

Can't I just do my own thing?

These days, with international travel so convenient , and information on other countries so readily available, a lot of people look at the hoops they have to jump through to get on a short-term team, and think it would be easier to go by themselves.

Don't.

Don't even think about it. It's not worth it. I know we've all heard the inspiring stories of Jackie Pullinger and Gladys Aylward, people who went and did their own thing and it was brilliant, but for most people, it doesn't work like that. For every success story there are dozens of failures. People who get themselves robbed or kidnapped. People who come back disillusioned by failure and who subsequently struggle with their faith. People who don't understand the cultural values of the place they've chosen to bless and who set back the work of resident mission workers sometimes by years.

Agencies who are experienced at planning and carrying out short-term missions know how to help you avoid these pitfalls. They will help you prepare, so that you can raise support effectively, and they know enough about the local culture to help you avoid contradicting with your actions what you proclaim with your words. They have experienced leaders to manage your project, and local partners who will help you avoid trouble. They will help you adjust to coming back home again. And of course they will take care of all the planning, accommodation and travel arrangements.

So if you're tempted to do your own thing, please think again. If you can't find an agency doing exactly what you want to do, ask around, as one of them may be willing to organise something bespoke for you. But their support is invaluable, particularly if you happen to get yourself into a crisis. If you already have experience of a particular country, perhaps by already doing a short-term mission there, then it becomes more acceptable to return independently to work with people you already know. But it's still useful to have a reputable agency covering you.