

Serve the Children



Our mission is to improve the future of children by meeting their educational, emotional and physical needs in a biblically based environment.

GO LEARN RESPOND

**India Mission Team Book
2016**

**Serve The Children
Dr Doug Collier
4423 Pt Fosdick Drive #202
Gig Harbor, WA 98335**

**253-851-1794
www.servethechildren.com**

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INTRODUCTION

The first question you have to be asking is “Why am I going on this mission trip?” Too often short term mission trips emphasize the adventure of the trip versus the impact on the people to be served and the impact on those going. If you are looking for a scenic trip, climbing mountains, shopping and amusement rides, then you are going on a mission trip without the right reasons. We plan to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ by our words and deeds to the tribal people of India.

Serve the Children partners with Hosanna Ministries, an Indian NGO that operates the Ankoor Children’s Home (ACH). This home is for poor, needy and orphan children. It is not just a hostel, but a home where children are cared for with motherly love and concern. Christian principles and practices guide each activity, purpose, and goal. ACH was established in 2002 by Kiron and Nalini Gaikwad. It is situated in the small village of Lasina which is about 150 K.M Southwest of Nagpur in Central India.

It is our vision to let the under privileged and under developed children get an opportunity to develop in a way that will help them be self supporting. We hope this will in turn enable and encourage them to help other poor and needy children develop themselves.

Ankoor Children’s Home

The goal of Ankoor Children's Home is to develop an ongoing ministry for 200 children consisting of 100 boys and 100 girls. It is our desire to help the parents of these children develop also by giving them moral teaching and guidance in the areas of adult literacy, health and hygiene, agricultural and vocation training.

Programs and Infrastructure

At present there are almost 100 children living at Ankoor Children's Home from a range of tribal people groups. Some of the tribal groups represented are Kolam, Gond, Banjara, Pardhi, and Matang. The children are in Nursery through 10th standard. The programs at ACH are designed to result in development in four areas of the children’s lives; physical, educational, social and spiritual. Special attention is given to each child to ensure they get a reasonably balanced diet, ongoing medical care, hygiene supply and training, education, and have their other physical and emotional needs met.

A qualified medical doctor visits the home regularly. Special tuition classes are arranged for children, as well as various competitions such as drawing, singing, debate, games, picnics and gardening for their social growth. Children’s rally camps and moral teaching classes are also regular activities at ACH.

ACH is situated on a three acre plot. There are separate dormitories for boys and girls along with a well and water tank to supply water 24 hrs a day. A playground for the children also serves as a gathering place. The garden allows children to grow vegetables to help provide more balanced meals.

The current site contains many amenities such as; a boys dormitory (with three bathrooms), a girls dormitory (with eight bathrooms), a small children's dormitory, classrooms, a multipurpose building, a guest house (with kitchen, two bedrooms, dining room, and living room), a well, a water tower (with water pump), a garden, a play field, men's and women's rooms for the caretakers and a kitchen. We have a generator and a battery back up system to supplement the local electric power (called current).

We now have nursery (pre-school), kindergarten classes plus first through fifth standard classes on site, to provide Christian education and English for the younger children who stay at the home or live in the area. Our goal is to add one grade (called standards) each year until we go through the 10th standard. Older children attend a local public school.

In 2012, we purchased 5 acres of land about one mile from our main location. This site is located on a small river and will be used to grow additional crops, maintain a small herd of dairy cows to provide milk for the children and to sell in the local market and to provide the school with a steady supply of water from the well on the property.

What do the children do?

There is a daily schedule as well as a long term schedule (calendar of events). Here is a complete daily schedule. As necessary the schedule is flexible and subject to change, but there is a regular, positive routine ingrained in the hearts and minds of the children.

Daily Schedule	
5:45am	Rise up – Good Morning
5:45-6:00am	Corporate Prayer
6:00-6:15am	Exercise
6:15-6:45am	Personal Cleaning
6:45-7:00am	Quiet Time
7:00-7:30am	Breakfast
7:30-9:30am	Study Time
9:30-10:15am	Early Lunch
10:30am-5:15pm	School
5:15-6:30pm	Games
6:30-7:00pm	Evening Prayer
7:00-7:30pm	Dinner
7:30-9:30pm	Study
10:00pm	Lights Off – Good Night

What do the children eat?

The largest category in the ACH budget is funding for food. Although the children currently receive enough to satisfy their hunger and basic nutritional needs, we are working to improve the meals to provide them with a more balanced diet.

They have an extensive garden on site that grows tomatoes, cucumbers, okra, squash, dhal, peppers, bananas, papaya and other fruits and vegetables. We also have dairy cows producing milk for drinking, cooking and for selling the surplus in the local village.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Five months before the team leaves, we will begin holding informational meetings and request that you provide us with your application. You need to ask yourself, “Why do I want to go on a short term mission trip?” Schedule your vacation time at work.

Four months before the team leaves, you need to complete the medical release form, the team covenant and give us a \$500 down payment. You also need to confirm that your passport is current and renew it if necessary.

Three months- You should schedule any required immunizations. You should also send out your fundraising letters. Start your journal. Airfare should be paid for.

Two months before we leave, you need to pay for the balance of the costs.

One month before we leave, you should begin thinking about the clothes and other items that you will need to take. Confirm that you have a ride to the airport, purchase your supplies and make sure you know when to begin taking your malaria pills.

1, 2 days before we leave- usually we have a packing party and weigh all of our suitcases to confirm they are within the weight limits for check in luggage. Review the check list- Do you have everything?

Start taking malarone for malaria if this is the pill you will be taking.

Go to the bank and get your spending money. Check each bill and do not take in bills that are ripped, written on or heavily worn.

We will leave Seattle and fly through Europe (via London, Frankfurt, Amsterdam or another city). We will fly to Bombay now called Mumbai and catch a local airline and fly to Nagpur. In Nagpur, we will be met by Ankoor Home staff and driven by car to Lasina.

TEAM MEETINGS

In the U.S.

We will have team meetings beginning several months prior to leaving for India. THESE MEETINGS ARE REQUIRED FOR TEAM MEMBERS. The purpose of these meetings is to prepare you for your experience, to bond as a team, to communicate the goals and objectives of the trip and to plan how we will accomplish them. Spouse and friends are welcome to come. Topics that we will discuss include:

1. Trip Logistics, i.e. communication, dress code, travel arrangements, etc. These items are covered in your team book so we will not spend a lot of time going through these items in the team meeting.
2. Cultural issues covering clothing and other areas
3. Team member roles and preparation- what we will do there
4. Team building exercises- praying for your team mates is very important
5. Spiritual preparation- Satan will attack you
6. Immunizations and medications for malaria and other medical issues
7. Keeping a journal
8. Packing and luggage needs
9. Passport and visa requirements
10. Questions, concerns and other issues

In India

Once we arrive in India, we will also have team meetings. We will meet for breakfast as a team and have a devotional time together. This meeting is also required. We will quickly review what we are planning to do during the day and remind everyone to drink plenty of water. We will have meetings after dinner as necessary to discuss changes in the schedule, find out how everyone is doing and go over plans for the next day. Evening meetings could also happen with groups that are working together, such as a teaching team or medical team.

Another reason to have meetings at night is to retreat from everyone in the area who will be persistently trying to spend time with you. We need time together as a team. Married couples need time alone. Leaders need time alone. You will need time alone. But we also need time to just relax with each other. It is a good chance to decompress and cope with all of the things you will be experiencing.

IMMUNIZATIONS/MEDICATIONS

We urge you to get a tetanus update, a measles/mumps and rubella update, hepatitis A and polio. Medical team members should also have hepatitis B. You should also get a prescription for malaria prevention medication. This would also be used to treat malaria should you become infected. You may become nauseous while taking this medication, so having a snack with you while traveling is very important.

1. Malarone- taken daily, most expensive, least side effects –highly recommended
2. Doxycycline- you cannot take this if you are allergic to tetracycline antibiotics

Note: Mefloquine has been taken in the past for malaria prevention, but may have serious neurological side effects. Do not use this medication.

You have several options for your immunizations including Safeway (<http://www.safeway.com/IFL/Grocery/Immunizations>) and locally you can use Linda Hensley at Infections Northwest to get your immunizations. You must schedule an appointment at least 30 days before we leave. They are located in Tacoma next to St. Joseph's Hospital at 1624 South I Street, Suite 405. Phone: 253-428-8754.

You can also get a 2-day travel prescription for Cipro or any other type of oral anti-biotic medication that can be used for gastro intestinal infection, or “travelers’ tummy.”

You can take a Pepto Bismol tablet every morning at breakfast to prepare your stomach for the different type of food that you will be eating. If your stomach does become upset due to the food, weather, etc, you can increase the dosage as needed based on the instructions.

PASSPORTS

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of 7,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two passport sized photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license. Webpage is <http://travel.state.gov/passport>. Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices including the Tacoma City Annex. You'll need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time; if your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession; if your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago; if your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under 16 or your currently valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen. **Be sure to apply early.**

You can renew by mail if: Your most recent passport is available to submit and it is not damaged; you received the passport within the past 15 years; you were over age 16 when

it was issued; you still have the same name, or can legally document your name change. You can get a passport renewal application form at the web site listed above.

VISA

You will need a Visa to enter India. You apply on line for a tourist visa at the India consulate in San Francisco. You will need to complete the application and return it with 2 passport sized photos (You can get these at Costco and many other places or you can try to do this yourself by following these instructions: http://howto.cnet.com/8301-11310_39-57441212-285/how-to-take-your-own-passport-photos/), the processing fee, submit a proof of address such as a copy of your driver's license or a utility bill and a copy of your birth certificate or high school diploma. Be very careful with these documents and confirm that YOUR NAME IS EXACTLY THE SAME on each document and your passport. Your passport must have at least two blank visa pages. Allow 5 days for processing and submit this at least 30 days before we leave.

Note a couple of the unique requirements for the visa found on their web site:

You need to include one recent passport size photograph (black/white or color) depicting a front pose against white background on photographic paper. **No glasses are allowed to be worn in the photo.** Affix the photo on the India Visa Application with glue or paste. Do not staple the photo.

You must have a document that shows your address such as a driver's license or you must submit a copy of a major utility bill (Water, Gas, Electric, Sewage) or a copy of a valid/current lease containing both the landlord and tenant signatures. The following items are not accepted: cell phone bill, credit card statement, bank statement or lease. **The address cannot include a P.O. Box.** Proof of your current physical address is required.

You should review these requirements now and prepare for the unique requirements. Do not take these issues lightly.

WHAT SHOULD I TAKE?

Important Items

Passport- in a zip-top bag. Provide a copy of your passport and yellow card to your team leader.

Money belt (and/or necklace) – cash in newer bills- amount should be at least \$300 depending on how much you want to spend on souvenirs and eating out or at the airports. Traveler's checks and credit cards can be used in the US and Europe; but this will not work in all places in India. Snack size zip-top bags work well for holding cash. You can exchange for Indian dollars (rupees) at the Mumbai airport or we will arrange for this.

Clothing

Everyone: 3-4 changes of outerwear in cotton or other breathable fabric, hat, light night wear (2) and robe; sandals or flip flops for in-house wear; sturdy shoes & socks or closed-toe sandals; underwear (4-6 changes). **Conservative wear is critical and you will be asked to change your clothes if they are not appropriate.**

Women: No low necked tank tops or spaghetti straps, no transparent, tight clothing or strapless tops. On the Ankoor campus, sleeveless tops or T-shirts and knee length shorts or capris are fine. Off campus, tops or tees with short sleeves that cover the upper arm, ankle length skirts or a Punjabi (salwar) suit of tunic and pants are required, along with a scarf.

Men: T-shirts and shorts are fine except when leaving the campus. Men must wear long pants when leaving the campus.

Your clothes will be hand scrubbed on stones, so be prepared to wash anything delicate yourself.

This is a suggested list of items and you will not need to purchase all of these. But if you are sensitive to the sun and this causes a lot of headaches, you should bring in more than one head covering, stronger sun screen and more aspirin than someone who is not as sensitive. Other team members will also bring items that can be shared (zip ties for example). Your supporters can use this list to help you with your expenses. The electrical current in India is 220 volts, 50 cycle's alternating current (AC); you may want to bring a converter.

MUST HAVE'S:

Bible

Bug spray-40% to 100% depending on your skin sensitivity and the time of year

Journal and pens/pencils

All/any medications (malarone)

Electrolytes for the water

Money belt

Passport with visa

Sunglasses

Sunscreen (SPF 30+)

Toothbrush/paste

Towels/wash cloths (microfiber)-2 each

Toiletries: do not bring toiletries with fragrance – they attract mosquitoes and other insects

Bath/face soap

Deodorant

Eye Care products

Feminine products

Hair care products

Hand mirror
Nail clippers
Toilet paper (partial roll)
Toothbrush/paste
Waterless hand cleanser- small container for purse or pocket

Snacks: For there and on the plane. Suggestions: Jerky, Trail mix, Dried fruit, Granola Bars, Mixed Nuts, Peanut Butter crackers, protein bars. Avoid chocolate for in country snacks, as it will melt in the heat.

Medicinal:

Airborne
Aloe Vera
Band-Aids
Benadryl
Chapstick
Cipro
Cortaid cream
Imodium AD
Malaria pills- see immunizations for the different types
Neosporin
Nyquil
Pepto-Bismol
Stool softener
Sudafed
Sun screen (45+)
Tums
Tylenol/Advil
Vitamins
Wet wipes/Bath cloths (pre-moistened), Body wipes (for use in the airports)

For Travel & Free Time: Blindfold, cards, earplugs, gum, inflatable neck pillow (SQUSH brand pillows work well also), motion sickness and/or sleeping pills, music player, reading, travel games

Other Miscellaneous Items:

Camera w/all cables, battery charger
Cell phone charger
Fan- battery operated
Flash drive to back up your camera photos
Flashlight with extra batteries
Garbage bags or plastic grocery bags for dirty clothes & packing of souvenirs
Glasses cleaner
Pictures of family
Q-tips
Scissors (check-in luggage only)
Sharpie Markers for labeling your water bottle
Super Glue
Umbrella (August team only)
Zip ties
Zip-top bags (various sizes) - for your passport, check in liquid items and anything that would absorb moisture such as money.

Rule of thumb to follow: If I need this in the US, I should be bringing this with me to India. You can't run to the local store – there isn't one.

Carry on- Bring snacks, games, books to read, **any medicines required for the ENTIRE TRIP**, at least two changes of clothes (I plan to have all of my clothing in my carry on and only team supplies in my check in), toilet paper (partial roll), journal and anything else you need or cannot be without for a couple of days such as chap stick, cough drops, hand sanitizer, copy of your passport. Some airlines are very strict on the exact size and weight of your carry on. Do not carry extra batteries in your carry on. Place these in your check in baggage. You will need to tag your carry on in India with one of their tags. This tag must be stamped by security before you can get on the plane.

Check in luggage- Each person needs to check in one bag that must weigh the maximum allowed by the airline. I suggest trading bags of clothes with a team mate so if your bag is lost, you still have some clothes. Remember to write down the brand of luggage, color and basic contents of each bag in your journal in case your luggage is lost. Make sure you have your name and address on each bag including your carry on!

NOTE- If your bag is delayed, you could be without it for at least one week. Plan carefully what you put in your carry on and what is in your checked bag.

TRAVEL TIPS

Airline travel can be an exhausting experience. You probably did not sleep well the night before you left because of the excitement of the trip. You might have stayed up late preparing for the journey and taking care of last minute details.

There are a number of things you can do to make your travel experience more pleasant. Drink plenty of water on the plane. Buy bottled water after you go through security before you get on the plane. You can always ask the flight attendant for more water once you have boarded the plane. On long flights it is important to get up and walk around occasionally to maintain good circulation and avoid stiffness. If you cannot sleep, at least try to rest as much as possible.

Simple stretching exercises help a lot; stretch your feet, turn your head and hold it, flex some muscles. Wear support hose. Wear comfortable clothes and layer them. Take off your shoes. Take books, crossword puzzles, games to play, shows & music on your iPod if you have one. Remember to pack for both ways!

India itself is 12 ½ or 13 ½ hours ahead of us, depending on daylight savings time but since we fly through Europe we will cross several time zones.

How can I improve plane travel?

Most people don't have any problems when they fly, but it's possible to make airplane travel safer and more comfortable. Here are some tips:

- Carry enough of all of your medicines to last your whole trip in your carry-on luggage. Ask your doctor whether you should change your dosages if you're eating and sleeping times will change at your destination. Take extra medicine with you in case your return trip is delayed.
- If you have diabetes or epilepsy, carry a notification and identification card (such as the "Diabetes Alert Card" from the American Diabetes Association). Have the name and phone number of your doctor with you in case of an emergency. Remember to bring along the names and dosages of all of your medicines.
- Drink nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages and water to avoid becoming dehydrated.

What can I do about jet lag?

- Get plenty of sleep before you leave.
- Eat well-balanced meals, avoid overeating and alcohol
- Exercise as much as you can on your trip.
- Use sleep medicines for only a few days.
- Get used to a new time zone by going along with the local meal and bedtime schedules.

Melatonin may help with jet lag, but no one knows how long it can be used safely. Tell your doctor if you plan to take melatonin or any other herbal or alternative medicines. Melatonin, a hormone sold in supplement form at health food stores, may help decrease jet lag. While in flight, consider taking some melatonin (generally 3 - 5 milligrams) at the time at which it would be appropriate to sleep at your destination. Then try taking melatonin several hours before bedtime for several days once you arrive at your destination.

What about pain in my ears?

If your ears hurt when you fly, try taking a decongestant medicine (such as pseudoephedrine) before you get on the plane. You can also swallow often and chew gum during the flight. Talk to your doctor about taking any kind of medication.

Picture taking

You're on a mission trip and you want to take pictures for a power point presentation at your church when you return home. But do you point your camera at people you do not know in the US and take their picture? We need to be sensitive to the people around us and treat them with the same respect and dignity that we treat people in the US. ASK.

TRIP LOGISTICS

We will meet at the airport and check in together. Be prepared for a long flight. Regardless of the route we take, we usually have long flights and long layovers. Bring whatever you need to be most comfortable for this part of the journey.

When you arrive in Mumbai at the international terminal, you will pass through immigration, where they will check your passport and visa. Do not wear any Serve the Children or religious apparel. **Very important- You will probably be asked why you are going to Lasina and who will you be visiting. You are visiting Kiron and Nalini Gaikwad and they are your friends.**

At baggage claim, we will pick up our luggage and clear customs. Once this is done, we need to catch a bus to the domestic terminal. The wait for the bus can take an hour and the ride takes about 30 minutes (6 miles away). The airport is hot and crowded, which can be very challenging after such a long journey.

We can exchange US dollars to rupees and eat while we wait for our flight. We will fly to Nagpur (about 90 minutes away). Once in Nagpur, we pick up our luggage and head out the door, where we'll be met by Ankoor staff. We will split into two teams and ride in vans for about 3.5 hours to get to Lasina. You will pass by scenes of poverty, all kinds of vehicles and animals on the road. Driving is a sport in India so if you struggle with unique driving patterns, I suggest you close your eyes. Once we arrive at Lasina, we will learn how to use the bathrooms (no paper products down the toilet), introduce the housekeepers, and review the agenda for the next day and rest.

Breakfast is around 7.30 AM but the kids are up singing at 5.30am. You can either drink water, tea or coffee. We will be served chai 3 times a day. We want to develop daily habits of praying as a team so we begin each day praying together. We will have a short devotional and business meeting after we eat.

After breakfast on the first day, we will tour the property and get a feel for where we will be working. We might visit some classrooms and meet with the staff. After this we will eat lunch which normally consists of leftovers.

The afternoon is typically the hottest time of day. You will need to remind yourself and your teammates to drink plenty of water, lather on the sunscreen and bug-spray, and wear a hat when outdoors. The sun burns quickly in the 90 plus degree heat. You will need to drink more water the first few days as you adjust.

Napping, talking, playing with the children, playing cards and writing in your journal will easily complete your day until dinner.

Dinner varies, but almost every night you will eat rice and chicken. Most of the food is grown on site. You are expected to eat the food out of respect for our cooks. Illness, food

allergies or sensitivities or a queasy stomach are exceptions. The food can be spicier than you are used to at home.

Every evening there is a chapel service consisting of prayer, lots of robust singing and a teaching time. Normally we are responsible for some of this. The children love skits and it would be great to perform some for them.

After chapel service we will usually go over what we did during the day, what we need to do differently and what our plans are for the next day. Evenings cool down to the 80's and sometimes we might see a temperature in the 70's. Once you adjust, you will be surprised at how cold 75 degrees can be.

We will travel the 20 minutes to Yavatmal for supplies and shopping a couple of times. There is no "tourist" type shopping here as we are very remote and far off the beaten track. Scarves, polo shirts, Indian clothes such as a sari and sandals are a few of the items you can purchase.

What will we do there?

Activities while at ACH can vary. You must plan ahead for your time there so you are prepared.

1. Child sponsorship program- STC uses sponsorships to support our staff in both countries where we serve. Each team member is asked to find five people who will commit to sponsoring a child. You will find a child for each of them while you're there. You can also help update our sponsorship information on children currently sponsored. We need team members to photograph children currently sponsored, get a letter from them to their sponsor and interview new children for sponsorship.
2. Chapel services- be prepared to lead at least ten chapel services. This includes music (teaching a new song or leading the singing with a guitar or CD), message and a skit. The children love skits.
3. Sports- be prepared to lead some outdoor activities like group games. The regular water balloon fight is a great tradition to follow.
4. Classroom- read stories, read poems, teach phonics, math, art and other crafts.
5. Picture taking and display- the children love to have their pictures taken and see their picture displayed on the TV screen using a PowerPoint program.
6. Cooking- you can join in on the cooking and learn some great ways to cook Indian food for your friends when you return home.

CULTURAL ENTRY

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

- As you enter a new culture and begin to make observations and experience life in a new setting, you will either find this to be a positive time of growth or a very difficult and frustrating time.
- Let go of expectations. Let the Lord speak to you. Let Him reveal new things to you about Himself, yourself and others. Be flexible. Keep a journal and maintain a daily quiet time. Lean on the Lord.
- Rather than being suspicious, fearful, prejudiced or feeling superior, try to see things with openness, acceptance, trust and adaptability. It is inevitable that you will feel uncomfortable as you live in a new cultural setting. At times, you may become frustrated or feel misunderstood, confused, tense or embarrassed. This is to be expected. It is your response to these emotions that will determine a negative or positive outcome. Rather than rationalize, criticize or isolate yourself, try to observe, inquire and listen. If you do, you will find that you will establish a rapport with the people and empathy for their plight rather than alienate yourself through withdrawal.
- Don't assume anything. Ask questions and observe. You will be stretched.
- Cultural differences exist all around you, some are visible.
- Cultural beliefs are not visible but they govern the thoughts of the people. Women care for the home and children. Men work outside the home, if they're lucky. Many Christian churches teach against dancing, drinking, smoking, excessive make-up and jewelry and hold to varying degrees of legalism about these matters. The society is event versus time-oriented. Punctuality is not a priority. Assertiveness, loud and aggressive behaviors are not considered admirable traits.
- The purpose of your short-term mission is to be a support to the STC staff and children and be a witness to Christ. It is about dying to self and living for Christ for two weeks. It is about being sensitive to the culture. If it means wearing a long skirt, or removing an earring or eating a food that you are not particularly fond of...just do it... for the Lord. You will be blessed.

(Portions taken from Intervarsity STIM Manual)

Hindu Religion

Hinduism may be categorized as either a distinct culture or as a particular religion. As a religion, it is extremely difficult to define. There is no record of any founder, there is no central leader, they do not have a church, they do not send out missionaries. Hinduism developed over a very long time and absorbed many diverse religious cultures.

Hindu people call it *vaidika dharma*, the Vedic religion or *sanatama dharma*, the eternal religion. Hindus are born into their religion. Those who practice Hinduism are very selective, choosing what they want from any cultural source and blending (syncretism) it into their religion. The Hindu religion is very vague about its beliefs.

One of the definite tenets of the Hindu religion is the caste system. This system sets the Hindu religion apart from all other religions in the world.

Hindu society is divided into four main castes:

- Brahmins*- priests and teachers
- Kshatriyas*- warriors and rulers
- Vaisyas*- economic wealth producers
- Sudras*- serfs and laborers

Below this 4th level, there are probably millions of outcasts who are called untouchables.

The main theological belief of Hinduism is centered in one omnipresent, divine being called Brahma. Belief in Brahma is a diversified mixture of theism, polytheism and pantheism.

In the Hindu view, rebirth, reincarnation or transmigration will take place in the lives of all creatures. Karma is simply the fruit of every Hindu's past merits and demerits. Being bad will reap suffering and bondage in a person's existence. Good actions can lead to freedom from this bondage.

The process by which an individual passes through reincarnation is called samsara. Reincarnation is a natural principle of the universe involving man and animals. Everyone carries a piece of their past with them. The main purpose in life of all Hindus is to escape from this endless wheel of samsara and karma.

The Hindu religion is not concerned with the soul's relationship to God or to other souls. It is only concerned with the eternal being of the soul. The soul is eternal. It is not limited to mankind but is the true essence of all living things including plants and animals.

The soul does not act and thus is not an agent of sin. There is not personal moral guilt. Sin is not the personal guilt that it is for a Christian.

Salvation in Hinduism is the separation of the eternal soul from the phenomenal world. It is release from samsara and from the bondage of karma. In Christianity, deliverance from sin and death is through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Hindus claim that the ultimate reality is essentially unknowable. They recognize the right of everyone to believe in whatever way of life they may choose. This is contrary to what Christians believe. In John 14:6 Jesus states that "I am the Truth." Jesus says in John 8:32 that "the Truth will set you free." Only from a revealed religion can we know the Truth. Hinduism is not a revealed religion.

Hindus believe that gods are merely a projection of human will, desire and thought. There are estimates of over 300,000,000 Hindu gods in existence!

God loves Hindus. We need to approach Hindus on the common ground of love.

Tribal Religions

Though Hinduism is the predominant religion of India, many of the children who come to the Ankoor Home are not Hindu, but come from a background of tribal religious practices. These include ancestor worship and animal sacrifice. You may see the places of sacrifice when you visit a village. Many villages also practice witchcraft.

SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Your spiritual life could be challenged on a mission trip. Lack of privacy, a different schedule of activities (eating times, work, etc), and lack of sleep can impact your time with the Lord. But you must adapt your new situation to your daily time with God. I get up early in the morning to pray and find time in the evening for Bible reading. This time comes very naturally when I combine it with updating my journal.

We cannot emphasize the importance of having a daily quiet time. Satan will be doing his best to keep you away from God. If he succeeds, this will impact the team and the goals of our trip. Read Ephesians 6:10-19. Be prepared for spiritual warfare! This applies equally as you prepare to go on the trip and after you come home.

Bring a simple devotional along with you. Set the pace for your roommates by having a daily devotional. Let them see how important this is to you.

Be prepared to share your faith with the people that we come in contact with. Most of our staff are Christians but you can find some non-Christians in the outreach that you might be involved with.

Writing a 3-5 minute personal testimony is easy. You do not have to create a theological discourse to explain how you came to know Christ. Talk about how your life was before you became a Christian, explain how you became a Christian and end with a verse that has a special meaning to you or talk about the importance of Christ in your life now.

BUT REMEMBER: India is a Hindu country and Christians are persecuted by radical Hindus in many areas. We do not want to endanger our hosts or create future problems for them. We can leave – they cannot. If someone in Yavatmal or in a village we are visiting asks why we are there, the usual response is that we help the children at Ankoor with their English. We do not actively share our faith unless we are asked by our hosts to do so in an appropriate environment.

COMMUNICATIONS

Emergency contact- We will provide you with a name and phone number to give to your family so if an emergency occurs at home, they can call the number and we will be contacted. There is a 12.5 hour time zone difference depending on Daylight Savings Time.

Facebook- The easiest form of communications of what the team is doing is to have your friends and family join the Serve the Children group site on Facebook. This is updated regularly during the mission trip.

Internet services- While in India, we will have limited access to the internet. However, this should not become a consuming event that impacts team unity. You are not on vacation. Your cell phones might work in India but the cost will probably be high.

Cell Phone use- Can you use your cell phone in India? Maybe. You can contact your phone company and see if you are covered in India. However, check out the rates at the same time. We suggest you leave your phone at home.

Email updates- if your family and friends are not on Facebook, we can update them by email so they can be aware of what you are doing. Please provide their names and email addresses.

I want to emphasize that you are in India on a mission trip and you need to focus on the team and why we are here. Do not plan on spending all of your free time chatting with your friends in the US; that is not the reason you are in India.

WHY RAISE SUPPORT?

- **A Prayer Team Will Result**

When people are challenged to give financially, they are likely to pray for you, too.

- **Your Faith Will Grow**

Support raising is a faith journey. When days go by and your support level does not increase, you may be tempted to question your call to missions. Those are the days when you will be challenged to step forward in faith that God has called you and in His time will supply every need. You will learn how to adapt to divergent, difficult, and sometime desperate circumstances. That's when you realize that you are so limited and God is so limitless.

- **It Broadens the Missionary Vision for you and your church**

The best recruiter for world missions is the missionary yourself. When you meet face-to-face with others, you are able to communicate your vision and your call. Your enthusiasm and dedication stimulates and challenges interest and involvement in missions.

How to Raise Support:

1. **PRAY that God will lead** you and your team in looking for the resources for this trip. The cost of this trip is tax deductible.
2. **EVALUATE your contribution.** Other team members can tell you the surprising places God provides money (unexpected refund checks, garage sales, extra income opportunities). Challenge yourself to plan ahead, evaluate what sacrifices you can make in the next few months to contribute toward your trip.
3. **LOOK outside of your church.** Friends, relatives, co-workers and neighbors, whether they are Christians or not, will feel blessed to invest in you and God's leading in your life. Seek out their support. Many people are looking for opportunities to invest in someone else's life and help a good cause. Use Facebook and other social media sites.
4. **ASK inside your church to see if your** small group or ministry team friends would pray about God's leading to give you prayer and/or financial help for this opportunity. Do not give requests to people that do not know you personally unless they hear of your need and want to be a part of your team.
5. **DEVELOP your financial supporters** into prayer supporters. Use the Prayer Covenant form (included in this book) to gather prayer team members. Your prayer partner can keep a copy of the covenant to remind them to pray for you. They should return one to you so that you know that you have prayer supporters lifting you up each day during the trip.

RE-ENTRY

RE-ENTRY is the experience you will have as you return to your home, family and friends. You may have experienced changed attitudes and values. The greater the change in attitudes and values, the more unsettling the **RE-ENTRY** to your personal home culture will be.

Although you may not realize the impact this short-term mission has had on you, there are a few things to consider:

- The things you have experienced here are very unique. Some people will never have such an impacting experience in their entire life. As you go home, it will be as though you were in a time-warp...so much has happened to you, while it has been 'life as usual' for most of the people you know back home.
- Roles that you have assumed here that have been significant and important may not carry the same value back home. In fact, they may serve no purpose at all.
- Values you have maintained all your life may come into question. You may feel convicted about certain things you have always done or become disturbed by things that others say or do. Things that once seemed very important may suddenly appear trivial or meaningless.
- Though people may ask you, "How was your trip?" many do not really want to know the details. Not everyone will share your enthusiasm and want to hear about your trip.
- It is important to connect with your team mates after you return to help you adjust.

The following are some ways that people deal with **RE-ENTRY** and the above reactions

ALIENATE (negative)

- Assume the: "Nobody understands. Nobody cares." attitude
- Withdraw or become an elite group that excludes others
- Become depressed, judgmental, critical

ASSIMILATE (negative)

- Compartmentalize the experience. It is over. Check it off the calendar and get on with life as though nothing significant happened
- Dive into diversions: movies, malls, activities
- Channel your desire to do something by overcompensating or assuming 'black and white' mentality
- Be tough and untouched

INTEGRATE (positive)

- Use lessons from your experience as a springboard for positive growth and change
- Search for platforms where you can share your experience with a selective audience
- Become a “bridge” between your experience and how those at home can benefit from it
- Use your experience as a tool for evangelism
- Be a spokesperson sharing with others so they can ‘catch the vision’ of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20

There are more positive ways for you to handle your transition back to life at home. Here are some steps you can take before and when you return that will help things go smoothly:

- Prepare for re-entry shock
- Pray and listen to God
- Journal and re-read your mission journal one day at a time
- Become a good listener with others. Be interested in their lives
- Prepare a ‘snapshot’ of your trip
- Become a story-teller. Learn to salt your speech to make others thirsty
- Seize the opportunity to share with that person that really wants to listen
- Get together with others from your team that shared the same experience
- Be a point of strength by living out your newly identified values at home
- Remember successes and accomplishments
- Use the ‘talents’ God has given you
- Write a note of thanks and share your experience with everyone who received your request for support letter
- Eat well, rest and exercise. Understand that you will probably feel a physical letdown upon your return as well
- Realize that long-term changes may take time and patience
- Continue to make plans to impact your life and the lives of others
- Make the minutes of your life count for eternity

Prepare a five minute testimony to give when your friends ask you about the trip. Invite anyone interested to meet with and look at your pictures or make copies of your journal and pass these out. Refer people to the Serve the Children web site and recruit people to sponsor children, donate to STC or consider going on a mission trip with us.

Be prepared for flashbacks or re-runs; memories of your trip that were negative-the poverty that you witnessed, malnutrition of the children, etc. Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people or to children? Do you serve a big God who cares for you or a little god who cares nothing about you? You will be forced to ponder these questions and more.

(Portions taken from Intersivity STIM Manual)

CONTINUING YOUR MISSION INVOLVEMENT
WONDERING HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN YOUR CORNER OF THE WORLD?

Discover Your Unique Life Mission

“What do I need to do next after a mission trip?”

- God has a mission for the world and is already working to reach out to the hopeless, hurting, and lost people groups. He has invited us to respond to his call to join Him at work around the world.
- We don't want you to develop an interest in going on multiple short-term trips for adventure travel. We want to help you develop a heart for your world.
- You have something unique to give! God desires to use your gifts, passions and life experiences as a unique life mission to the world. To where or to whom will it be?

“What is a unique life mission?”

It is allowing God to use your gifts and abilities, life and vocational experiences (both the good and the bad), and passions and interests for the Great Commission of reaching out to people with Christ's love.

Plan your schedule for the next 30 days by committing to some of these suggestions. Keep these commitments with you as a reminder in discovering your life mission.

1. PRAY FOR A WORLD VISION

*"When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to his followers, "There are many people to harvest but only a few workers to help harvest them. **Pray to the Lord**, who owns the harvest, that he will send more workers to gather his harvest." Matthew 9:36-38*

- Pray for 5 friends, family members or neighbors that need a relationship with Jesus. Include someone of a different ethnicity than your own. How can God use your recent mission trip experience to expand your vision locally?
- Ask God daily for the next month: "Help me see the world the way you do."
- What can you volunteer for to help Serve the Children?
- Pray for your passion issues globally (i.e. abortion, homeless children, health, and women's shelters).
- Turn your current life roles (Little League coach, consistent customer, employee, neighbor, etc.) into a mission field. Ask God to give you opportunities to share God's love in practical serving ways and to share a bit of your faith story with them.

2. CONSIDER WHERE YOUR LIFE DREAMS COLLIDE WITH THE WORLD'S NEEDS

- Ask yourself: What would I do for God if I knew I couldn't fail? Then write it down! Commit to praying about that dream.
- Read the international sections of the newspapers. (The Bible tells us what God wants to do in the world: the newspaper tells us where He needs to do it and where we need to be involved through our prayers.)
- Pray daily for the staff of Serve the Children.

3. GET CONNECTED

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."
Hebrews 10:24*

- Invite a speaker from Serve the Children to your church, Sunday School class, small group or Bible study
- Volunteer some time in your church (Need: administrative help, phone calling, special projects)
- Commit to sponsoring a child or staff person at Serve the Children.
- Take a next step in leadership. How would you like to lead a short-term trip for Serve the Children? Contact dougc@servethechildren.com.

4. EXPLORE THE NEXT STEPS

"My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring." I John 3:18

- Lead out in an opportunity to practically serve in the community. Encourage other members to participate with you.
- Meet with a staff person of Serve the Children or your church to discuss in greater detail how God wants to use your unique shape for life mission around the world.
- Tell your mission story. Encourage others to step out in faith and be stretched to see and experience their world in whole new ways. Have a "Chai Night" info party for your friends, relatives and supporters when you return to introduce them to the children who need sponsors and tell them what you saw and did.
- Serve the Children has many openings for volunteers. We would love to talk to you about using your skills in our organization.

We all know money is not everything. You worked hard to raise money for your two week mission trip. Now what? Do not stop being engaged. Consider the following options:

1. Sponsor a child and ask your friends, relatives and donors to your mission trip to sponsor a child
2. Volunteer- Serve the Children needs you. We have fundraisers and we need help as well as occasional office support
3. Recruit future mission team members for Serve the Children

SERVE THE CHILDREN
SHORT TERM MISSION POLICIES AND TEAM COVENANT

I realize that the following principles are crucial to the effectiveness, quality and safety of our mission together. As a member of the short-term mission team, I agree to adhere to these policies:

1. Remember that I am a representative of SERVE THE CHILDREN (STC) and the church I attend, and as such I will seek to represent good spiritual values, moral conduct and a likeness to Christ that is embraced in that assembly. I will adhere to the STC Mission Statement and Statements of Faith and Belief in my conduct and conversation.
2. Remember that I have come not only to teach, but also to learn. I may be exposed to procedures and practices that I feel are ineffective or insufficient. I may also be confronted by attitudes that I feel are narrow or close-minded. As this occurs I will resist the temptation to "correct" my hosts and inform them about "how things are done back in the United States."
3. Respect my host's culture and distinctive practices of Christianity. I recognize that the Christian faith has many different faces throughout the world, and that one of the purposes of my trip is to witness and experience faith lived out in a different culture.
4. Develop and consistently maintain a servant's attitude toward all nationals and my teammates.
5. Respect our team leader(s) and their decisions and the guidance of our host country staff.
6. Refrain from gossip and keep my promise of giving only good reports. If there are policies and decisions made by the leaders with which I disagree or do not understand, I will go to the team leaders in private and make my concerns known to them rather than to other team members. In so doing I will avoid the possibility of sowing seeds of dissension and division. If someone on the team offends me I promise to remain silent and forgive the person before God in my heart (Mk. 11:25), allowing love to cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), or go to the person privately and seek reconciliation. I will resolve to approach an offender in the spirit of gentleness and genuine love, having first corrected my own attitude and actions (Gal. 6: 1, 2). Only if I am unable to restore an offender will I share the problem with others according to the principles of Matthew 18: 15-20. When I violate these aforementioned principles, I resolve to ask the forgiveness of my brother or sister and the Lord, knowing that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). By doing all these things I will seek to promote harmony on my team.
7. Be patient, forbearing and forgiving toward the short-comings of the other members on the team.
8. Refrain from complaining. I realize that travel can present numerous unexpected and undesirable circumstances, but the rewards of conquering such circumstances should be my goal. I will resolve to be flexible, supporting and adaptive on such occasions rather than grumbling when circumstances are difficult.
9. Respect the work that is going on in the host country with its pastors and leaders. I realize that our team will be there for just a short time, but the local church and ministry is there long term. I will respect their knowledge, insights and instructions.
10. Refrain from negative comments or hostile discussions concerning the host country's politics and culture.
11. Remember not to be exclusive in my relationships with the team. If my best friend or spouse is on the team we will make every effort to interact regularly with all team members of the team.
12. Refrain from activity or undue interest that could be construed as a romantic interest toward a national. I realize that certain actions that seem innocent in my own culture may be inappropriate in another culture.
13. Refrain from any consumption of alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine, and liquors. While this is not an attempt to bind the conscience, I understand that such indulgence may cause another to stumble. I realize and accept that failure to adhere to this mandate will result in my exclusion from further short-term trips with STC.
14. Refrain from use of any tobacco or tobacco related products while on this trip. This is due to the different cultural or religious views of tobacco usage the team may encounter and I do not want to hurt my witness or the team's testimony.
15. Remember my financial commitment as a team member and to STC in choosing to be a part of this team.
16. Attend team meetings in the US and in the country where I am serving.
17. I will help with fundraising activities for the team as much as my schedule will allow. All pictures or videos that I am in are the property of STC.

I understand that if I cannot abide by this covenant, I may be asked to return home early at my own expense and will not have any funds that were spent on this mission trip returned to me.

Signature _____ *Date* _____

**SERVE THE CHILDREN
SHORT TERM MISSIONS APPLICATION**

PERSONAL INFORMATION-Name must be as it appears on your passport

Date _____

Name on passport _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____ Date of Birth _____

Passport Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Height _____ Weight _____ Hair Color _____ Eye Color _____

Physical identification marks _____

Spouse name _____ Spouse phone _____

Nearest relative _____ Relationship _____

(Emergency contact)

Address _____ Phone _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Doctor's name _____ Phone _____

Office address _____

Medical insurance company _____ Phone _____

Plan name and number _____ Travel coverage? _____

If you are presently under a doctor's care for treatment and/or medication now or in the past two years, describe care and medication (attach additional page if needed). _____

Describe any allergies or problems relating to food, medicine, heat or lifting. _____

Do you smoke or use tobacco? _____

Would you have trouble walking 2 miles carrying your suitcase? _____

If yes, explain _____

Describe any health problems _____

CHURCH INFORMATION

How long a Christian? _____ How long at your current Church _____

Positions or involvement include: _____

A close friend that is active at your church is _____ Phone _____

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Employer _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Your position _____ How long? _____

Describe any duties that might relate to this trip _____

MISC. INFORMATION

Describe any skills and proficiency _____

List present and past leadership positions _____

Foreign countries you have been to _____

Foreign languages you speak _____

Do you have the personal funds or access to funds to pay for this trip? ____

Will you need help to pay for this trip? ____

Can you help with fundraising activities for the team? ____

EMERGENCY RELEASE AND RIGHT OF REPRESENTATION

I, _____, in consideration of my participation on this mission trip to India, represent and agree that:

- 1. I am prepared physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually for this trip. The scheduling, environment and other foreign country and travel conditions are not adverse to me. I will be flexible and have a servant attitude.
- 2. I grant to any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents the right to represent me in decisions relating to my welfare or the group welfare during the trip. I will follow the suggestions made on my behalf.
- 3. I understand the administrative role that Serve the Children plays in putting together our mission trip. I also understand that the mission trip could be handled by a contracted agent of Serve the Children in country and the contracted agent of Serve the Children will be responsible for the trip and the team.
- 4. I hereby grant any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents my permission to authorize medical treatment and medication on my behalf. I will not hold any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents responsible for the results of such treatment, medications or decisions made on my behalf.
- 5. I am aware of the hazards and risks to myself and property associated with this mission trip. I have read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory (if any) for this country found at <http://travel.state.gov/travel>. These risks include, but are not limited to, death or injury by accident, disease, terrorist acts, weather conditions, and inadequate medical services and supplies. I accept these conditions with full awareness and I assume all risks of death, injury, illness, terrorist assaults and personal property loss or damage associated with such risks.
- 6. I attest and certify that I am physically fit and have no medical conditions that would prevent me from performing my assigned duties which may include long hikes, high altitude, and heat, limited and infrequent meals. I am aware of the disease risks associated with foreign travel and I accept these risks.
- 7. I waive any and all claims for damages against Serve The Children leaders or their contracted agents, arising from death, injury, illness, inconvenience, or in property damage or loss occurring as a result of this mission trip for any reason including but not limited to any negligent act or acts of Serve The Children leaders or their contracted agents which may in any way cause death, injury, illness, inconvenience, or property damage or loss to me. I have read this release in its entirety, understand its contents and agree to them of my own free will.
- 8. Governing Law/Venue: In accepting service from us, this agreement shall be governed only by the laws of the State of Washington. Venue for any action hereunder shall be in Pierce County of the State of Washington.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent signature if minor _____ Date _____

Please return to: Serve the Children along with your application and covenant

Sample Fundraising Letter

Dear (name):

Make your first paragraph a personal greeting and introduction.

God has opened the door for me to go on a short-term mission trip to India with Serve the Children in October, 20XX. We will be working at the Ankoor Children's Home in Lasina which is located in central India. I will be involved with the (education, recreation, medical team) as we work with the children that live in the home.

You can find out more about the ministries of Serve the Children by visiting their web page at www.servethechildren.com.

This is a team project, and you are needed on the team. First, I need to have a prayer team in the US supporting me while I am on the trip. Would you be willing to sign a prayer covenant and committing to praying everyday for me and the team while we are gone?

Second, please pray to God about becoming a financial partner with me in this project. The total cost is \$xxx. Would you consider investing \$xx to help me pay for this trip? Much of the cost of the trip is due by August 1, 20XX.

If you would like to join me in this, please make your check payable to "Serve the Children." Either return your check to me or you can send it directly to Serve the Children, 4423 Pt Fosdick Dr NW #202, Gig Harbor, WA 98335. Just place my name on the memo line of the check and the funds will be directed to my account. Your payment is tax deductible.

If I do not hear from you by _____, I will attempt to contact you to see what you have decided. I can answer any questions you may have at that time.

You are very important to me. Thank-you for praying about being a part of my team.

Letter tips:

4. Avoid mass produced letters
5. Avoid long words and sentences
6. Establish a deadline
7. Mention the amount of money that you need. Maybe suggest an amount to give
8. If you have been on a mission trip before, briefly explain to your supporters how the trip changed your life or impacted you personally
9. Follow-up

*Serve the Children
Mission Trip to India
Prayer Partner Covenant*

I do hereby covenant to pray daily for _____
from this date until they return from the mission trip. Further, I will pray for safety for
the mission team, that God will work in their lives and for the people they are serving.

Your Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

www.servethechildren.com

Cut here- keep one copy for yourself and return one copy to your prayer partner

*Serve the Children
Mission Trip to India
Prayer Partner Covenant*

I do hereby covenant to pray daily for _____
from this date until they return from the mission trip. Further, I will pray for safety for
the mission team, that God will work in their lives and for the people they are serving.

Your Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

www.servethechildren.com

CHECKLIST

Name _____

_____ Application (enclosed)

_____ Emergency Release Form (enclosed)

_____ Covenant (enclosed)

_____ Immunization record- have you scheduled your vaccinations?

_____ Passport- Check and confirm that it is current (6 months or more before the expiration date) or order one today. Make a copy for the team leader.

_____ 2 Passport sized photos

_____ Visa Application- complete this on-line

_____ Mail application in with required forms

_____ Down payment of \$500

_____ Payment in full

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Overlake Christian Church Short Term Mission Trip Team Leader Training Manual, Bellevue: 2004.

This Mission Team Book could not have been created without the personal short term mission experiences of the board members of Serve the Children. Also, Dr. Chung of Faith Seminary in Tacoma has provided valuable insights and suggestions that made this book more complete.

HISTORY OF SERVE THE CHILDREN

Dr. Doug Collier

Purpose of Serve the Children

Serve the Children (STC) exists to improve the future of children by meeting their educational, emotional and physical needs in a Biblically based environment. STC provides tuition free education, one meal a day, basic medical care and counseling to needy children in the West African nation of Liberia. In central India, STC gives poor children from villages too small to have a public school the opportunity to attend a school in a larger village. They stay at a children's home during the school year, where they are provided with free room and board, school supplies, clothing and medical care.

The public education system is not free in Liberia and India. The children are required to wear school uniforms by law and the cost might be more than the total earnings the family makes in a month. Add to this the testing fees, school supplies and books, and a family earning from eighty cents to one dollar a day cannot afford to send their child to school. Because of subsistence living, they cannot afford to lose a productive member of the family for the sake of an education. For example, a ten year old child in India can earn one dollar a day working in the fields instead of going to school. That dollar pays for food the family would not otherwise be able to afford.

Liberia - All God's Children Schools

The groundwork for Serve the Children began in 1996 when a Tacoma area photographer who was covering the civil war in Liberia returned home during a break in the fighting. He met with his brother and me, telling us stories about the estimated 30,000-40,000 war orphans in the capital city of Monrovia. These orphans had no opportunity to return to school because the educational system had been destroyed. The only option left to these children was to return to fighting.

The two brothers and I decided to create a 501(c) (3) organization in Tacoma, Washington and raise money to finance a free school for war orphans, ex-combatants and other children who were too poor to pay for school. The organization was named All God's Children. The first All God's Children school was opened in the capital city of Monrovia in 1997, and served 125 children. Almost all of these children were ex-combatants. The vivid accounts told by these children are the kind of stories that people write books about and make into movies.

In 1999, three additional schools were opened in rural areas of Liberia. A \$100,000 grant was received from ADRA (Adventist Relief Agency) out of Sweden, which was used to build one site, remodel another, and rent two buildings. These funds were also used to pay for the staff and all of the supplies. Almost 4,000 children who had no other access to education were served during this time, receiving education, counseling and food.

The schools stayed open except when they were forced to close due to fighting and looting. One of the rural schools was destroyed when fighting broke out in the area in 2000. Most of the staff except for one teacher were lost and STC never heard what happened to the children, only that they fled into the jungle. Another school was overrun in 2003, and when the conflict neared the capital in June of 2003, the remaining two schools were forced to close.

The schools were looted numerous times during the first six years of operation. The children used pieces of slate for their lessons, since paper was so hard to get and too expensive to buy. Slate also allowed for a portable school strategy in some very basic places when they had to move due to armed fighting.

After the war ended in August 2003, two schools were reopened. One school is in the Sinkor District of Monrovia, located on the beach of Atlantic Ocean. It has a three story building with approximately 1,500 square feet per floor, one small outbuilding with a couple of lean to additions, a latrine building, a well and a generator for electricity. Running water is available Monday through Friday from around 9am to 3pm and occasionally on weekends. We can also draw water from a well located on the school grounds by a hand pump.

The classrooms are on the first two floors of the main building. The third floor has dormitory style bedrooms, two bathrooms and a dining room, and is used to house visiting mission teams. The kitchen and laundry area are both in lean to additions and the compound is surrounded by a fourteen foot wall. The classroom windows do not have glass in them. The windows had to be covered with bricks to help secure the school to prevent looting. The classrooms receive some light through slots in the bricks, but they are still very dark. Learning is difficult when trying to read in a dark environment. In 2014, the city started providing electricity to the Sinkor district. It is reasonably dependable. However, we own a generator and use it only as needed when local electricity is not available.

To maximize space utilization; there are two sessions at the school in Monrovia. Both sessions combine to serve over 650 children. The morning session has children from pre-school through the sixth grade. Children through the ninth grade attend the afternoon session. Most of the classes have forty students. In 2013, we started a high school at our Sinkor location funded by our PTA and local contributions.

There is also a rural school located at Gate 15 of the Firestone Rubber Tree Plantation. We purchased this land in 1999 and constructed a new school here (replacing a building

that Firestone allowed us to use) in 2012. Over 350 children are served at the 15 Gate School. There is no electricity or running water but we do own a generator. 15 Gate is a crossroads about thirty miles from of Monrovia. This school is the only one in the area and some of the children walk three hours one way to get an education. The school's staff estimates that there are 250 more school age children living in the surrounding community who have no access to education.

The Mahn Bahn Civic Compound School (we call it Civil Compound) had to close due to the fighting in 2003. It was located in a very rural area of Liberia where there had never been a school. During the fighting it became too dangerous for the staff to go there.

I visited the site of this school in 2004 with an escort from the United Nations, since the area was not yet considered secure. The building had been completely destroyed. So great was the desire for education, however, that five classes were still meeting. They were found in a one room church of about 800 square feet. Over 100 children were crammed into this room, with separate blackboards for each of the classes. They had no supplies and the teachers did not have any textbooks. The teachers gathered their classes around a blackboard and the children memorized the lesson from the board. The teachers were the only hope that these children had for an education. It was a very emotional moment for me, as well as for the United Nations personnel.

STC received a \$30,000 grant from a Belgian organization to rebuild this school. The school building consists of 6 classrooms, offices for the teachers and principal, a well and a latrine. The local people donated the land and helped in the construction. They wanted to be involved in their children's education.

Our three schools serve over 1,300 children, with about sixty paid Liberian staff members. Approximately 1,000 children are on the waiting list for the All God's Children Schools. The Liberian Ministry of Education has rated the teachers as some of the best trained instructors in the country. They make around \$85 US per month. There is also a full time Christian counselor on staff to help the children at the schools deal with the trauma they experienced during the war.

Many of the children witnessed atrocities against their families and friends. Some are ex-combatants who committed atrocities themselves. Since the fighting lasted fourteen years, most of these children have never experienced anything but war during their lives. Their bright eyes and smiles hide a lot of fear. They like to have visitors hold their hands and hug them. I enjoy making them laugh and just sitting with them. The older kids love to ask questions about life in the United States. Many of them go to a Liberian version of a movie theater, which is simply a darkened room with a television and a DVD player. For a small price, they can watch American movies.

It is sad that these children learn about America from Hollywood's point of view. Their ideas of America are far from reality. They call Liberia 'Little Hell,' but America is 'Little Heaven.' The children see America as their only hope for a better life and many

of them base this view on the Hollywood image they have of the United States. Through everything they do, it is STC's goal to give these children hope for a better future for their lives in Liberia.

There is a full time nurse on staff to provide basic medical needs for the children and staff. The children need to be de-wormed regularly and thirty to forty children suffer from malaria each month. Several students die from malaria each year. Unhappily, there is no hope for a staff person or a child that has a major medical problem. Quality medical care in Liberia is not available. The hospitals open in Liberia cannot handle involved surgeries, so the staff member or child dies if they have a major medical problem. Cost of any care for the average Liberian is out of their financial reach.

School children in Liberia are required by law to wear uniforms. Almost all of the children have only two changes of clothes; their school uniform and one other outfit. They have one pair of shoes, and they use these for school. Some of the children in the morning session share their shoes with children in the afternoon session. A few of them have one or two toys at home. They sleep on a mat on a dirt or cement floor.

The schools operate with over sixty Liberian staff, which includes a principal at each school. The Country Director for All God's Children Schools is Sackie Kwalalon, who is a Liberian national that has worked for STC since 1997. He is responsible for the operation of the schools and reports to the STC Board of Directors. He currently lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and two children and visits Liberia for three months each year. He communicates regularly with the staff in Liberia via phone and email.

STC has achieved many things since operations began in Liberia in 1997. However, we must continually plan ahead. The government of Liberia is emphasizing education as their top goal. It is hoped that a free public school system will soon be in place inside the capital city of Monrovia. STC needs to start looking at moving outside the capital where the needs are just as great, or transitioning toward a vocational education system. In 2012, we purchased 7 acres of land at Mt. Barclay and will eventually raise funds to build a school there.

Previous short term mission teams have made a huge impact in the lives of the staff and children. Here are some of the accomplishments STC can build on as they look to the future in Liberia.

- Reconciliation workshops - teaching staff and children that they do not have to use force to get what they want
- Hugs and holding hands - these children need to be shown love and are starving for physical affection
- Their presence - someone in the world cares for the children enough to travel two days just to be there
- Attention - reading books, walking home with them and playing games with them give these children hope
- HIV/Aids workshops

- Teacher training

Currently, we are raising funds and starting a farming operation at our 15 Gate and Civil Compound schools. We will sell the produce and use the funds to help cover operational costs. We will also be able to train our students in better agricultural methods.

India - Ankoor Children's Home

In 2004, All God's Children combined operations with Serve the Children Coalition, a ministry for village children in India. The organization's name was changed to Serve the Children while keeping the name All God's Children for the Liberian schools. In India, STC partners with Hosanna Ministries and operates as the Ankoor Children's Home (ACH). ACH is located on five acres that was donated to Hosanna Ministries by Kiron and Nalini Gaikwad, who operate the home.

The Ankoor Children's Home is based in Lasina, which is located in central India. Lasina is a very small village with two barbers, a couple of small one room stores, two tailors and a small elementary school. Yavatmal is the nearest town of any size and is located about twenty miles away, with a population of about 125,000 people. The nearest large city is Nagpur.

On the ACH campus, there is a guest house, boys' and girls' dormitories, classrooms, a kitchen, a multipurpose building, a well, a water tank and a pump for running water. There is limited electrical power that does not operate on a regular schedule. Usually we can expect to have electricity (called current in India) about 40 hours a week. This is completely dependent on the water supply (the impact of the yearly monsoons) and the electrical needs of the nearby cities that take priority of any available current over the needs of the rural communities such as Lasina. ACH does have a small battery backup system for electrical needs when required.

At ACH, free housing, meals, medical care, school supplies and clothing are provided for children from villages too small to have a school. The children live at the home during the school year so they can attend our on-site school. The older children travel to Yavatmal for high school and college classes. Kiron, Nalini, their son and four other adult staff members run the home and care for the children, giving them spiritual guidance and training for life. Nalini is a retired nurse from a local government hospital in Yavatmal and she provides basic medical care to the children and staff. Many times Nalini has taken a very sick child to the hospital and they have treated the child without cost. The hospital has also donated medical supplies to ACH. A doctor also visits the home regularly to address any medical needs.

We serve about 90 children at the home. About ten of these children are orphans and live at the home permanently. We also have an outreach to the community by offering tuition based educational opportunities to children in the surrounding villages, treating simple medical problems and conducting classes on hygiene and other topics.

Improving the future of children by meeting their educational, emotional and physical needs in a biblically based environment. 41

The children come from villages as far as 6 hours from Lasina by walking and riding a bus. They come from the lowest Hindu castes in India or from very poor tribal villages. Most of their homes are one room mud huts with tin or thatched roofs. When they first arrive at ACH, they are malnourished and covered with lice. Many are infested with intestinal worms and all of them need to be loved. Many of the children come from homes where both parents work all day in the fields to support their families. When the parents return home at night, they are exhausted and do not have time or energy to show their children affection or play with them.

At ACH the children's day begins at 5:30am with some amazing devotions, breakfast, then chores and study. The children attend school from 10:30am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday and on Saturday morning. Many other activities are provided for the children to help them develop into well rounded adults with life skills. These activities include games, singing and skits, and lessons in sewing, haircutting and gardening.

We also have a small herd of cows the children help with that give milk. This helps provide a good source of nutrition for the children, and the surplus milk is sold in the local village to help with operational costs. We also operate a small chicken farm that provides eggs and meat for the children and surplus eggs and meat to be sold locally making the home more self-sufficient.

In 2012, we purchased ten acres of farmland about one mile from the home. We use this land to raise crops that we sell in the local market, and our cows go there daily for grazing. The land is located on a small river and we plan to eventually pipe water from this river to our campus to provide a more secure source of water. Many times during the summer, the well on campus will go dry requiring our staff to purchase water.

The ACH children return to their villages during the summer break from April to July and tell their parents that they only want to have one God worshipped in their homes. They are witnesses to their families and their friends.

The children keep their entire store of belongings in small metal footlockers about the size of a medium suitcase. They might have two pairs of flip flops, an extra pair of pants and shirt or dress (other than their school uniform) and possibly one toy. It is depressing to look into these footlockers, but they are very proud of what they have. They have never had much, and they are being taught the great lesson of being thankful to God for what they do have.

Serving the Children

STC provides the only educational opportunities available to the children in the areas where they operate. This is a heavy responsibility and many decisions must be made. There are hundreds of children on the waiting list in Liberia, for example. They are being denied an education if quality for the few is stressed too highly over quantity for the

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many. Education changes the world one child at a time, but STC's donors expect results, and the organization must be result based for as many children as possible.

Considering the great education need, wise decisions on allocating resources must be made. Regardless of the difficulty in choosing allocation of resources, the local staff should make the call as much as possible. Learning to choose wisely is one way to help in-country staff develop into the leaders their country needs. Since one of the goals is to help native Liberians become self-sufficient, they must be given room to grow.

There are many more needy children in the villages of Central India that STC can serve. However, many families cannot send their children to live at the Ankoor Children's Home for the ten months of the school year. The children are needed to work in the fields to help support their families. Other families are able to send their children and want them to come, but ACH needs additional funding to support their needs.

Funding for STC operations comes from many sources. Over 130 children are sponsored at \$25 per month. There are approximately 8 staff members that are also sponsored at \$50 per month. Several churches and schools contribute to the needs and there are two yearly fundraisers that bring in about \$70,000. A few small grants have been received, but the majority of STC budget support comes from general donations.

God has shown his goodness by providing the funds necessary for STC to give these children hope and a future. In addition to meeting their physical and educational needs, STC's goal is to see them come to Christ and have an impact for the Lord in their families and communities. STC desires to help the children grow into positive and productive adults who make valuable contributions to their society. Through all STC does, they are also training the future leaders of Liberia and India.