

Samaritan's Purse - Operation Christmas Child UK

Connect Volunteer Ministry Background Information

In 2013 the Senior Leadership team of Samaritan's Purse UK committed to fully implementing the *High Impact** approach to volunteer ministry, defined as 'restoring a biblical model of volunteer ministry and experiencing organisation-wide, powerful ministry effectiveness.' In Operation Christmas Child we refer to our *High Impact* volunteer ministry as *Connect*.

This distinctive approach to volunteering combines 'out-there' goals that contribute to the organisation's mission with 'in-here' goals of volunteers growing deeper with Jesus as they serve and as they experience authentic biblical community together. More specifically volunteers are recruited using ministry descriptions that outline specific responsibilities and commitments both for the volunteers and the organisation. A selection process is used to discover those whom God has called and who will make a great impact. Volunteers are equipped with the resources and necessary attitudes, competencies and knowledge, to be effective and then are cared for and disciplined to be effective in personal and team ministry. Finally some volunteers are developed into leader volunteers who lead other volunteers facilitating multiplication of ministry.

Key values underpinning this are treating volunteers as capable partners, viewing ministry as a privilege, showing the Kingdom value of all activities, being willing to hold volunteers accountable, and investing in equipping, coaching and managing volunteers.

High Impact has also been successfully implemented by other parts of Operation Christmas Child internationally. Since 2005 OCC US has seen its number of volunteers increase from a couple of thousand individuals who made the shoebox project happen each November to over 9,000 trained *Connect* 'multipliers'. They are organised into over 400 active area teams spread across the US who serve all year round to promote the ministry and initiate new teams. On average active teams collect 1.5 times as many shoeboxes as those that are developing or not full implementing *High Impact*.

Connect is also being implemented in over 100 countries. Volunteers are rigorously recruited and selected according to clear criteria. They are trained for specific roles and led by other committed volunteers in these destination countries. 5,905 *Connect* volunteers serving in 1,351 teams apply *High Impact* as they prepare the children's workers or leaders of over 87,000 local churches to plan and present outreach events with a child-friendly gospel presentation, as well as offering *The Greatest Journey* Bible discovery programme as a follow-up opportunity. Children who receive shoeboxes are invited to explore who Jesus is through twelve fun and engaging lessons based on Bible stories. Children who start to follow Jesus are also prepared to share the gospel with their friends and family. So our *Connect* ministry in the UK and worldwide is a first step in gospel multiplication around the world.

Since 2013 OCC UK has transitioned its ministry culture and the focus of its national and regional staff and leader volunteers from a 'doer' to a *High Impact* 'multiplier' approach. By December 2019, 139 *Connect* volunteers had been selected. There are currently 113 *Connect* volunteers in church/community relations and prayer mobilisation and a further 336 are Church Collection Centre Team Leaders.

*The **High Impact** volunteer ministry approach has been developed and refined by Newell & Associates, the world's leading consultants in Christian volunteer ministry development.

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