellow International Certificate of Vaccination. Keep this certificate with your passport when traveling. If your health care professional does not give you the yellow International Certificate of Vaccination when you receive your immunizations, you may obtain one by contacting the Superintendent of Documents at (202) 512-1800. The cost is \$1.00 each. The form number is PHS 731 #017-001-00483-9.

Country	Yellow Fever	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Typhoid	Rabies
Argentina	Not necessary for Argentina. However, travel to other South American countries may put you at risk.	Recommended for staff, Interns, and Servant Teams if working with children who live on the streets, medical facilities, IV-drug users or other high-risk areas. Three injections over six months (0m, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for Discovery Teams and visitors only if staying in local homes.	Recommended for staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or series of tablets. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for Discovery Teams and visitors only if staying in local homes.	Low risk; rabies is rare. No vaccination recommended
Bolivia	Required by law if traveling <i>from</i> an infected country. Recommended for all travelers > 9 months old if travel outside La Paz is planned. Discovery Teams and visitors only if traveling outside La Paz.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	High risk. Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams as rabies is highly endemic. Three injections over 30 days (0, 7d, 21-28d). Booster at 1 and 3 years. Suggested for Discovery Team and visitors.
Brazil	May be required by customs if traveling <i>from</i> an infected country. Recommended for all travelers > 9 months old if travel outside Rio de Janeiro is planned. Discovery Teams and visitors only if traveling outside Rio de Janeiro.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	High risk. Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams, as rabies is highly endemic. Three injections over 30 days (0, 7d, 21-28d). Booster at 1 and 3 years. Suggested for Discovery Team and visitors.
India	Required by law if traveling from many countries in Africa, South and Central America. Not necessary for visiting or living in India.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	High risk. Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams as rabies is highly endemic. Three injections over 30 days (0, 7d, 21-28d). Booster at 1 and 3 years. Suggested for Discovery Team and

					visitors.
Moldova	Not necessary for travel to Moldova	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m).	Not necessary for travel to Moldova	Not a major risk for most travelers.
Nepal	Required by law if traveling <i>from</i> an infected country. Not recommended for visiting the country.	Recommended for all staff and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Recommended for all staff and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	High risk. Recommended for all staff and Servant Teams as rabies is highly endemic. Three injections over 30 days (0, 7d, 21-28d). Booster at 1 and 3 years. Suggested for Discovery Team and visitors.
Peru	A risk in certain parts of Peru outside of Lima. Recommended for travelers 9 months or older traveling to infected areas. Recommended for all travelers ≥ 9 months of age going to areas $< 2,300$ m in elevation.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m). Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Not a major risk for most travelers. Recommended for staff living in country long-term.
Romania	Not necessary for travel to Romania	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m).	Not necessary for travel to Romania	Not a major risk for most travelers.
Sierra Leone	Required by law for travelers 9 months or older traveling to Sierra Leone. Must show proof of vaccination upon entry into country.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Not a major risk for most travelers. Recommended for staff living in country long-term.
Thailand	May be required by customs if traveling <i>from</i> certain infected countries in Africa or Latin America.	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Three injections over six months (0, 1m, 6m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. Two injections over six months (0, 6-12m).	Recommended for all staff, Interns, and Servant Teams. One injection or tablets over a week. Booster at 3 or 5 years respectively. Recommended for all Discovery Teams and visitors.	Not a major risk for most travelers. Recommended for staff living in country long-term.

Overseas Safety Awareness

Traveling overseas always carries with it a potential for risks. Any time we leave our zones of familiarity, we become more vulnerable to potential threats. These same threats may exist at home; however, we have built-in defenses to reduce our vulnerability. When things are more predictable, we can be better prepared.

We can depend on God to supply the grace necessary in our times of need. Because of this, we should never hesitate to be obedient to His call to serve. But this does not mean we should act in foolhardy ways. We must be “as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

We can take steps to limit the potential of threats to our safety simply by increasing our awareness. We can learn from Nehemiah’s example. As he bravely obeyed God’s command to rebuild Jerusalem, he did not neglect to provide for his men’s safety by equipping half of them with armor while the others worked (Nehemiah 4:16). By making ourselves aware of potential threats and having a plan for dealing with them, we can arm ourselves to be effective as Christ’s servants to the poor.

Practicing Security Awareness

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

Each person must view security as an individual responsibility. In doing so, Short-Term Program members will avoid two dangers:

1. A blind dependence on the Word Made Flesh program and staff.
2. A reckless disregard for potential risks.

Team members can gain a greater sense of security and self-confidence knowing that he or she is prepared for potential crises. Good preparation affords the freedom and ability to make instant life and death decisions.

The following principles are a combination of common sense, creativity and resourcefulness.

Be Conscious of Criminal Activity

In recent years, criminal activity has become the greatest threat to the safety of aid workers. As we can see in our own country, the proliferation of small arms and the prevalence of random acts of violence put everyone at risk. Criminal activity can take many forms.

A few **general precautions**, when observed in conjunction with the suggestions regarding personal safety later on, will help you avoid becoming a victim of common criminal activity.

Tourist areas are magnets for criminals. Avoid looking like a tourist, laden with jewelry, baggage, cameras and other valuables. Pickpockets often work in pairs using distractions as their basic ploy. Be aware of jostling in crowded areas. If you carry a handbag, keep it close to your body. Do not carry valuables in your purse or handbag; instead, leave your valuable items in a secure place. It is better to carry only a small amount of money and wear a cheap watch so you can hand them over easily if you are mugged. Divide your money between two or three pockets or bags.

Safety Starts With Your Demeanor

- Always know exactly where you are going and act accordingly. Radiate confidence; yet be discreet and unassuming.

- Dress conservatively, giving consideration to the local culture and dress code. Do not display jewelry, cash, keys or other valuables.
- Be appropriately groomed.
- Maintain a calm, mature approach to all situations. Be passive when confronted with hostility or potentially hostile situations.
- Be alert to the possibility of confrontation with individuals or groups.

Safety When Traveling

General guidelines:

- Look confident. Dress sensibly, with valuables out of sight.
- Use lockable luggage and label it so that your name and address are not easily seen.
- If traveling alone, leave your planned itinerary with a responsible person.
- Carry a list of emergency names, addresses and phone numbers.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport (after sending the Word Made Flesh office a copy). Place it in a different location than your passport.
- Carry a phone card or local coins. Sit near other people. Hold your handbag in front of you.
- Do not accept “sweets” or food from strangers, or you may wake up several hours later and find all your belongings gone.
- Discuss the fare **before** you get in a taxi. Have the address of your destination written out in the local language and carry it with you.

Safety When Using Public Transportation

- Travel in pairs when possible.
- During off-peak hours, wait for your bus or train in a designated area.
- Avoid deserted trains or buses.
- Avoid misinformation from locals by not asking leading questions. Instead of asking whether the train leaves Calcutta at 5:30, to which the answer will invariably be “Yes,” ask: “Where is the train going? What time does it leave?”
- If it is unavoidable to travel by bus at night, sit near the driver.
- If it is unavoidable to travel by train at night, select a car that is not deserted and try to sit by a window for an easy exit.
- After getting off, check to be sure you are not being followed.

Safety on Foot

It will probably be necessary to walk a great deal of the time. Follow these precautions when possible:

- Walk with two or three companions.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Consult a local street map before going out and bring it with you.
- Seek reliable advice on areas considered safe for walking.
- Avoid groups of people loitering on the streets.
- Avoid walking too close to shrubbery, dark doorways and other places of concealment.
- Maintain a low profile and avoid disputes or commotion in the streets.
- Never hitchhike or accept a ride from a stranger.
- If a driver pulls alongside you to ask for directions, do not approach the vehicle. Be cautious when asked to “Look at this map.”
- Carry your handbag in a secure manner to prevent snatch-and-run thievery.
- Carry a small amount of cash in your wallet – enough to appease a mugger. Keep the rest in one or two separate pockets. Avoid carrying credit cards or important documents.
- If someone suspicious is behind or ahead of you, cross the street. If necessary, cross back and forth several times. If still being followed, use whatever means to draw attention to yourself.

Remember, it is better to suffer embarrassment from being overcautious than to be the victim of an attack.

Safety for Women

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

A woman should never be pressured to feel she must prove herself in any way. For this reason, we suggest safety precautions, which every woman is advised to practice. Men will find most of these safety measures applicable to their own safety and security awareness efforts.

General guidelines:

- Adopt a low profile. Dress and behave conservatively. Do not display jewelry, cash, keys or other valuables.
- Follow your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable about a location or person, leave immediately.
- Do not hesitate to call attention to yourself if you are in danger: scream, shout, run or make some loud sound.
- Find out about the customs of your new environment, how you are expected to dress and behave and potential threats.
- Learn to identify what is inappropriate behavior of others toward you.
- Find out what areas to avoid.
- In your place of work, find out where the nearest police station is and what stores, businesses and restaurants are open late. Is there a telephone nearby?
- Quickly learn a few words or phrases in the local language that could deter an offender or signal for help (i.e., “police” or “fire”).
- Consider wearing a wedding ring if you are a single woman.

Self-Defense

Rehearse the actions you would take in the case of a confrontation. Self-defense is not just about learning martial arts – 70 percent of self-defense is mental preparation, knowing how to behave when faced with danger. There is no single right or wrong way to respond to an attack. Each situation is different. Whether to resist an attacker or not can only be your decision. Generally, the following options will be open to you:

- Talk your way out of it
- Give in to demands made of you
- Shout for help
- Flee
- Fight
- Never risk your life or the lives of others for material possessions.

Avoiding Harassment

- Exercise caution when meeting someone you don’t know well.
- If possible, go to a meeting with a group or more than one person. Meet in a public place. Avoid being alone with a new acquaintance.
- Dress conservatively. Wear loose fitting garments that conceal your shape. Avoid low necklines and clothes that reveal what is underneath, even the shape of what is underneath. Do not wear clothes that reveal your legs above the knees.
- Learn what appropriate and inappropriate behavior is both for you and toward you. Sometimes what may be acceptable behavior in our culture would be unacceptable in another. Recognizing these things can protect you from harassment.
- Speak up! Communicate your needs clearly.

- Assert yourself. Insist on being treated justly.
- Adopt a low profile.

Safety in Your Temporary Residence

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

Doors

- Keep your doors locked when you are not home or in your room.
- Lock your doors at night.
- Ask visitors to identify themselves before opening the door.

Windows

- Keep access windows locked whenever possible.
- Keep valuables out of reach of open windows.
- Keep curtains or blinds closed after dark or when changing clothes.

Robbery and Armed Assault

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

If you are directly threatened by an armed person:

- Never take physical risks in defense of property or money.
- Keep your hands clearly visible.
- Remain calm and demonstrate personal composure.
- Do not be aggressive. Do not try to escape.
- Move slowly and precisely. Speak quietly and distinctly.
- If in a group, do not talk among yourselves more than necessary, particularly if it is in a language not familiar with your assailants.
- Do what is told within reason.

Civil Disturbances and Natural Disasters

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

If you hear sirens, explosions or gunfire:

- Stay inside if possible.
- Stay away from windows. Keep curtains closed if possible.
- If outdoors, stay away from groups or open areas.
- Get to a safe and secure location.
- Use good judgment in determining when it is safe to go outside.

Kidnapping and Hostage Situations

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

Kidnappers and hostage takers almost always have deliberate targets chosen after careful surveillance. Attractive targets are those with visible assets and/or clear affiliation with a certain group.

Basic Rules for Survival

Perhaps the most difficult problem for a captive in a hostage or kidnapping situation is the lack of knowledge of what is to follow. We should all be aware of appropriate behavior when taken hostage

and the types of problems and conditions that might be faced during a hostage situation. General suggestions include:

- Be cautious of heroics.
- Remain calm, composed and cooperative.
- Focus on pleasant scenes, Bible verses, prayers, etc.
- Build rapport by drawing attention to your own and others' human needs like hunger, thirst and use of a toilet.
- Be reluctant to give up identification or clothing.
- Be conscious of your body language. Do not say or do anything that could arouse hostility or suspicion.
- If several are kidnapped together, consider appointing one as a spokesperson.
- Do not speak unless spoken to.
- Do not offer suggestions.
- Do not argue.
- Ask before making movements.
- Do not try to be funny.
- Be polite.
- Listen well.
- If confined, keep physically and mentally active. Sleep when possible. Devise a method of keeping time. Practice self-discipline.

Managing Stress and Maintaining Mental Health

Information from World Vision: *A Shield About Me*, 2.1-2.3

All overseas work involves some degree of stress. This is particularly true of relief work. Team members must cope with a different culture and language, as well as a job that seems to have no end in an environment where choices are limited. Unless stress is managed, prolonged exposure to tension and pressures can directly affect the health of team members, which in turn can hinder performance, their own safety and the safety of others.

Sources of Stress

Extreme levels of stress can result from both crisis events and day-to-day activities. While serving with WMF, crisis stress and day-to-day stress could be caused by emotional reactions to:

- Exposure to the injustices faced by the poor
- Not being able immediately have answers to the question "why"
- Loss of someone you are serving
- Pressure
- Miscommunication
- Need for recognition

Recognizing Stress

Unmanaged stress may be manifested by:

- Apathy
- Depression
- Sleeplessness
- Compulsive eating
- Recurrent minor illness
- Disharmony with other team members
- Decline in productivity

Preventing Stress

The following techniques can improve your ability to withstand stress-inducing pressures:

- Ask your Servant Team Coordinator or field staff questions. You will cope better if you know what you will be facing.
- Maintain your spiritual health. Spend consistent time in prayer. Take advantage of fellowship with other team members.
- Maintain good physical health.
- Express your emotions. Fear is a natural response to danger and should not be suppressed.
- Stay informed both locally and globally. Personal knowledge of your environment provides an effective way of checking rumors and addressing needs. Knowing what is happening worldwide helps you feel connected to the global community rather than isolated.
- Rest often. Take time to relax.

Managing Stress

Sometimes stress cannot be prevented. In these cases, simple stress management techniques can reduce stress to a healthy level:

- Acknowledge your stress.
- Maintain your spiritual life.
- Do not withdraw from other team members.
- Express your emotions. This can lead to constructive dialogue and long-term learning.
- Guard against panic. Panic is unhealthy fear and may lead to unwise actions.
- Maintain good physical health.
- Maintain good nutrition. Stress makes great demands on the body and elevates the body's need for vitamins.
- Rest often. Take time to relax if needed.

These guidelines and principles have been learned, many times the hard way, by those who have given themselves to the poor in aid and relief programs. Take them to heart and become familiar with them. They will make your experience much safer, giving you freedom to concentrate on your time of service among the poorest of the poor.

Cultural Preparedness

As a participant in a WMF Short-Term Program, you will be traveling to places you have probably never been before and immersing yourself in different cultures. You will be taken out of your comfort zone. Real growth takes place when we allow ourselves to be taken from who we are to who we were created to be. Still, we do not want to jump blindly into another culture and make fools of ourselves or offend others. We have come up with some things that might better prepare you for this experience. Our hope is that you will be culturally sensitive people who are willing to celebrate the differences in our brothers and sisters. Our willingness to not offend others is the first step in posturing ourselves in humility before those we will serve among.

Culture Shock

You can expect culture shock in a cross-cultural situation to be an intense part of the Intern, Servant Team, and Discovery Team experience. However, no matter how much you prepare for culture shock, it is impossible to be fully prepared. There is only so much that can be done to prepare because each person's reaction to a new culture is unique. You will have to experience it for yourself to learn how to cope with the differences in culture.

Nevertheless, before departure, it is very important to be aware that culture shock will be real. Arrival in another country can be traumatic and full of the unexpected. With a little bit of preparation, you will be more equipped to get beyond it. You will have to come to a place of accepting that things are different than they are at home. No amount of complaining, "fighting the system," or wishing things were like they are back home, will change this fact. When you are able to accept this, you will be able to see real growth take place in your life.

All of a sudden, you will be in an environment where most of your assumptions – which you have accrued from a lifetime of living in your culture-about existence, life's operating principles, and the way people relate to one another have to be thrown out the window. When you are in another country, the rules change. You may experience a sense of uneasiness because you will no longer be able to predict what is going to happen in a social situation. People in this new culture may not respond to your efforts at friendship in the way you would expect.

Culture shock is experienced in varying degrees in different people. Whatever the degree, everyone is affected by it in one way or another. The discomfort of culture shock may just cause minor irritation or it may leave you in tears for days at a time. You may want to return home even after only a few days. The old adage "No pain, no gain" is true in culture shock situations. The feelings associated with culture shock show that something is taking place in your life. The choice will be yours as to how you will respond to it.

Evidence of culture shock may include:

- Finding many things irritating or depressing
- Feeling that you cannot accomplish anything expected of you
- Thinking that colleagues are unusually unpleasant or unfair
- Loss of interest and enthusiasm
- Fatigue after only minimal effort
- Desiring to spend time with others with similar backgrounds more than nationals of the country you are in (Adapted from *The Missionary Team*, p. 40)

Culture shock may hit at different times and in varying degrees. You may experience it within the first twenty minutes after your arrival or you could be in your last weeks and wake up one day in a state of depression wondering how you can possibly make it eating another meal of rice or speaking another

word of Romanian. Culture shock may express itself as an emotional roller coaster. It may be more of a process than it is an "in your face" shock.

In addition to the shock that cultural differences bring into the experience, you must also be aware of the brokenness you will experience by being confronted by the reality of poverty. As you realize your great wealth in light of the standard of living of the majority of the world, you will go through a range of feelings not only about the culture you will be living in but also about your own culture. Your feelings may range from excitement to hatred to love to rage to compassion. Maybe you will feel all of them during your time.

Recognizing that you will have these feelings is a necessary step to make before the real learning can begin. But the next step will be to roll with the punches. You will have to accept these feelings so that you can reach out beyond your comfort zone to cope with your new surroundings. Accepting that things are different makes you willing to open yourselves to what those differences can make in your life.

Shocked Culture

The following article, entitled "Shocked Culture" was written for the handbook by David Chronic, Regional Coordinator and Romania Field Director. It is easy for us to get caught up in ourselves and in our own struggles when we are dealing with being in a culture that is foreign to us. In his article, David offers valuable insight on the potential of our presence influencing the culture we are in:

Often we have heard of the psychological disease termed "culture shock," which occurs when we enter a new or different environment and culture; but seldom do we think about the "shock" suffered by the culture we enter.

We, as westerners, were raised in what we believe to be an "advanced" society or a "developed" nation. Whether true or not, these attitudes make us proud and ethnocentric. We see our way as the best and therefore spread it, sometimes even unconsciously. These attitudes are abruptly confronted when we enter another culture.

The people of this different culture may know much or very little about where we come from. Regardless, they have expectations of us. Responding to those expectations depends on how much we know. But we can guarantee our failure from the start by holding onto our own culture.

*We enter a foreign culture, struggle to speak a foreign language, and try to make relationships with foreign people. But we need to ask ourselves, who is foreign? The reality is that we have foreign ideas, foreign ways of doing things, and a foreign language. Contrary to how we feel, **we** are the foreign ones and **we** are different.*

I know of one instance in Romania when a group of female missionaries went to church wearing short hair, makeup and their western Christian T-shirts, all unacceptable in the conservative Romanian church. You may think that this is all right or that they probably just did not know better. I too would say that there is nothing inherently wrong with their actions, except they had been in Romania for a few months and generally knew the Romanian Christian sub-culture. Whether their reasons were arrogance or ignorance, I am not sure, but I do know that we should strive to overcome erring on both sides. The apostle Paul tells us that, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all that I might win the more." We must remember that we are the guests and that everything we do reflects on the God we are following.

We can say thanks be to God who left His heavenly home to model cross-cultural ministry for us. If Christ laid down His home, being heavenly, how much more must we lay down our home, being worldly? John 3:16 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay

down our lives for the brethren.” Laying down our culture is a practical part of laying down our lives and truly loving the lost.

A common motive for hanging onto our culture is the belief that we have the right to do it. Galatians 2:20 tells us, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” If we are crucified, we are dead. If we are dead, we have no rights--not even the right to our own culture.

A missionary once told me that the Romanian culture is a bondage and that it expects us to act a certain way, thus hindering our freedom. I think this statement is rooted in his own personal bondage. We must ask ourselves if we are free from culture or in bondage to culture. Paul says that he is free to do all things, but not all things are beneficial. Paul does not use his freedom selfishly; he uses it redemptively. He is free to do all things for his neighbor, not for himself. This is a hard statement for us coming from an extremely liberal culture - a culture that has even infiltrated the church. If we cannot lay down our “freedoms” for the sake of others, I question whether we are truly free. In fact, cross-cultural ministry is a great opportunity to see how bound we are by our “freedom.” Jesus, who was pinned to the cross, said that he who the Son sets free is free indeed.

Jesus models the way: “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Likewise, we must empty ourselves of everything. Because we desire to minister incarnationally, we definitely must empty ourselves of our culture.

Christ embodied the culture of the Kingdom and expressed it through the 1st century Hebrew culture. That means we too must learn and grow in Kingdom culture, moving from an ethnocentric view to a Christ-centered view. We must stop extending our culture and allow the Kingdom to extend in us. The challenge confronting us is to lay down our culture, learn the Kingdom culture, and express it through the culture we enter. Lesslie Newbigin says that the Kingdom gives us new lenses, through which we can see and evaluate the world.

Fortunately, entering into a new culture offers the great opportunity for us to look at our own culture objectively and comparatively. The result is a deeper understanding of the kingdom and its culture.

In entering a new culture, there is a 100% chance of making mistakes. This is expected. What is important is that we find the proper solutions. When we suffer from culture shock, we see how dependent we are on “our way of doing things.” The benefit is that we learn how to change. Likewise, there is some mutual value in shocking the culture we come in to. The culture of the Kingdom will most definitely conflict with the culture of the world. The world’s culture will be shocked. We must use this opportunity to pray that the kingdom and its culture come, on earth as it is in heaven.

Reverse Culture Shock

For most people it seems that just when they are getting used to living in an overseas environment, just when things are becoming familiar and comfortable – it is time to go home. What comes as a surprise is that most people find themselves going through culture shock all over again. This is called reverse culture shock. Just as culture shock is caused by feelings of unease when you can no longer predict what is going to happen in a social situation, reverse culture shock is caused by feelings of unease when you return to a place that should seem familiar to you but is surprisingly foreign.

Although it may seem that everything changed while you were away, you are actually the one who changed the most. You may feel isolated and alienated by the culture that was once so familiar to you. You may even feel alienation from your family and friends. This is a very normal part of reverse culture shock. You have just had an experience that has had a deep, broadening effect on your life. You will see what was once familiar through a new set of perceptions. Your sense of what is important will be

different. Values will change. Many of these changes in views and attitudes may be in conflict with the views and attitudes of your family and friends. They may question you and even pressure you into going back to the way you were.

Heightening the sense of alienation and isolation is the fact that not everyone, including good friends and even family members, will want to hear about your time overseas. At first, people will ask about your experiences and will appear to be interested even showing slight fascination. The mistake that many make is accepting this curiosity as understanding. However, when the curiosity fades, you may find that family members and friends are no longer eager to listen. Perhaps their questions reflect the fact that they do not understand anything you have said about being overseas. You may feel bitterness or anger because of this. However, please remember that those whom you desire most to understand you - your friends and family - have not shared your experiences with you. You cannot expect from them what they cannot give. They will not be able to understand where you are coming from. After looking through your pictures, many of them will lose interest. Sometimes you may even be accused of being arrogant or an "elitist," though this may be your last intention. People are often threatened by new and unusual points of view if they have not had a similar experience themselves.

Relationships can change because of the changes that have occurred in your life while you were overseas. It may also be a surprise to you that you are not the only one affected by re-entry. It can be so easy to take out your feelings of being dislocated on those who are closest to you. Nonetheless, you must understand that they also are experiencing a need to adjust to the "new you."

A staff member once likened reverse culture shock to the experience of the four children in C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* when they returned from the magical land of Narnia. In this fanciful world of mythological creatures, the children faced difficult times, discovered who they really were, and matured in many ways. It seemed to them that they had spent years in Narnia, yet when they returned to their home, only a few seconds had passed. Time had almost stood still while they were away. While they had changed in so many ways, everyone back home had remained the same. This staff member pointed out that similar to the children, as you return home it may seem as if you were the only one to grow and that time had stood still for everyone else. The danger is to give this assumption too much freedom. You must remember that while your life may have changed significantly because of your experiences, your family and friends have also had life experiences while you are away which are significant to them.

The ultimate purpose of the Servant Teams, Discovery Teams and Internship programs are that you will not return the same as when you left. Experts who counsel study abroad university students advise that it takes time to readjust to life back home just as it took time to adjust to life overseas. They say that in time, you will become re-accustomed to life in the U.S. and will not be as shocked by its excesses (such as the variety of brands in the supermarket). This may be true to an extent, but it is our hope that we never lose our sense of shock at the excessiveness of our culture. This can be best described by an analogy by David Pollok, a re-entry expert for missionary children and third-culture kids. He explains that living overseas can be like growing up with a family who came from a place that is yellow while going to or experiencing a significant part of your life in a place that is blue. The result is that you are neither yellow nor blue but rather, green. One thing that he emphasizes is that it is all right to be green. This is a good explanation because it implies that your time overseas may result in a permanent change in your life, rather than a temporary difficulty that is solved by reintegration into the niche you left.

As a side note, it is important to mention that you should not expect your time on a team or internship to be merely a "sidestep" on your way to a successful career. It is dangerous to view short-term missions as a "time away," or an "event" that takes place amid other life events. The nature of your short-term experience overseas is intended to make you "green." The purpose of Servant Teams, Discovery

Teams, and Internships are not to give you a chance to do something good for the poor so you can go back to your previous existence with an eased conscience. The purpose is to introduce you to a lifestyle of service and openness to your fellow man that will continue throughout your life.

As we mentioned, you cannot overcome culture shock with preparation. You also cannot overcome reverse culture shock by being prepared for it. It will still happen. There are many ways, however, to help it go smoother and to help you to transition back to your home country.

Things to keep in mind:

- Remember that a great deal of what you feel (dislocation, alienation, isolation) is magnified by the re-entry process. Things are not actually as bad as they seem.
- While it may seem that your family and friends are disinterested in your experiences, they may actually want to hear about your time overseas, just not in the detail that you want to tell them.
- No matter how well you describe your experiences, people will rarely be able to understand why you view things in your society (which may often be negative) the way you do now unless they too have had a similar experience.
- While you may not be the same person you were when you left, people back home will not be able to automatically recognize the changes in your life. They will probably expect the same things from you that they expected before.

Coping Strategies:

- Acknowledge the changes in your life. The most important step in re-entry is to come to terms with the differences in the person you were when you first left and the person you have become. One of the best ways to do this is to keep a journal or diary so that you can look back over and read entries from different times when you were experiencing different things.
- Acknowledge that adjustment stages are real. Just as you had to give yourself time to adjust to the initial culture shock, you need to have patience for yourself as well as those you are in relationship with. Acknowledging that reverse culture shock is real will help you avoid feeling guilty if you become discouraged about being home. You must not blame yourself for experiencing a common phenomenon.
- Acknowledge that those whom you love and those who love you cannot understand what you have experienced. So no matter how much they may try to support you, you cannot expect from them what they cannot give you.
- Acknowledge that it will take time. Much of what you learned and experienced is conflicting to what you knew before. Give yourself time to integrate those often conflicting lessons into your life and time to reconcile the conflicting components within you.

Concrete steps you can take:

- Be open and honest with the difficulty of adjustment. Educate your family and friends about the stages of reverse culture shock. Many people are not aware that there are very good reasons for your feelings. If the people around you know a little more about what you are experiencing, they may be more patient and understanding. Remind your family and friends that you cannot unlearn what living in another country (and what God) has taught you.
- Keep in contact with the country you came from through whatever means available. It will help you remember that what you experienced was real and not a big dream. It is easy to become so over-stimulated by your home culture that you begin to have the feeling that you never went

overseas and that nothing changed in your life.

- Keep in contact with the other members of your team. They will be experiencing the same things you are experiencing. While most people in your life do not understand where you are coming from, they will. Remember, your team members may need you too.
- Seek out others who have had similar experiences. Also, remember that your experiences may help people prepare for a similar time overseas. Part of reconciling all that is going on in your life will be to tell your stories, share your experiences and express yourself. Find someone who, while not necessarily able to understand you, is a good listener. Allow them to be a sounding board and to help you think through your experiences in order to own them and make them a part of who you are, and not just a forgotten part of your past.
- Set goals for your future. This may be something you may need to begin thinking about before leaving your country. When you get home, it will be harder to set goals that are in keeping with the changes in your life.
- Set goals that will allow you to feel that you are moving ahead in what you have learned rather than regressing or going back to the “rut” you may have been in at one time.
- Set aside time to listen. While you will have a lot to share, give others time to talk about all that has happened in their lives as well. Even if it seems that their experiences have less significance or relevance compared to yours, they are still significant and relevant. Your patience with them will help them be more open to you.
- Reflect on the positive aspects of being at home. Try not to overly focus on the negative aspects that leave you feeling judgmental.
- Re-read letters and journals you wrote. Re-reading descriptions of people, experiences, places and events will help you relive your experience including the lessons and changes.
- While on your Servant/Discovery Team or Internship, take time to communicate your experiences, feelings and lessons with your family and friends. Doing this as you are experiencing the things that are affecting you and making changes in your life will help them to grow with you and aid in their understanding of you when you return home.
- Remember that reverse culture shock is completely normal. Anyone who returns from spending time overseas in another culture goes through some degree of reverse culture shock. Most people say that reverse culture shock is more difficult than initial culture shock, mostly because it is unexpected. You expect to be able to return home and fit in. However, you are no longer the same person and may never fit in the same way. Reverse culture shock can manifest itself in feelings of loneliness, sadness, depression and alienation. You may want to isolate yourself from others simply because you do not feel that you can share your experiences. This is common. If you feel these things, you are not strange or a “basket case.” The important thing is to not internalize too much. Talk with someone. Write to your coordinators, field staff or team members. Talk about your feelings and the process of reverse culture shock. Many people within the Word Made Flesh community are willing to listen and help you with reverse culture shock. You do not have to feel alone.