

Studying

One of the things that the missions community often overlooks is what the business world calls Continuing Professional Development. This is based on the principle that you might have got a qualification in your speciality 25 years ago, but the world moves on and your knowledge may be really out of date. While it's clear that this applies to (say) computing, medicine or motor mechanics, it also applies to theology and missiology. The world moves on, ideas change, technology develops, and if we're not careful, we can turn into fossils without even realising it.

So CPD is the practice of taking short refresher courses to brush up on what's new. This is really worth doing if you want to remain at the cutting edge of your ministry. Many professional institutes offer refresher courses or conferences as part of their programmes, and though they may not be cheap, if you explain that you're a voluntary overseas worker they may be willing to grant you a bursary. There are also short courses available at local colleges, or even evening classes to help you brush up on things you've forgotten.

It may be that your ministry has taken a different course than you originally anticipated and you feel the need to acquire new skills or to further your studies. This might necessitate you staying for an extended period, or doing some remote study. Many organisations are set up for remote learning these days, including some Bible colleges, though the Open University (www.open.ac.uk) remains the most well-known.

Several of the UK's theological establishments are well set up to cater for the needs of the missions community. We particularly like All Nations (www.allnations.ac.uk) and Redcliffe (www.redcliffe.org) but there are others (www.ukbiblecolleges.com/colleges_a-z.html) as well, and our friends Oscar (www.oscar.org.uk/service/training/index.htm) list a whole load of different training options, including off-road driving!

So although you may be tempted to get your HA over with as quickly as possible, spending some time developing your expertise or acquiring new skills could pay off in the long run.