



Sending Supporters: the forgotten partners

By Tory Ruark, Chief Operations Officer and STM coach at Standards of Excellence

In the summer of 2001, between my junior and senior years of college, I went on a mission trip to Zimbabwe and then spent the final 10 weeks living with a pastor and his family in Ensenada, Mexico. This was not a small undertaking. Decisions had to be made about summer income and paying tuition, a significant amount of money had to be raised, and that's to say nothing of the significance of what I was doing and the spiritual and emotional support it would require. Apart from seeking advice from my parents as plans were being made, I don't remember seeking help from others beyond asking for money.

I did raise all the money I needed, and I did so rather quickly. I remember sending out a first support letter, an update letter and then a second solicitation when I was about halfway funded. I'm pretty sure I also sent a small report in the mail when I returned. That was it. I don't have the list any more of those who gave, but I remember some of the people on the list. They included former missionaries, seminary professors, old prayer warriors who taught my Sunday School classes when I was young, college friends, pastors, extended family, and even my grandmother who had been a pastor's wife for more than half her life.

As I consider the topic for this issue of The HUB, I can't help but wonder how much I missed out on by only seeking financial support from these people? How much more did they have to give than just their money?

The book *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission* introduces the process trilogy and the participant trilogy. The authors create a nice chart that helps broaden our perspective when thinking of short-term missions (STM) beyond just the goer and the trip. For each STM participant there are literally dozens of what the book calls sending supporters.

| MISTM Grid Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission | | Process Trilogy | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|----------|------------|
| | | PRE-field | ON-field | POST-field |
| Participant Trilogy | SENDERS | | | |
| | Sending Supporters | | | |
| | Sending Entity | | | |
| | GOER-GUESTS | | | |
| | Goer-Guest Leaders | | | |
| | Goer-Guest Followers | | | |
| HOST-RECEIVER | | | | |
| Field Facilitators | | | | |
| Intended Receptors | | | | |

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What are sending supporters? Simply put, these are people who support the participant in going. We typically think only in terms of financial and prayer support, but there are many other ways. The house or dog sitter while you're gone, a spouse who takes care of the children by him or herself, the friend who takes you to the airport, the small group who listens to your stories when you return—all these and many, many more are sending supporters. For each participant, there are usually dozens of sending supporters and even more who would support if they realized the many ways they could! Imagine the impact of mobilizing so many people for more than just a check!

The MISTM Grid above helps us understand that sending supporters are important throughout the whole process of an STM trip—not just before it happens. As practitioners, we need to challenge ourselves to consider how sending supporters could impact participants during and after the trip, and then provide training and opportunities to help motivate and mobilize these valuable people. As we do, we not only increase the impact on the participant, but we also involve exponentially more people in the ministry and recruit new champions for our cause and for the Kingdom of God.

For more information on how to mobilize Sending Supporters, check out the featured items in this issue of The HUB including the Tip, [The Next Mile Mentor Guide](#), *Serving as Senders Today* by Neil Pirolo, and the SOE webinar called [“Sending Supporters: the forgotten partners”](#) on Tuesday, May 8, 2018.