

giving
global sojourns
circle

Southern Africa



connect empower transform

Ambassador Packet



Traveling to Africa is a powerful experience, especially when you have the opportunity to meet locals, listen to their stories and share in their lives.

We're thrilled that you are joining us on this adventure! As members of the Global Sojourns' Giving Circle, we have a common desire to "make the world a better place." One of the most effective ways to do this is to get out and learn about the issues first hand and make connections. And that's what you will be doing on this journey.

It means so much to those who are disadvantaged to know that you care and are willing to make the effort to learn about the issues they are facing and to come and meet them. Likewise, they are interested in getting to know you. At the end of the day, it's relationships that are at the core of making the world a better place.

The information in this packet is designed to help those of you who want to go deeper in your understanding of international development / philanthropy as you prepare for your trip. It's also meant to help prepare you for meeting people from other cultures by having a clearer idea of one's own cultural traits and perspectives. We'll be discussing these issues during the trip so if you don't have time to read it, you'll get an idea of them during the trip. For those who have the time and interest, the information should help you to put what you see and experience on the ground in context and to help you to starting thinking about your role as a traveler, ambassador and philanthropist.

As you prepare for this journey, keep in mind that you are "doing good" by caring, learning and reaching out to connect. First hand experience and connecting with others is empowering. We are able to debunk myths, deepen our understanding and develop a more global perspective. All of which are powerful when it comes to making the world a better place. We look forward to experiencing this adventure with you!



We may not have all the answers but if our heart is in the right place, we have an open mind and dig into increasing our understanding...

The ripple effect can be tremendous.

Learn & Connect

One of the most effective things you can do during your trip is to learn from and connect with those you meet.

As we look at how we can assist those who are less fortunate, our focus often goes to: “*What can we give them? What can we do?*” As well meaning as these questions are, it is important to be careful to avoid paternalistic attitudes and wasteful actions. Too often those living in poverty have had projects implemented in their communities without their guidance or input and it ends up causing more harm than good.

The Paint Syndrome

“You know, Americans always want to paint things. They want to paint buildings, so we have a building we let them paint. Usually we have to repaint the walls after the Americans leave because they don’t do a very good job.”

— Remarks from an African leader who felt that letting visiting Americans paint allowed them to feel like they accomplished something even though it was an unnecessary task.



Excerpt from *Rethinking Short-Term Missions for Long-Term Impact* by Mary Faulds.

Our focus is on **building partnerships** with those we are supporting and following their guidance. The best thing we can take on our journey is a desire to learn, an open mind and our friendship.

The GSGC believes that the most effective way to help others is by becoming partners and having those living in the communities take the lead in designing and managing projects. To help us do this effectively, the first step is to develop relationships with those on the ground.

It's one thing to read about the concept of micro-lending. It's quite another to sit with a woman who has received a loan and works seven days a week selling fresh vegetables so that she can care for her family. It's in such an experience that one is able to grasp the challenges faced by those living at this economic level.

Besides coming to better understand the needs facing the communities we visit and better evaluate how we can most effectively provide support, we also benefit from the relationships themselves. For many of us who have spent years working on development projects, at the end of the day, it's often the relationships that we've developed along the way that have had the biggest impact in our efforts to make a positive difference.

Inherent Challenges

Communication Differences:

"When we communicate in Africa, we are very guarded in what we say. We don't want to offend. Westerners say that Africans never tell you what they really think. They tell you only what you want to hear. And yes, that's true! Because of our perspective, every engagement between two people always has the potential of leading to a lifelong relationship, or preventing a lifelong friendship...Africa is a very relational continent. It's the relationships that make the society work."

— Oscar Muriu from *Round Trip*

- Connecting with people from very different cultural and economic backgrounds.
- Developing a meaningful relationship in a short amount of time.
- Navigating the donor/recipient dynamic.

The Desire to → Make a Difference

The desire to improve conditions in this world is a great thing. However, even projects with the best of intentions can leave a trail of problems. Often outsiders have the notion they can swoop in and save lives by implementing projects that often end up being unsustainable and inappropriate.

When you delve into the issues of developing countries, it is clear there are no easy answers. This does not mean we shouldn't do anything, but it is important to be aware of the complexities, to have a long term view and take guidance from the local communities.

Why is it so difficult to help in a beneficial way? Click on.....

It's More Complicated Than It Looks Article

Keep in Mind:

- **We are going in the right direction by educating ourselves and raising our level of awareness.**
- **Do not forget the power of connection and the simple act of kindness! For some, you will be the first foreigner that they have had a conversation with.**
- **Often times, the biggest impact you can make is when you come home and share what you have learned. You can also become involved in advocacy and fundraising.**
- **Things can look very different when utilizing a long-term view rather than in the short-term (which most of us use).**

Educating Ourselves

Study up before your travels, dig in and gain an understanding of the bigger picture. How does the history, culture, socioeconomic and political situation affect what you will see and the people you will meet? How has international development efforts impacted the area, or areas like it. What has been successful, what hasn't?

What is the Context?

The better we understand the context of the people we meet, the more appropriate our observations and actions will be.

1. Gain a general understanding of the people and places you're visiting

- History (what were the colonial influences, independence...)
- Culture (tribes/languages and their current day influences, dominant religions, gender roles...)
- Socioeconomic situation (what are the main sources of income for the country, for individuals...)
- Current Political situation (who leads the country, various parties...)

There are many sources for this kind of information. Let us know if you want us to help you with resources.

2. Gain an understanding of international development

- It's helpful to have an idea of the leading development theories and realize that no one has the perfect answer. If we did... the world would look a lot different!
- Read up on the various current theories (Click on the article names to open PDFs to read)

1. *The End of Poverty*, Jeffrey Sachs

2. *An Interview with Jeffrey Sachs*

3. *Dead Aid & The Life You Can Save*

4. *A review of Sachs by William Easterly*

5. *A New Alms Race to help the World's Poor*

6. *Aiding & Abetting?*

7. *Affluence & Ethics*, by William Easterly

- Familiarize yourself with some of the big institutions, powers, trends and terminology:
 1. “The Big Boys”(e.g. World Bank, IMF)
 2. Bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors
 3. Millennium Development goals
 4. Globalization
 5. Debt and trade

3. Gain an understanding of our own culture and how this influences our perspective

It is important to recognize your “Americanness” and to think about what cultural baggage you will be carrying abroad. To help you think about this, L. Robert Kohls has developed a list of 13 commonly held American values. See if you recognize yourself in any of these values, and think about the fact that some cultures have values that are diametrically opposite to these American values.

CLICK
13 American Traits



In the Field

Enjoy Yourself !

Have fun as you explore new places, meet interesting people and take on new experiences

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

If you find yourself overwhelmed by your new surroundings, know that this is perfectly normal. Each day during the trip, we will take some time to talk about any cultural confusions or frustrations.

READ ON...

CLICK

Ethnocentrism
Article

Handouts & Gifts

The best gift you can give is your friendship. Although we will be bringing some items on a special needs basis, in general we steer away from giving handouts because of the dependency and interruption it causes. Instead, think about bringing photos from scenes of your life... your family, home, etc. to share with curious eyes.

Gathering Stories: Recording & Sharing Your Impressions

We highly recommend you take time during your trip to write down some of your impressions and feelings. You can never replace your first impressions and reactions.

To help us share our experiences and what we learn with others it greatly helps to have a record from the people who visit the projects. Think about bringing a journal to jot down your thoughts, what questions you would like to ask the local founders and recipients and how you would want to share your experiences. Remember, the GSGC has a blog and there will be an opportunity for everyone to post live reactions for the rest of the members to read.



In the Field

A note about photography:

We all appreciate photos to help us reflect on our experience and share with others, however, please be mindful about how you use your camera. When taking pictures of people, first say hello and introduce yourself and ask if you can take a photo. Avoid voyeuristic acts that remove you from the locals, instead, meet others first with a smile, not a flash.



If you promise someone something, such as giving them photos, it is important that you 100% follow through. To receive photos is very special and your word will be taken seriously. To forget would reflect poorly on the trust between traveler and local.



Returning Home

**Share Your Stories
Raise Awareness**

A few Ideas...

Get a few friends together, show them a few pictures and share some stories from your travels.

Write an insightful essay and email it to your friends.

Brainstorm with other members about addressing the needs expressed by those you met.

Take a more active role in the GSGC.

Share your experiences with your local paper.

Give a presentation at a local school or organization.

**Stay tuned-in and advocate based on what
you have learned!**

Parting Thoughts:

CLICK

Paul Theroux:
*The Lesson of
My Life*

See you in Africa!

