

Why We're Going Back

7 Behind the Scenes Ways Mission Trips Benefit Everyone

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"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles... Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your accounts." Paul to the church at Philippi when Epaphroditus delivered gifts. Philippians 4:14,17

After narrowly escaping arrest in South Sudan, many might decide not to go back. But a return mission trip to Uganda and South Sudan is currently in the works for ITMI's **Steve Evers** and **Kent Reisenauer**.

Why risk entering a corrupt third world country where you can get arrested for recording a video interview with a friend at her house? Simply stated, the benefits are far-reaching and numerous.

On that trip alone, their visit resulted in:

- Increased security and privacy for our partner, **Vicky Waraka** and the 5 orphaned teenage girls she has taken into her modest two-room mud home with a small private restroom facility and fences and home walls offering more effective protection.
- 125 impoverished women gaining first-time understanding of Biblical principles for money and finance immediately impacting how they make life choices. The message held authority in their eyes coming from an American.
- ITMI supporters and other believers gaining the opportunity to pray for the specific needs of our partners and other followers of Jesus in South Sudan.
- Delivery of small but important items affecting our partners' ability to minister, like the small solar powered LED light Kent and Steve gave to our partner, **Lazarus Yezinai**, allowing him and his "family" of 25 to study the Bible after dark in his home.

- Encouragement and rejuvenation for our South Sudanese partners who minister to the traumatized and suffering on a regular basis.

When Steve visited our partners, **David and Taru Kumar** in India last year, they later wrote that the slum families they minister to "were so blessed and happy to get to know you [Steve], they want to talk to you some time." This led to additional influence with these Muslim families, which Steve used to point them to Jesus during a video call, greeting them during one of their Christmas celebrations.

Overall, these intentional mission trips have a wide range of multiplying and expanding benefits, but here are 7 of the most impactful.

1. ITMI partners gain exposure to fresh perspective, discipleship and influence that is removed from their own culture. We all get to where we can't see the forest for the trees, so having someone a little more removed from the situation provide Biblical insight is always a benefit. Sometimes we are so entwined in our culture, a solution escapes us, but is obvious to someone outside that society.

2. Crucial encouragement for our partners. Our partners, like so many believers in godless societies, face



difficult situations regularly. From lives ruined by war and violence, to spiritual oppression and darkness, to physical persecution and opposition, to the pain of disunity between them and other believers, it's not easy serving in the field. Site visits remind them that God's people are with them. Last August, **Johan Leach** wrote from his ministry base in remote Zambia, "With Steve and Kent's visit we know that ITMI has our interest [ensuring the expansion of the gospel in the Luvale plains] at heart."

3. Often, a foreigner's voice lends credibility to the message and the person, increasing our partners' influence. One of our Indian partners,

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NEWSBITES

SOUTH SUDAN

In February, ITMI's **Lazarus Yezinai** traveled to Bor. Bor is one of the areas most affected by the political conflict, making the unity of the believers both difficult and crucial. Using the SALT material, Lazarus was instrumental in building Gospel-centered unity among believers. One pastor shared with the group that previously he condemned and judged believers from other denominations, but now plans to pursue unity, starting by demonstrating the servant leadership he learned from Lazarus' delivery of the SALT material.

SOUTH AFRICA

The young men in **Stone Hill** who call themselves "Soldiers for Christ" as they learn God's Word and put it into action in their community together recently worked hard to raise funds which they gave to help Cozmore, the Zimbabwean missionary who was one of the first to reach out in Stone Hill, and who now partners with ITMI's Charl van Wyk to reach youth in Zimbabwe.

INDIA

Last month, 40 pastors and evangelists in a rural town, Yagir, completed their 6th training in 6 months equipping them to dialogue with their Muslim friends and family about Jesus. ITMI's **David Kumar** traveled 373mi to deliver each of those trainings, despite battling health issues.

POLAND

The printed version of **Piotr Zaremba's** literal translation of the Bible to Polish nears completion, while the digital version has already been recognized as the "best user experience" for Polish speaking readers of the YouVersion Bible App, leading to their decision to make Piotr's translation the default Polish version! Meanwhile, Piotr has planted a Sunday service for Ukrainians fleeing political unrest in their country and settling in Piotr's city, Poznan. Though Piotr preaches (in Russian) for them when he can, he is discipling a Ukrainian leader to shepherd this group.

ROMANIA

ITMI's **Adi and Ema Ban** have been presenting seminars on Biblical family life in several churches. "How to Make Your Marriage a Priority", "10 Great Dates", "Personality and Your Marriage" and "Family and Social Media: Principles for Media Use with your Children and Teenagers" are a few examples. The Bans have four upcoming seminars in Iasi, near Bucharest, Hateg and Oradea and were recently featured in a podcast as contributing authors to a book on the topic of Biblical family and marriage.

ZAMBIA

ITMI's **Eugene Kalunga** reports that the foundations for the third building of the school he is building for a remote village, Kabowa, has been dug and filled with concrete. Soon, children in the village will have the opportunity to be educated, and it will be from a Biblical perspective!

UGANDA

In January, ITMI's **Muhindo Kawede** and the **International School of Missions** planted a church service in Kauga Prison following the completion of a Bible course for some of the prisoners. In February, they began a second Bible course for an additional 80 prisoners.



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Paul, is fully qualified and effective at equipping pastors. Those who participate in one of several trainings Paul does each year can't say enough

good things about how thankful they are to have been there. Even so, Paul likes Steve to teach training sessions when he visits because a foreigner's voice increases the credibility and the impact of the message. Sometimes, just being seen with a foreigner opens new avenues of influence, giving our partners an expanded platform from which to share the Gospel.

4. Site visits reveal things that aren't obvious in email and video. For example, while visiting David and Taru, Steve witnessed a debilitating

health issue Taru endures due to the heat in her area. He gave her a cooling towel that cost less than \$20 and has made a huge impact on her ability to minister. Something like this wouldn't come up in an email, but is revealed with in-person contact.

5. Site visits provide donors and potential donors peace of mind. We know our donors and partners take stewardship seriously, and you want to know that your sacrificial gifts are having an impact and being used as we say they are being used. Every time we visit, we bring back stories, photos and testimonies that your gifts are indeed making a big difference. This

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From the Director



Dear Team: An Exciting Video from India

It was a short video, and was a tad grainy, but it showed clearly what challenges the people of rural India, and as a matter of fact, the rest of the world live under.

The video was sent to me by our partner Paul in India. Paul is very excited to begin ministering in the villages that we introduced you to, called the “Untouchables” Village. Untouchable due to the caste system that the enemy has used to put generations in bondage.

If we could show you the video it would show three simple rural Indian workers, in the hot, dusty Indian community, cleaning off dry, brittle weeds for one of the three toilet/bathroom facilities for a village that has never had either. Two of the people are, as best we can understand, locals eager to be involved in this amazing new construction project. The third person seems to have a bit more experience in this type of project. The three buildings are each around 11 x 13 feet each, not a very imposing construction project. Yet for these people, it is monumental! The video goes on to show two sticks staked in the ground, marking two corners of the structure. One local was instructed to pull tight a string so that white powder can be sprinkled on the ground to show where one wall and its footing should be. The far worker bends down and puts one end of the string at one stake. The other worker pulls the string tight and the leader begins to take the white powder from his bag and sprinkle it over the now taut string, leaving a white line on top of the dusty barren dirt. If you aren't careful, you will miss what happens next. After marking about 1/3 of the distance from the first stake to the second, the leader looks up. He notices that yes, the string is nice and tight, the village worker is really focusing on his task, but his end of the string is not near the stake. The leader motions quickly for his co-worker to move his end to the stake and with his foot tries to wipe the errantly laid powder.

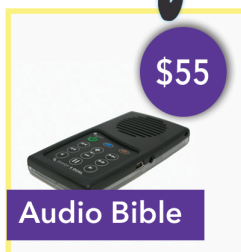
This scene is a perfect example of why ITMI is in existence. This is why we need each of you to partner with us in prayer and in helping those that make sure the string of life is tied to the right truth: that Jesus is the only way to life, the only way to know joy and peace, the only way to be reconciled back to Almighty God. So many people have the string tight and they are very intentional in what they feel they need to do, but they are not tied to the right stake or truth and they end up never hitting the mark. ITMI works very hard to make sure that we are tied to the right stake and that we are listening to what God is leading His people to do in service for Him. Thank you for helping us put the white line down all around the world that leads to Christ. May our Father be glorified as we work together!

In His Service,

This spring, give a meaningful gift.

BIBLES

for prisoners



Great for:

- ✓ Easter
- ✓ Mom
- ✓ Dad

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accountability both offers a benefit for you and protects our partners.

6. Delivering items that expand ministry opportunities and sustain our partners. Last year, **Excellence Christian Academy** was able to launch a desperately needed staff retention program by rewarding instructors who stay with the school, despite the unrelenting draw of higher paying opportunities, with reconditioned laptops. This wonderfully effective solution to a problem ECA has dealt with since its inception was possible because Steve and Kent carried the laptops with them to Zambia. Our site visits also provide for the delivery of items like pillowcase dresses, blankets and knitted hats, lovingly handmade to clothe young at-risk girls in villages, protecting them from the elements and other dangers of exposure as well as helping them understand that they are valued and beautiful to the Lord.

7. Site visits provide the opportunity to see godly national workers in action over years, yielding new and fruitful partnerships. Before we present a partner to you as worthy of your partnership with them and their ministry, we've observed them serving for some time.

Perhaps they've served alongside one of our partners, as was the case with our South Sudanese partner, Lazarus, who ministered to the same community as Vicky for years before he became an ITMI partner. **Tomek Jezyk** demonstrated his effectiveness within **Bread of Life** faithfully before becoming an ITMI partner.

Sometimes, we've entrusted them with a small amount of funding for a very specific use and intentionally observed that they can be trusted to use the funds as agreed upon. Other times, they've proven themselves faithful through other demonstrations. But without site visits, we couldn't begin this journey alongside godly, faithful nationals who are reaching their communities for Jesus.

There is one problem with these high value site visits, though.

Travel tends to be expensive. And while our teams are budget conscious and work to keep expenses low, there's no getting around rising airfares and the accompanying, unavoidable baggage and miscellaneous fees.

We thought you'd like to know that on average, these visits cost around \$5000 depending on the length and type of trip, and that we could use help in making them happen. Would you prayerfully consider helping us fund these benefit-rich ministry opportunities over and above whichever partners or projects you support? Any amount toward our missionary trips would help us better multiply all that ITMI and our partners are called to do.

Summer Kelley, Steve Evers



For Praise

1. Poland - Bread of Life - Provision of resources to add two villages to their regular food distribution ministry.
2. South Africa - Charl van Wyk - Local pastor imprisoned while on a mission trip in Zimbabwe was allowed to return home!
3. South Sudan - Jahim Buli - Opportunity to travel to village where he was born to preach the Gospel last month.
4. South Africa - Fifi Smith - New opportunity to minister to Zulu children and share Bible stories.

For Prayer

1. Zambia - Johan Leach - Violent storm damaged the equipment providing electricity at their mission base.
2. Poland - Richard Nungesser - Richard and Bread of Life team's upcoming visit to several (US) East Coast cities.
3. India - Paul and Molly - Protection for their family as they reach out to the village of people considered "untouchable."
4. South Sudan - Vicky Waraka - Protection, safety and complete healing from lingering effects of eye surgery.
5. USA - Steve Evers - Provision and guidance to make the many missionary trips to further disciple God's people.

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