

Developing a support base

As much as many of us may like the idea of following our calling on our own, it is particularly hard to do it, though this is something we often don't realise until it is too late. So developing a support base at an early stage in our planning is important, since it's much harder to put one in place once you're under way.

You will have a natural support base made up of interested and willing participants among your family, colleagues, friends and church members. They will be able to contribute to your ministry in a variety of different ways, make life easier for you, and help you be even more effective in your ministry.

You will need a number of people to pray for you. Going into overseas mission without prayer cover is about as smart as getting onto a plane with no fuel. Ask people personally if they're willing to pray for you. Give them pray cards to stick on their refrigerator to remind them. Then communicate with them regularly (at least once a month) letting them know what you need prayer for. Sometimes a brief email (just one paragraph) for urgent news, but also a regular letter or email. Keep it to one side of A4 or there's a danger people will just cast it aside without reading.

You will also need funding and a lot of your friends will be willing donors. Ask them to pay by standing order into your bank account (or your charity's, if you've set one up) on a regular basis so that you can plan.

If you're setting up a charity you'll need to find people who know how to do that and will become trustees, and you'll need people who can set up and manage a website for you. You might also need fundraisers.

You may also need a group of friends who can do practical things on your behalf, like finding accommodation for you when you return, or transportation, or just meeting you at the airport. It's a good idea to appoint an 'ambassador' for you in your church, to remind people to pray, send birthday cards, and generally not forget you. A good ambassador can actually generate more support for you along the way.

We often find it hard to ask people to do these things for us because we like to be self-sufficient, or because we're embarrassed to impose on others, but it's a great way of bringing people alongside us to buy into our mission and share the vision with us. Building a group of supporters takes a bit of time, mainly with the communicating, but it is well worth doing. It helps contribute to the sustainability of our mission and creates a channel through which we can share our calling with others.