



# Volunteering & Community Development

## - What you should know

How do you volunteer? What are you looking for and what are community development programmes looking for?

Volunteering is an activity usually undertaken through a not-for-profit organisation, which is of community benefit, of the volunteer's own free will, and for no financial reward. It is also a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.

### WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

People will volunteer for a broad variety of reasons. It may be to add something to their own lives (companionship, work, adventure, structure, or travel) or with the express intent of adding to the lives of others (education, skills, caring, practical support).

### WHEN SHOULDN'T YOU VOLUNTEER?

When you are wishing to work over other people, to 'get them better organised', or because you think you have all the answers. No-one does, and most volunteers claim to learn more than they teach.

### ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

- Flexible
- Adaptable
- Good at group dynamics
- Team workers
- Proactive
- Sensitive to cross-cultural issues
- Resilient, particularly if there is conflict or times of difficulty

- Prepared to make a commitment
- Willing to learn and share, and don't assume they have all the answers
- Possessing a sense of humour
- Know yourself well enough to select the correct task for your energies and one that matches your values
- Respectful of the rights, dignity and culture of others

### GOOD VOLUNTEERS DO NOT

- Need to direct others
- Use work as an ego or power trip
- Feel overtly 'sorry' for those they are assisting
- Treat volunteer tasks as a social outing. It's not an excuse for a chat – there's work to be done!

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Volunteering overseas, sometimes called voluntourism, is all about giving something back while you travel. Overseas volunteer programs can run for anything from one week to a year. Voluntourism is the perfect way to gain an in-depth understanding of the places you visit, while helping people, communities or the environment. A good place to start is to think about your skills, interests and abilities.

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

Volunteering to help the environment usually requires you to be in good physical shape. You can assist scientists with their field work, and many of the projects do not

require any previous experience or specialist knowledge. If you want to stay closer to home there are some environmental conservation projects in Australia and New Zealand.

### COMMUNITY PROJECTS

If trekking through national parks or tagging turtles isn't your cup of tea, you might want to take a look at some international projects in developing nations

### SOMETHING MORE ADVENTUROUS

If you are looking for a project off the beaten path, and you are in good physical shape, then there are some projects that will involve trekking and/or very remote locations

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Different volunteer organisations will offer different facilities and extras. Some projects will come with meals and accommodation, others won't. It is also important to look into how much the position will cost. Some organisations ask for a token administration fee, others request a larger donation to the project before you can help out. Volunteering overseas can be an incredibly rewarding experience, but it is important to research all the options first.

*This article is an edited excerpt from Get a New Life: how to change the way you live by Kaye Fallick.*

### SCAMS

We all need to be wary of the many traps set for well-meaning foreigners! Passport Travel believes

it is important to understand how volunteering has been commercialised. It is for this reason that we are very selective about who we work with.

Many people who are keen to help people and animals, in less developed areas of the world, do so with good intentions. Sadly, many believe 'up front' what they are told and read. Community Aid tourism has become a commodity. In Europe millionaires have been made from travel business offering 'Gap Year' packages which include the obligatory week at a project. Partypackers help absolve themselves with short periods of 'hands on' at community development projects. But do these, 'flit in flit out' experiences really.

In Nepal many orphanages are run as businesses. They are filled with children who have families, but who are kept and used to bring in funding from foreigners. Activists say many are not orphans and some end up as victims of child-trafficking.

[Al Jazeera's Subina Shrestha reports from Kathmandu.](#)

#### **THE CHILD ORPHANAGE SCAM**

Is alive and well in other parts of Asia. This fine piece of investigative journalism by Tom Perry brings detail to the surface. [Download his article.](#)

#### **RECENT ARTICLES ON VOLUNTEER TOURISM:**

Refreshing to see these insightful words from the younger generations as they wake up to the falsehoods of many 'Gap Year' and 'Volunteer Excursions'.

[Why Volunteering Abroad is Dangerous ~ Not the Reasons You Might Think](#)

[Voluntourism - the good the bad and the ugly..](#)