



Building Hope **tmb**

& showing love in action
(however be an asset - not a liability!)

tropical medical bureau

Setting the scene

The Irish have clearly shown over the years how very generous they are towards those in desperate need. We have seen this through huge financial giving but also there are many others (like you) who have personally travelled to distant lands to share their skills and to make an improvement into the lives of others. These people are certainly 'building hope' but the structures they leave behind only show one element of what is achieved. The knowledge that people in Ireland care enough to travel to help others less well off is worth its weight in gold and, in many cases this is the greatest benefit to the programme.

Getting organised

Those planning to travel for this type of project need to make sure that at the end of the day they are contributing and being an asset rather than a liability! In other words make sure that your health is up to the task for what will be involved. There are many jobs which need to be done and there is no doubt you can fit in somewhere - **but be honest with yourself** (as well as the organisers!) and don't take on more than is sensible. In some cases (those with various chronic illnesses, older age group etc) you may be wise to talk this through with your GP and get their opinion early on before taking this commitment too far.

Planning for health

Depending on your destination there may be a requirement or a recommendation to have certain vaccines. There are a number of different options but these depend on what you may have had previously for other foreign trips and also the personal risks which you may encounter. Having the vaccines early makes sense so make an appointment perhaps 2 or 3 months before you leave if possible. However if you are leaving at short notice vaccines can still be given and it is always better to have some rather than none!

Personal medications

If you are any long term drugs for your own health make certain you have enough supplies to last for the entire trip. If any of the medications are 'absolutely essential' then give a back-up supply to a travelling colleague in case yours gets lost.

Predeparture training

OK, so you are not running a marathon but nevertheless being fit enough for the task is an essential element to what you can provide to support the project. If walking and lifting objects and generally being useful around the house are foreign concepts do be aware that instead of being an asset you can too easily become a liability! **Get motivated into the task ahead** and plan to be ready for the work which will be coming your way.

On the flight

It is great to meet up with friends who are on the same trip and of course you have thousands of things to talk through but try to get some rest on the flight. Once you arrive you will hit the ground running and so exhaustion can occur and wreck your trip if you have not had any decent rest. However, at regular intervals, do **exercise your legs** somewhat to lessen the risks of deep venous thrombosis (blood clots).

On arrival

The climate of your destination is usually very different to Ireland! In most cases it will be much hotter and more humid and you will find the first few days are nothing less than exhausting. The different sights and smells of the area coupled with the tiredness of the long-haul flight and the excitement of the task ahead can overwhelm some folks. If you know this is likely for you personally try to be sensible and remember, no matter what you see, you are there to help and so do some homework to try and be prepared. **Remember, you need to be an asset not a liability!**

Heat exhaustion

When working in a hot humid climate you will perspire and sometimes this can be really very significant. You won't just 'glow' it is likely you will 'drip'! **The perspiration loses both fluids and also salt.** You will replace the fluids fairly easily just by drinking plenty of good pure water but regularly folks forget to replace the lost salt. This leads to a state of generalised tiredness, muscle aches and a dull headache. All in all you will become a misery to your fellow companions and a real moan! Unless medically contraindicated, you should increase the amount of salt you put on your meals (not salt tablets) - about a three finger pinch should be sufficient. If you suffer with 'prickly heat' use talc rather than spray or roll-on deodorants as this will help absorb the moisture and leave you much more comfortable.

Being sensible with yourself

Sometimes when you are part of a large group you don't want to be 'different' and so you just follow everyone else and do what they do. At times this may not be wise - especially if you have a 'sensitive' stomach! *Even if your head is telling you one thing try to listen to what your stomach is saying!* Fail this basic concept of safe international travel and you are sure to hear from your bowels!

Shoes and Clothing

Having proper protective shoes and gloves are essential for any building site. Those in charge will let you know what other requirements there may be but make sure that you have used the shoes regularly before you leave home to **get them 'worn in' and comfortable.** Nevertheless have some small plasters with you just in case! In hotter climates your feet will swell and you should have plenty of cotton clothing to absorb the perspiration.

Kit to Carry

This will depend greatly on your actual tasks during this trip. Hot or cold, wet or dry climates all make a difference to what you bring. Check it out for your trip and be prepared for some variation as the climate does not always behave itself!

Getting Lost

In groups, people often get lost by staying behind the rest or wandering off by themselves. **Stick with your group at all times and listen to the instructions of what is planned.**

First aid kit

The group will have central supplies but you should always have a small amount of essential items ... just in case.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✗ passport / visa / currency | ✗ plasters |
| ✗ personal medications | ✗ insect repellents* |
| ✗ spare glasses | ✗ cream for bites & cuts |
| ✗ sun glasses* | ✗ diarrhoea and nausea tablets |
| ✗ wide brimmed hat* | ✗ guide book |
| ✗ sun block* | ✗ TMB contact numbers / web |

Vaccines & malaria tablets

The vaccines for your trip will need to be talked through so that a sensible decision can be reached. Very often there are no 'essential' vaccines but others which are recommended. The risk of contracting many diseases while abroad is usually higher than at home in Ireland and it is just not worth the risk to take a chance.

Finally

Have a great safe trip. Be sensible and don't take any daft risks with your well being. Take particular care crossing roads and on the building sites. Be safety conscious. Watch out for the traffic.

If you have any unusual sickness while abroad or after you come home (even weeks/months later) please talk to one of our staff in the Dun Laoghaire Centre. (Tel +353-1-271 5200 / tmbclient@tmb.ie / www.tmb.ie)

National Travel Vaccine Appointment Tel 1-850-48 76 74

Web Address: www.tmb.ie

This leaflet has been prepared using information supplied from W.H.O. Center for Disease Control (US) and other International sources.

- ✓ Travel Accessories *BuildingHope/TMB/26Jan09*
- ✓ Tropical Diagnostic Laboratory
- ✓ Tropical Disease Screening Centre
- ✓ W.H.O. registered Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre
- ✓ International Vaccination and Malaria Advice Centres

- ✓ Aston Quay
- ✓ Blanchardstown
- ✓ Bray
- ✓ Clarehall
- ✓ Cork
- ✓ Dun Laoghaire
- ✓ Galway
- ✓ Gorey

- ✓ Grafton Street
- ✓ Inchicore
- ✓ Kerry
- ✓ Letterkenny
- ✓ Limerick
- ✓ Maynooth
- ✓ Naas * if travelling to hot climate region
- ✓ Ongar

- ✓ Shannon
- ✓ Sligo
- ✓ Stillorgan
- ✓ Tinahely
- ✓ Walkinstown
- ✓ Waterford