

Finding a Responsible Volunteer Placement

- 1. Check that volunteers are not taking away local jobs or creating dependency.**
 - Some organizations take on foreign volunteers when a local person could be paid to do the same job.
 - If your specific skill is hard to come by locally, make sure that part of your role is to train local staff so they can take over when you leave.
- 2. Assess the impact of the organization you are likely to volunteer with.**
 - Ask them how they measure their success.
 - Providing books, for example, is not the same as teaching reading skills, and will not necessarily improve literacy rates in the same way.
 - Do your research and don't be afraid to ask critical questions.
- 3. Make sure the goals of the organization are driven by local people.**
 - Important decisions should be made by people familiar with the needs and culture of the local community.
 - The goals of the organization should be identified by working closely with the community an organization is aiming to help.
- 4. Think about the sustainability of what the organization does.**
 - Are they offering short-term, quick-fix solutions or are they really addressing deep-rooted, underlying causes of problems?
 - Be wary of organizations that offer handouts or give things away, these can create dependencies.
 - A more sustainable project will focus on capacity building to enable local people to make improvements in their own communities.
- 5. Be wary of organizations that let un-vetted and unqualified volunteers work directly with children.**
 - Ask yourself, will you be qualified in your own country to work as a teacher or a care-giver?

- If not, it is probably not a good idea to do it in a foreign country either.
 - All vulnerable children need a safe and stable environment regardless of where they live.
- 6. Research the management and the transparency of the organization.**
- It might seem like they are doing good work, but make sure they can also account for how their donor's money is being used.
 - Transparent organizations should be willing to share their financial information.
- 7. Think about the social impact of a foreigner doing your role.**
- Were you offered a high position simply because you speak fluent English?
 - Allowing volunteers to take high-level roles just because they are foreign can create tensions, undermine local staff, and set a bad example.
- 8. Question organizations that allow volunteers to do anything they're not qualified to do at home.**
- Would the organization employ someone with your skills to do that role?
 - If you are looking to learn, make sure you are assisting a project and not leading it.
 - Many volunteers see developing countries as a means of gaining work experience, but that's not always in the best interests of the organization.
- 9. Question any organization spending extensive amounts resources on catering for volunteers.**
- Does accommodating volunteers actually detract from the organization's mission?
 - Make sure your needs as a volunteer do not take priority over the project.
 - What you bring to the organization should at least be as valuable as the resources you are taking.

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