
Guidelines for Sending Volunteers on Overseas Placements

Phillida Strachan: March 2009

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Overseas Placements

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Introduction

This resource has been developed by the Humanitarian Centre as a guide for small organisations sending volunteers overseas. The information contained within it has been drawn from a number of sources:

- Existing guides for organisations that organise placements (for example, the Ethical Volunteering Guide, the Comhlamh (Irish Aid) Code of Good Practice, BS 8848: 2007, British Standard for activities outside the United Kingdom), links for which can be found in the appendix.
- Meetings with individuals from small organisations who currently send people overseas (such as Camvol, Cambridge Volunteers in Nepal (CVN) and Engineers without Borders – UK (EWB-UK)).
- My own and other volunteers' experiences of organising a voluntary placement.
- Relevant talks and presentations designed to help prepare for overseas placements.

Who is this resource for?

This resource has been developed for small organisations and societies sending, or intending to send, volunteers on overseas placements. Although this guide is not aimed at individuals planning to volunteer abroad, it does contain information which may be relevant to people thinking about volunteering overseas.

Aims of this resource and how to use it

This guide encourages organisations sending volunteers overseas to think critically about why and how they do this. It is structured to guide the user through all stages of the placement process from evaluating why organisations send volunteers overseas to receiving volunteers back into the UK. I hope that whilst this resource provides a framework for considering some important issues, it also stimulates questions. It is not designed to be a checklist which can simply be followed to produce good placements. It does not assume that overseas placements are good, nor that they are necessarily the best way for an organisation to meet a particular need or aim. It is designed as a stepping stone to engage in further thinking, rather than a definitive guide in itself.

This resource is intended to be developed and added to over time. If you have any comments or feedback to improve this guide, or any personal experience which you would like included, please contact:

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Key terms

Sending organisation: This term is used to refer to the organisation which advertises and arranges overseas placements, and recruits and selects appropriate volunteers. In the context of this resource, the sending organisation refers to small organisations or societies based in the UK sending volunteers on overseas placements.

Partner organisation: This term is used to refer to the host organisation or community the volunteer will be working with on their overseas placement. It is used interchangeably with the term 'host organisation'.

Project manager/mentor: This refers to a person who is designated to take responsibility for overseeing a specific placement. The project manager/mentor is the volunteer's primary avenue of communication for professional support and personal welfare.

Organisations have different terms for describing this role (for example, placement manager/mentor, project supervisor etc). For consistency, this role is referred to as project manager/mentor throughout this resource.

A distinction is made, however, between a **UK-based manager/mentor** connected to the sending organisation, and an **in-country manager/mentor**, usually from the partner organisation.

Section 1: Evaluating aims and objectives

“Camvol started as a response to an increasing demand among students to do something worthwhile with a development organisation”.

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

Why send volunteers overseas; mission or strategy?

Most placements are organised in response to a demand. This is not always from people wanting to volunteer overseas. Sometimes it comes from within an organisation (as a means of raising funds to support other projects for example), sometimes it is a response to a request to work with a partner organisation overseas. Organisations should identify where the demand for placements is coming from.

Placements fit into the structure of the sending organisation in one of two ways:

1. For some organisations, sending volunteers overseas is their mission, their reason for existing.

EXAMPLE: Camvol

Shiraz Vira founded Camvol in 2006 as *an organisation which specifically and only sends volunteers abroad*. Camvol’s mission statement is to “provide **mutually beneficial** placements for UK students with development and environmental NGOs in India”.

2. Other organisations use placements as a tool or strategy which supports their overall aims and objectives.

EXAMPLE: Engineers without Borders UK

EWB is an organisation which works in six key programme areas, of which Placements is only one. EWB’s mission is “to *facilitate human development through engineering*”, and *whilst placements support this objective, they are not the only means of achieving it*.

Organisations should consider which of these two approaches is best suited to their overall aims and objectives.

Considering different needs and expectations

Most volunteering schemes involve three key players:

1. The partner community or organisation
2. The sending organisation
3. The volunteer

Each of these three players has a different set of needs and often different expectations of a placement. Two key considerations which are important in setting up successful placements are:

- A) **Awareness** – Sending organisations play an important role in communication and making each player aware of the others’ needs and expectations. It is only when these are clear and explicit that negotiation can be successful.

EXAMPLE

Partner organisations may need/expect:

- Certain skills and previous experience from the volunteer
- Monetary contribution to the placement from the volunteer or sending organisation

Sending organisations may need/expect:

- A clear placement description from the partner organisation
- A professional attitude from the volunteer in representing the sending organisation

Volunteers may need/expect:

- A chance to use their skills overseas
- Help with fundraising from the sending organisation

- B) **Compromise** – Each player needs to be willing to compromise and negotiate to ensure that each others’ needs and expectations are met as far as is reasonable. Sending organisations should encourage flexibility and be realistic about what each placement and player can offer.

EXAMPLE

The partner organisation may agree to find accommodation for the volunteer, the sending organisation may subsidise the cost of the placement for the partner organisation, and the volunteer may arrange to be more flexible on placement dates to fit in with local school terms.

The sending organisation is often the main link between the volunteer and the partner organisation. Sending organisations should consider how to facilitate communication between each of the three key players. For example:

- Encourage volunteers to contact the partner organisation before the placement begins to ask any questions they may have, and to build a relationship.
- Encourage volunteers to communicate with each other (e.g. by setting up a Facebook group) to share tips and information.

Volunteers

The expectations of partner organisations will be discussed further in section 2. This section will focus on the expectations of volunteers, and reasons they might choose an overseas placement. Some questions which need to be answered include:

- Are volunteers’ expectations/motivations in keeping with the sending organisation’s aims and objectives?
- How is the sending organisation going to manage its own aspirations and expectations, those of the volunteer, and those of the partner community or organisation?

"I wanted to do an overseas placement because I had previously volunteered in my gap year and wanted to teach children. I was attracted to Nepal and had heard that students who went with Cambridge Volunteers were really valued by the local community so I applied."

CVN volunteer, 2007

Not all volunteers will be choosing to go overseas for the first time. In the case of this volunteer, choosing a placement was based on previous experiences which helped shape the volunteer's specific areas of interest. There is also a desire to be part of an organisation which makes a tangible difference to local communities in a developing country. The volunteer then chose an organisation which corresponded most closely to these needs.

Some other reasons why volunteers choose to go overseas might be:

- As part of a gap year scheme
- Learn new skills
- 'Make a difference'
- See other parts of the world
- Meet new people
- Have fun
- Gain experience in a particular sector (e.g. development, medical), often with a view to future employment
- Learn or practice a new language (e.g. language students on a study year abroad)
- Running away from personal problems
- A lack of alternative directions, feeling at a loose end
- Cultural exchange, expanding one's horizons

Organisations need to consider what their placement programme provides in relation to a volunteer's personal motivations for applying to the scheme. Organisations should be clear in all placement advertising and throughout the selection process what the organisation offers and what they expect from volunteers in return.

"Camvol recruits volunteers who have a strong interest in development and often want to pursue it as a career. In many ways, Camvol offers a work placement; it's definitely not a 'gap year' thing."

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

Key points

- Placements should fit in with the aims of the sending organisation.
- The needs and expectations of all players involved in the placement process should be clear.
- Sending organisations should be aware of the different motivations of volunteers.

Section 2: Organising suitable placements

“Engineers without Borders – UK always partners with organisations overseas. We are not an operational NGO and we do not run our own projects. There are already many organisations out there which do, but you have to find out about their aims and motivations first. In my experience, you can’t know too much about the partner organisation.”

EWB – UK Placements Coordinator, 2007-2008

Most sending organisations do not run placements themselves, they partner with other organisations working overseas. This section looks at the two main ways of identifying placement partners, and how to build lasting relationships of trust.

Seeking placement partners

Some placements originate when someone visits a community or organisation overseas, and either notices or searches for a particular opportunity which they want to continue supporting through sending volunteers from the UK. They may start a new organisation, introduce placements as a new activity of an existing organisation, or incorporate the project into an existing placements scheme. In this model, the sending organisation is proactive in seeking placement opportunities. This approach is often used by small organisations with limited capacity who concentrate initially on building and consolidating a small number of successful placements (see also ‘choosing a placement location’).

Advantages:

- Initial contact with the partner organisation is personal; relationships are already established and communication is ongoing.
- Sending organisations can vouch for the accommodation, living conditions and framework of the placement partner.

Receiving placement requests

An alternative option instead of actively seeking placement opportunities is to advertise for partner organisations to approach the sending organisation. In this model, the partner organisation is proactive in seeking suitable volunteers. This is usually adopted by larger organisations such as VSO which are sufficiently well-known as to attract a large range of different placement partners.

Advantages:

- Partner organisations have formulated a strong idea of their own needs and have decided themselves that a volunteer from overseas would be the best way to meet them.
- Volunteers can have the assurance of knowing they will be meeting real and clearly defined local needs.

Organisations should consider which of these two approaches is most suited to the organisation's aims and their current capacity level. An organisation's approach may change over time.

Managing partner organisations' expectations

A) Building relationships of trust

"I have personal links with all the partner organisations I send volunteers to in India. It works well like that because there's a lot of trust between us."

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

When liaising with a potential partner organisation, sending organisations seek to establish long-term relationships founded on trust. Two issues which an organisation should consider in building these relationships are:

Consistency: Consistent behaviour is about reliability. Sending organisations must ensure they can guarantee any promises made to a partner organisation; that they do not deviate from arrangements without good reasons, which are communicated to and discussed with the partner.

Communication: Sending organisations should reflect on how they communicate with partners, and how often. Partner organisations must be included when discussing any problems or changes in placement policy. Trust is partly based on both organisations having access to all relevant information from each other, which make decisions easier to understand and to accept.

B) Building volunteer flexibility

Managing the expectations of the partner organisation, the volunteer and the sending organisation is difficult and placements are not usually exactly what each person expected or planned for. Volunteers need to be aware that a certain degree of flexibility and willingness to respond to the changing demands of a placement is important for building trust, responding to real needs and learning new skills.

For example, a volunteer may be on an engineering placement helping a local community to develop a sustainable water supply, but the arrival of key materials is delayed and plans are put on hold for a week. What the community really needs in the meantime is an extra pair of hands to help with painting the local school or harvesting and storing crops. Similarly, a volunteer conducting some research for a local NGO may be asked for help with writing a grant proposal or translating some previous research into English. These are all simple tasks which can teach the volunteer new skills and are responding to a real need within the community or organisation.

Volunteers should be willing to adapt to the needs of a particular placement, as long as:

- The tasks are fulfilling a real need
- The volunteer is not being asked to spend long periods of time on tasks which bear little relation to the role description
- The volunteer has the necessary skills to complete the task

Volunteers must NOT agree to help with tasks which require expertise the volunteer has no experience of; this may actually cause more harm than good.

The most important thing is that the volunteer and the partner organisation both feel comfortable with the volunteer's work, and that the volunteer talks to their in-country or UK-based project manager/mentor if they are unhappy about their placement. A good example of a role description which prepares volunteers to work flexibly is given below.

EXAMPLE: EWB-UK placement 2008

RUCHI – Improving drinking water network

RUCHI is an NGO that initiates development at a grass-roots level in rural villages. The purpose of the project is to deliver a low maintenance water distribution network, allowing the local community to spend more time on being economically productive.

The beneficiaries of the project are the 100 villagers served by this water source, who are currently undertaking an onerous maintenance regime to prevent the network from blocking with sediment. The volunteers' work will involve:

- Evaluating the existing infrastructure
- Investigating the current problems
- Designing a solution to a problem with the sedimentation tank
- Make improvements to the design
- Overseeing construction works
- Evaluating the results

There will also be opportunities to further understanding of and contribute to other water resource infrastructure projects (time allowing) whilst working with the NGO.

EWB-UK has carefully considered the aims and objectives of this placement and how it fits in with their overall strategy. The role description gives the volunteer a very clear idea of the purpose of the placement, the need in the local community, and the desired outcome. It gives a framework for the placement in broad terms, identifying the skills a volunteer will need and main areas of responsibility; 'evaluating', 'investigating', 'designing', 'overseeing'.

This is worded so that the volunteer is prepared to be flexible, think creatively and respond to the villagers' needs, knowledge and expertise. There is also the opportunity for the volunteer to use their own initiative and get involved in other water infrastructure projects.

Choosing placement locations

Many small organisations choose to operate in a regional area rather than place volunteers globally. Often this is because the organisation has not got the capacity to support many placements, or uses volunteers as only one part of their activities in that region.

This model is very effective for organisations where placements are arranged through personal links, or where staff capacity is limited. If an organisation is thinking of geographically expanding its placements scheme, it is important to carefully research each new area or region. Existing placement structures may not transfer appropriately, and there will certainly be new patterns of negotiation, organisation, strategy and management to learn, as well as new relationships to build and new needs to engage with.

Organising placement accommodation

Organisations should consider where volunteers are going to live overseas and whose responsibility it is to organise this; the sending organisation's, the partner organisation's or the volunteer's? Possible sources of accommodation include:

- Living with a family
- Living with a family as a paying guest (effectively equivalent to renting a room)
- Renting an apartment
- Youth hostel
- Self-catered accommodation
- Hotel
- Sleeping in a community building (e.g. church, hall, barn, school etc)
- Tent

Managing accommodation expectations

Wherever the volunteer is staying, it is important that both the sending organisation and the volunteer understand that living overseas is different from travelling. Volunteers will be staying for 2 months or 2 years rather than a night or two. Comfort, safety, distance from place of work, ability to self-cater/be flexible and privacy are all important factors.

It is important that the sending organisation is realistic. Some volunteers may be happy to stay in remote villages, others will prefer greater access to creature comforts or better communication facilities. Find out volunteers' expectations as early as possible and try to match them to appropriate facilities. Volunteers in turn need to be made aware of the type of accommodation which is most likely to be provided, and be happy with this.

Accommodation should be planned in advance as accommodation providers need to know when they are expecting volunteers to arrive and depart. Available dates, estimated costs and terms of accommodation should be considered in advance, e.g. ability to cater for dietary requirements, contribution to meal costs (e.g. if living with a family), curfews, transport to work, privacy and sharing, washing facilities etc.

Key points

- Sending organisation should consider how they find suitable placement opportunities.
- The needs and expectations of partner organisations should be considered.
- Encourage volunteers to adapt to the individual needs of each placement.
- Practical arrangements for placements (accommodation, location etc.) should be planned well in advance.

Section 3: Recruiting volunteers

Some of the issues surrounding volunteer recruitment have already been discussed in sections 1 and 2 in terms of being clear of the placement purpose, and managing volunteer expectations. This section will discuss the process of selecting appropriate volunteers.

Evaluating an organisation's volunteering base

One of the first steps in recruiting volunteers is to identify the sending organisation's target demographic. Some organisations may choose to work with professionals, students, school leavers, or people who have retired from full-time work.

Students

For those organisations which focus on sending students abroad, there are several issues to consider:

1. Due to vacation dates, students are restricted in the time of year they can go overseas. For example, if students volunteer on teaching placements, how does their summer vacation fit with the term dates of local schools?
2. Students are also limited in the amount of time they can spend on a placement, usually 12 weeks maximum. Allowing for acclimatisation and in-country training, organisations should be realistic about time spent working productively.
3. Students are not usually professionally trained and partner organisations must be aware of the limitations of volunteers' experience. Whilst it is positive to be flexible, it can be dangerous if untrained volunteers are given the responsibility normally assumed by skilled workers.

Sending organisations should encourage students to think carefully about all time and family commitments before accepting a placement (e.g. courses which start earlier than expected, family issues etc).

Professionals

Professionals usually have a specific skills base which has been built up over a number of years' experience. They are also often more likely to want to use these specific skills on a placement which utilises their training. Professionals will experience similar time constraints to students, and there is often the additional issue of familial commitments which organisations need to consider.

School-leavers

Important issues to consider if recruiting school leavers are their level of skills, age (especially if they are under 18 and not yet legally an adult), family concerns (especially if the school-leaver is still living at home), time constraints (if starting university for example) and previous overseas exposure/experience.

Retired from full-time work

This is a growing category of people who increasingly want to volunteer overseas at a time when they have greater flexibility and choice over when they volunteer, where and for how long. Issues to consider are skills the volunteer may wish to use, age (especially for insurance cover), medical issues and dietary requirements, time and family constraints and previous overseas exposure/experience.

Advertising

One way to help recruit suitable volunteers is to ensure that all placements are advertised accurately, appropriately and above all, clearly. Some areas to consider when advertising placements include:

1. **Accessibility:** Bringing the organisation to the volunteering base. If this is students, make use of Careers Services, Careers or Societies Fairs, student societies and other pre-existing networks used to disseminate information.
2. **Transparency:** If you are giving a presentation to students, take along some returned volunteers who can talk about their experiences and inspire others with their enthusiasm. Organisations should give prospective recruits full and fair access to former volunteers. Transparency also applies to costs and fundraising for placements (see section 4).
3. **Consistency:** Consider giving prospective volunteers an annual timetable of the placement structure (see appendix). This not only shows them that the organisation is serious and organised, it provides a sense of reliability and evidence of consistent behaviour toward partner organisations.

Poor advertising can lead to difficulties, and in some cases jeopardise the integrity or reputation of an organisation. Comhlamh (Irish Aid) Code of Good Practice and the Ethical Volunteering Guide have identified two issues which sending organisations should be aware of.

Images

Some organisations, often unconsciously, reflect unhelpful expectations or questionable values through a poor choice of images. For example, what may seem like a harmless picture of a volunteer playing with children could convey strong overtones of paternalism, whilst pictures of similar aged people working together on a project is much more likely to promote partnership.

Placement descriptions

Similarly, badly-worded placement descriptions can give a volunteer a distorted sense of what they will be doing, making the placement seem more important than it is. Common phrases which can be unhelpful include 'changing the world', 'saving lives' and 'making a real difference'. This is not to say that placements are not capable of producing important results, but it is a question of balance.

EXAMPLE: Student Partnerships Worldwide

South Africa Placement: "SPW volunteers are helping to show that people from different backgrounds can work together towards achieving a common goal".

India Placement: "By working with SPW India partner organisations, volunteers serve as a catalyst and facilitator in addressing important social, health and environmental issues in each placement community".

SPW reflects the importance of volunteers' work whilst focusing upon partnership and realistic aims as the key to successful placements. The language used is of facilitation and partnership rather than control or dominance.

Selection process

Some organisations choose a written-based application process, others interview-based selection. Many organisations include elements of both. Either option must serve several key purposes:

1. Give the volunteer more information about the organisation they are applying to; its aims, motivations and projects.
2. Encourage volunteers to challenge their own motivations and engender partial self-selection. Candidates will often remove themselves from the process if they feel unable to meet the organisation's expectations or uncomfortable at the thought of going overseas.
3. Give the sending organisation more information about the type of volunteer a person may become.
4. Nurture a sense of investment by the volunteer in the placement process by giving them a stake in the scheme and partial control over subsequent decisions as to their suitability.

Organisations need to decide who is going to be involved in selecting prospective candidates. Often student organisations will ask former volunteers to assess the next year's prospective volunteers. There are, however, certain dangers associated with peer review, not least because people are influenced, consciously or otherwise, by prior knowledge about a candidate. Sometimes this may simply be because people advertise the organisation to friends, and then end up interviewing them. Or at times it may be a prejudice against a prospective volunteer. Whatever the case may be, it is always useful to have input from someone experienced who is removed from, in this example, the student environment. This could be a senior member of a college or department, a development practitioner with links to the student organisation, or a member from the board of trustees if the organisation is a registered charity. Sometimes organisations will ask candidates for details of references they can contact in the event of their selection, which can help to mediate this problem.

Other issues it is important to consider in recruiting volunteers are:

- **Equality policy:** Selected volunteers should represent a cross-section of applicants. However, whilst a commitment to inclusiveness and diversity is essential, candidates must always be chosen primarily according to suitability for the placement.
- **Language skills:** Language requirements should be made clear. Do candidates need a certain level of ability in a given language to apply for a certain placement?
- **Feedback:** Rejected applicants should be given access to feedback on their application on request.
- **Role descriptions:** Organisations should carefully consider role descriptions for volunteers in order to recruit suitably skilled candidates. As full and accurate information as possible should be given about each placement from the start of the application procedure. However, volunteers should be made aware that it is a process and specific details may not always be known months in advance.

Key points

- Sending organisations should consider their recruitment base.
- Advertising should always be clear, honest and reliable.
- The selection process for volunteers should be fair and assess candidates for required skills.

Section 4: Costs and Fundraising

All placements cost money. Often placements are funded from many different sources, including the volunteer, the sending organisation, and various grants or fundraising activities. When sending organisations are advertising placements, the three most important principles in relation to fundraising are:

1. Be realistic
2. Be transparent
3. Provide volunteers with help

Being realistic

It is important to be realistic about costs. Underplaying the amount of funds required can lead to dangerous situations where volunteers are not adequately equipped (e.g. haven't had important vaccinations, or run out of money for accommodation). Preparing for and arranging the placement - visas, insurance, flights, supplies (sleeping bags, mosquito nets, malaria tablets, first aid kits) and any special equipment e.g. for extreme weather conditions or dangerous tasks) - often costs far more than volunteers expect. Some countries have a lower cost of living than others and volunteers should be aware of average in-country living costs for their placement. Rural areas are often less costly to live in than urban areas (sometimes because there is simply less opportunity to spend money) but the key thing is that costs vary greatly and volunteers need to do some research.

Being transparent

Volunteers need to feel that the sending organisation supports them and is not simply making money out of them. An outline of main costs must be given in all publicity material and on the website (if applicable). This does not have to be extremely detailed, but organisations must briefly itemise the main areas placement money subsidises. If part of the placement scheme is intended to raise funds for the organisation this must be stated clearly. Volunteers who live on a small budget overseas yet fundraised far more in preparation will begin to distrust the organisation if fund allocation hasn't been fully explained. Often a page entitled 'Where does your money go?', or similar, helps volunteers to see how funds are broken down to support different parts of the organisation or placement process. Even if all the money goes towards projects on the ground, a few short case studies or examples will make a significant difference to a volunteer's willingness to become involved. Visual breakdowns are helpful; pie charts, bar charts, photographs and other media make the process more transparent and accessible. The Ethical Volunteering Guide clearly directs potential volunteers to examine critically the financial policy of all placement schemes, and organisations should expect questions about this from prospective volunteers.

Providing volunteers with help

Two factors volunteers will consider when choosing a placement are the cost of the placement, and what help they are given to raise the necessary funds. Organisations should consider the difference between 'fundraising' and 'paying'. Volunteers may perceive an organisation which gives little advice on

how to raise money for the placement as simply asking for a fee, which in some cases may be true. A more successful approach, however, is to mobilise volunteers by an explicit fundraising programme. This may involve subsidising part of the placement, encouraging volunteers to work together to organise group fundraising, or arranging or suggesting events individuals can take part in to raise the required funds.

Providing volunteers with help may also involve providing volunteers with deadlines for applications to grants or trusts, encouraging volunteers to plan a fundraising schedule, work out how much each fundraising option might raise, and set their own targets and deadlines for achieving the necessary funds.

A 'fundraising approach' demonstrates the following:

- It is evidence of the organisation's commitment to the volunteer.
- It gives the volunteer a strong personal stake in their placement, and may encourage them to stay involved in the organisation in the future.
- It spreads knowledge of the organisation and its work to the volunteer's friends, family and associates. Pictures and logos from the sending organisation should be made available to volunteers for use in appealing to grant-making bodies and other organisations for funding.

One way in which organisations can provide assistance with fundraising is through help with grant applications.

Some important bodies to consider may be:

- Universities (both college (if applicable) and central university funds)
- Community organisations (such as Rotary International and Lions International)
- Religious or faith-based organisations (if applicable)
- Charitable funds within commercial organisations
- Local businesses

Every year, Cambridge University publishes a special edition of the Reporter, detailing all University grants, awards and funds. This is usually published in early November; the latest edition was released on 7 November 2008, and can be bought from Cambridge University Press or accessed online at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2008-09/special/06/>

The Cambridge University Library also holds directories of trusts and grant-making bodies which are searchable on the library's Newton catalogue, www.lib.cam.ac.uk/newton/ or ask at reception.

Organisations may also consider giving volunteers help with the following:

- Claiming Gift Aid on donations
- Using a Just Giving online fundraising account
- Joint fundraising events with other volunteers (Sponsored events, cake stalls, raffles etc.)
- Access to examples of previous volunteers' fundraising techniques

Budgeting

Budgeting is an important part of the placements process. Based on previous placements, the sending organisation should provide volunteers with estimated costs of each placement which are as detailed as possible. Volunteers should be made aware that placement costs will vary, and should be clear on exactly what the budget covers, and that occasionally unexpected costs may arise. For this reason, it is useful for volunteers to have some contingency/emergency funds.

Living somewhere is different from travelling and may alter costs. For example, putting up with a poky room may be bearable for a night or two when travelling, but for longer placements volunteers will need accommodation which is comfortable and has provision for cooking etc.

It is important that all costs of a placement are met, or secured, before the placement begins. The capacity to meet the financial demands of volunteering is essential. Organisations need to ensure that financial solvency is maintainable throughout the duration of volunteer placements, especially in cases where the organisation offers some financial assistance to the volunteer.

Ensure that volunteers have met their fundraising target, and are not relying on the organisation to provide emergency funding. Sometimes funding bodies will transfer only part of the grant before a placement, and the rest upon return. Whilst the funding is secured, volunteers must be able to support the cost of the placement and receive the balance of funds in arrears.

A sample budget is included in the appendix of this resource.

Key points

- Costs of placements must be given in full in an accessible place (e.g. on the sending organisation's website).
- Sending organisations should provide volunteers with help to raise funds for a placement.
- Volunteers should budget carefully for their placement and be able to fund it fully.

Section 5: Health and Safety

Health and Safety is never the most exciting part of going overseas or arranging a placement, but it is one of the most important and helpful aspects which can ensure the smooth running of a placement. Volunteers who feel ill or at risk cannot engage productively and, even at university age, parents are concerned to know their son or daughter has the full support and guidance of an extremely competent organisation behind them.

Health

Almost all volunteers who go on a placement will fall ill at some point. Usually this is nothing more than manageable travellers' diarrhea, tiredness, or adjusting to more extreme weather conditions; heat, cold, humidity. There are times, however, when a volunteer may be exposed to more harmful health issues, and it is important to be aware of these, have taken sufficient precautions, and have a support system in place for the volunteer to seek help. Some important measures include the following:

- Research the area a volunteer is travelling to thoroughly and encourage them to do the same.
- Provide the volunteer with appropriate information and explain possible health risks.
- Provide the volunteer with in-country emergency contact details, and make sure they know, or find out immediately on arrival, where the nearest doctor and hospital are.
- Ensure volunteers are given all information regarding health issues far enough in advance to allow time to complete vaccination courses.
- Recommend that a volunteer seek health advice from their GP or a Travel Clinic before they go overseas, especially if medication such as malaria prophylaxis is required.
- If a volunteer will be placed far from the nearest medical facility suggest that he/she considers any recommended vaccinations which are not compulsory (for example, the rabies jab, which gives the individual limited additional time to receive treatment).
- If the placement is within the EU, ensure that the volunteer has a European Health Insurance Card.
- Ensure that the volunteer has adequate travel insurance which covers any potential health risks.
- Ensure that you have received all relevant medical details of volunteers.
- Ensure volunteers are assigned to placements which take account of any existing medical problems the volunteer has or is likely to encounter.
- Ensure volunteers are aware of the climate they will encounter during their placement and the possible risks of sunstroke, sunburn, dehydration, frost bite, extreme cold, hypothermia, wind burn, and other problems associated with exposure.
- Volunteers must be made aware of any potential risks resulting from animals or insects in the placement area.
- Recommend that volunteers consider taking a basic first aid kit with them which, in some cases, include supplies such as sterilised needles which are advisable if volunteers are based in a remote area.
- Ensure volunteers are aware of continuing health issues on return, for example the importance of completing a malaria prophylaxis course. Advise that if volunteers experience any symptoms of illness they should let a GP know they have been overseas, and give details of location of placement, length of stay, date of return and any other relevant information.

Safety

Organisations must ensure the safety of volunteers as far as possible, whether this is from accident and injury, political instability or health risks. Sending organisations need to complete a risk assessment for each placement, and if necessary should seek advice on potential threats (e.g. asking the partner organisation about safety protection for working in a clinic for example).

Guidelines on how to conduct a risk assessment can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>

Health and Safety Executive Five Steps to conducting a risk assessment

The organisation must do all within its power to minimise the safety risks to volunteers. Some important measures may include the following:

- Organise emergency in-country contact details.
- Discuss with volunteers what methods of communication are available to reach a person at home, or within the sending organisation, should a problem occur.
- Remind volunteers to check they have a valid ten-year passport.
- Suggest links for volunteers to find information about any relevant visas they may need to apply for.
- Recommend that volunteers check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice for the country or region they are volunteering in: www.fco.gov.uk.
- Recommend that volunteers take the British Embassy phone number with them. The website (link above) provides good advice for relatives and friends of placement volunteers should a problem occur.
- Volunteers can register online with the FCO's LOCATE programme, giving them access to more rapid assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Recommend that volunteers take a photocopy of any important documents with them, which they should carry in a separate place in case anything happen to the originals. It is useful to have access to money in more than one format (e.g. cash and a bank card or travellers' cheques)
- In cases where a volunteer will be working with elderly people or children, organisations must make volunteers aware of relevant CRB checks which may be necessary.
- Organisations may need to ask volunteers for a certificate of fitness before travel.
- Organisations should incorporate adequate health and safety advice into pre-departure training for volunteers. Volunteers should be given all health and safety advice in written form at least three months in advance of the departure date.
- Organisations should consider what the contingency plan will be in the event of a severe threat to the health or safety of a volunteer.

Key points

- Sending organisation should provide volunteers with all necessary health and safety information, and/or sources of health and safety advice.
- Volunteers must have an emergency contact whilst overseas.
- Sending organisations must carry out full risk assessments where necessary.

Section 6: Training, Orientation and Debriefing

All sending organisations are responsible for giving volunteers adequate training to prepare them for a placement, and to support them on return. There are three main stages of training and orientation:

1. Pre-departure training
2. In-country orientation
3. Debriefing for returned volunteers (see also section 9)

Pre-departure training

This involves all training given to volunteers from when they are accepted on the placement through to the date of their departure.

All volunteers should be assigned a project manager/mentor (see key terms), ideally both within the volunteer's home country and in the placement area. A manager/mentor is responsible for assisting the volunteer with any problems they may have, and for helping to guide and support the direction of the placement. They may be useful in some cases for technical advice, but their main function is to help the volunteer manage the placement effectively and productively. The manager/mentor should also be responsible for ensuring the volunteer's mental and physical welfare as far as possible. Regular e-mails or phonecalls, as well as progress reports, help to strengthen this system making the volunteer more productive, more confident and more relaxed.

Pre-departure training is important for several reasons:

- It allows the volunteers to meet like-minded people, including those who may be on placement with them.
- It gives a face and identity to the sending organisation which consolidates relationships of trust and support.
- It gives volunteers training in the practical tasks and skills they will be using on placement.
- It is a chance to cover all health and safety advice and shape volunteers' expectations of the placement.
- It may be a chance for the volunteer to meet or talk further with their UK project manager/mentor.

Some topics which should be included in training are:

- Health risks and how to stay safe on placements.
- Where appropriate, specific training related to the skills volunteers will need on placements (e.g. medicine, teaching, engineering).
- Safety advice and, if relevant, how to carry out a risk assessment for any work volunteers may be doing.
- Expectations of a placement; how to engage with local people, what to expect in a country, how to adjust to cultural differences, accommodation, food, water and sanitation advice.
- What in-country support will be available; where to get help, emergency contacts, in-country manager/mentor (if applicable).

- Support the volunteer can expect to receive on return, and any responsibilities the volunteer may be expected to fulfill.

In-country orientation

This can be particularly useful if a group of volunteers who do not know each other very well will be working together, or if a volunteer has little or no experience of volunteering overseas. However, organisations should aim to provide in-country training to all volunteers regardless of experience.

Every country, region and community is different. No matter how much experience a volunteer has, there are always cultural norms and values which he/she may not understand, expect or be confident engaging with. In-country orientation should seek to:

- Make the volunteer aware of local cultural practices they may encounter.
- Help a volunteer to understand the partner organisation or community's expectations of the placement.
- Give a volunteer basic language training, including whom to communicate and negotiate with, and how.
- Provide contacts for medical and emergency assistance and, if the volunteer is situated in a remote area, how to contact their in-country manager/mentor.
- Give volunteers space and time to adjust to changes in climate, feelings of disorientation or homesickness, to contact their family, and (if applicable) build relationships with other volunteers on a placement.

Organisations should consider who is the best person or persons to deliver this training. It may be more practical or appropriate for the partner organisation to deliver in-country orientation.

Debriefing for returned volunteers

Volunteers often return from a placement with strong feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, fulfillment, inspiration and with a passion to continue engaging with issues around international development. However, mixed in with these there may be other feelings of apprehension, fear, disillusionment, anger, helplessness, vulnerability or confusion. Debriefing for returned volunteers is about helping volunteers to recognise, identify and engage with all the emotions they may be feeling, and empowering them to make their own choices and decisions which result from their experiences.

Important aspects of the debriefing process include:

- How volunteers process emotions which result from a placement experience, including talking to other returned volunteers.
- Information on how volunteers can stay involved with the sending organisation, including (in a student society) joining the committee, volunteering within the UK, and helping with the organisation's outreach/fundraising.
- An evaluation process for volunteers which may include writing a report, filling out an evaluation form or giving a presentation on the placement.

- A debrief meeting between each volunteer and their UK manager/mentor from the sending organisation.
- Where volunteers can get additional help or support should it be required, including a reminder about the importance of completing malaria prophylaxis courses and informing a GP of their placement location and duration should they develop any symptoms of illness.

Organisations should consider who the most appropriate person or persons are to provide training. For example, Cambridge University Kenya Education Partnerships runs health and safety training for all volunteers through the Red Cross, an organisation which has the professional expertise to meet volunteers' needs.

Key points

- Sending organisations should provide pre-departure training to prepare volunteers for overseas placements.
- Volunteers should be given in-country training which allows them time to acclimatise.
- Sending organisations should evaluate placements with each returned volunteer.

Section 7: Adjusting to cultural differences

Recognising cultural differences

Whether a volunteer is going overseas for the first time, or has a lot of experience working on placements, each country and each situation presents new challenges. Whilst these are to be embraced, and indeed contribute to the volunteer's learning experience, problems can arise when a volunteer or organisation becomes complacent and fails to prepare properly.

The need for suitable preparation and training has been emphasised in sections 5 and 6. However, there are some common issues relating to cultural differences which need to be addressed. These may include:

- **Language:** It is always appreciated when volunteers make the effort to learn the local language. Also encourage volunteers to consider their speech in English; avoiding the use of slang, colloquial language, and swear words.
- **Gender issues:** Is it appropriate to have male and female volunteers staying in the same accommodation block? If a volunteer's boyfriend/girlfriend visits them on a placement, what is the appropriate way to behave?
- **Clothing:** Appropriate clothing differs between countries and between regions within a country. Volunteers should be aware of the types of clothes they need to wear, and those to avoid. This will usually differ between men and women, and depend on the occasion. It may be important for volunteers to have smart clothes with them, and not assume they can wear less formal travelling clothes throughout the placement.
- **Working practices:** Working practices will differ depending on the people the volunteer is working with. Work clothes, working hours, lunch breaks, ways of talking to people, negotiation and salaries will vary and volunteers should try and find out as much about working practices and expectations as they can in advance.
- **Dietary requirements:** If a volunteer has a special eating requirement (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher), can this be reasonably accommodated by the partner organisation or community? Volunteers should also be aware of what food to avoid. In some areas it may be fine to eat fresh fruit from roadside stalls, in others it may not be. It is important that volunteers know specific advice about the region they will be working in. In general, volunteers should avoid foods such as salads and ice-cream.
- **Alcohol and intoxicants:** Attitudes towards alcohol and other intoxicants vary greatly throughout the world. It is important to make volunteers aware of what is the norm for a community, and that this will differ within an area between families and between individuals.

- **Taboos:** In every culture, there are certain topics of conversation, behaviours, or parts of the body, which are considered taboo. This can range from the feet being viewed as the dirtiest part of the body (Nepal), to the thighs needing to be covered (the Solomon Islands), to avoiding talking about sensitive political or personal issues. Encourage volunteers to be aware of themselves and others and be flexible about approaches and lifestyles.
- **Cultural practices:** Dealing with the shock of encountering unfamiliar practices, such as polygamy (Sudan) or female circumcision (parts of Kenya), is very difficult. Volunteers must resist the urge to 'correct' these lifestyles or behaviours and appreciate why certain practices exist and how they might have developed.
- **Safety issues:** When people go abroad, there is often a myth that it will be a lot more dangerous. Whilst this is sometimes the case, it is important to build trust and confidence with partner organisations and communities and not assume they are dishonest or unsafe. Similarly, however, there is sometimes a view that risks can be taken abroad which volunteers would never consider in the UK. This is an equally pernicious myth, and volunteers should be encouraged to use their common sense and act responsibly at all times.
- **Recent political issues:** Volunteers should spend some time researching the country they are going to – recent events, the political situation, divisive issues, and history of the country and region. Sending organisations should try and help with this by recommending ways to find out about an area; not just Lonely Planet or Rough Guides but films, literature, poetry, music and dance for example.

Coping with cultural change

"Last year, one volunteer rang me at 3am. The cultural shock was too much and the volunteer wanted to come home. This was the most enthusiastic applicant! The volunteer was glad they went in the end, but realised that no matter how much preparation you do, it's always different when you're actually out there."

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

Everyone struggles to understand other cultures and communities, and we are all influenced by our own upbringing, values, morals and lifestyles. Cultural sensitivity is not about denying these biases or pretending they don't exist; it is about self-awareness. Organisations should encourage volunteers to take the time in each new situation to understand their own reactions. This may help to prevent knee-jerk reactions to unfamiliar customs.

Placements should not be a test of a volunteer's endurance, and there may be times when the most beneficial course of action is to remove a volunteer from their placement. Emotional resilience, a positive attitude, and the ability to cope flexibly in a range of situations are all qualities which cannot be guaranteed through the application process. As the example above demonstrates, sometimes it is the most unlikely person who finds it hardest to adjust. Organisations should encourage prospective volunteers to think carefully about a placement before they accept.

Recognising volunteers' needs

In rare circumstances, a volunteer may be extremely unhappy or face a difficult situation which they cannot resolve alone. Sending organisations need to recognise times when action may need to be taken and develop a contingency plan for more serious situations.

Key points

- Cultural differences should be recognised and respected.
- Volunteers should strive to be culturally sensitive in all situations and understand that they represent the sending organisation overseas.
- Sending organisations should recognise when volunteers need help and have a contingency plan.

Section 8: Volunteers In-country

There are many horror stories about volunteers who went abroad and became seriously ill, injured or unsafe during their trip. It is important to stress that this only applies to a very small number of cases. Whilst such situations are due to a number of reasons, there are a number of precautions which can be taken to minimise these risks, especially providing **in-country support** and **emergency contacts**. All volunteers should have a good in-country support system for any problems or difficulties they might encounter. This is not to say that placements are not demanding, challenging or character-building, but they are not productive or enjoyable if someone lacks relevant help and support.

Managing a project

Volunteers will often go out to placements with lots of enthusiasm, good skills and a desire to help. Turning these factors into more than the sum of their parts and enabling the placement to act as a learning experience can be difficult. Volunteers need the opportunity to comment on how their placement is going during their time working overseas. They also need a support structure which can provide assistance for work-related issues (such as planning a project, monitoring progress and outputs, evaluating methods and procedures used). This role is usually fulfilled by a project manager/mentor.

The ideal situation is that a volunteer has a UK-based project manager/mentor, and an in-country manager/mentor. This allows the volunteer to receive both in-country support whilst on placement, and the opportunity to comment on the partner organisation should any problems arise. Organisations should consider how best to organise volunteer support in order to meet these needs.

A project manager/mentor either within the UK, on placement, or both, should be responsible for the following:

- Providing professional advice or expertise to the volunteer whilst on placement
- Debriefing with the volunteer after the placement
- Contributing to the sending organisation's ongoing evaluation of placements (e.g. commenting on the utility and achievements of the placement)
- Providing recommendations for how to improve the placement process

Emergency contacts and in-country Project manager/mentor

Volunteers should have an in-country contact, who acts as a manager/mentor not only for work related queries, but also for personal or welfare issues. Volunteers are often worried that small issues do not constitute an 'emergency', but people cannot make the most of a placement if they are worrying about their accommodation or their food, or a difficult colleague.

In many cases, the in-country manager/mentor can also act as the volunteer's primary emergency contact. This has the advantage that they are in regular contact with the volunteer, and a relationship of trust has already been established. However, in situations where the manager/mentor may be based some distance from the volunteer, organisations should consider providing the volunteer with a more

suitable emergency contact. There must be someone at all times who is directly responsible for the volunteer whilst on placement.

Building relationships of support and trust

Building relationships of trust is one of the most important parts of any placement and responsible organisations encourage volunteers to build these networks throughout the duration of their time overseas; with partner organisations, with local communities, and with other volunteers. It is important, however, that these same relationships are developed between the sending organisation in the UK and the volunteer, even in many cases with parents of the volunteer.

Volunteers, and often their families, will usually have concerns and queries about placements. The more questions an organisation can anticipate the better, not least because it reassures the volunteer that other people have the same feelings, and the organisation is experienced in dealing with these. Ensure that there is a direct contact who can speak to parents or families at least via e-mail, but preferably by phone or in person. Volunteers and their families and friends need to feel assured that the placement is safe, well-planned and well-supported.

“Over the summer months I go out to India and meet all the volunteers personally on their placements. I remain in constant contact with them by e-mail or by phone to make sure I can answer all their questions.”

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

Accommodation and food

A volunteer's accommodation should be planned several months in advance of the placement (see section 2). If a volunteer is going to be based with a local family (rather than a hotel or youth hostel), volunteers need to be made aware of any specific requirements the host family has or cultural sensitivities it is important to observe. Likewise, if a volunteer has a dietary or medical requirement, it is important to ensure that the host family can reasonably cope with this before confirming accommodation arrangements.

Internal travel

Sending organisations should provide volunteers with appropriate information about internal travel within the placement area, for example, types of transport available, safety issues and where appropriate estimated local prices.

Key points

- Volunteers should have an in-country project manager/mentor and an emergency contact.
- Sending organisation should build relationships of trust with volunteers and their families.
- Sending organisations should provide help and advice for volunteers on living overseas.

Section 9: Returned volunteers and evaluating placements

Volunteers

The first few days or weeks having returned from a placement can sometimes be as hard, or even harder, than a volunteer's first few days overseas. Reverse culture shock is a recognised issue which many returned volunteers will talk about. Having often seen great poverty and hardship, or having experienced an exciting and dynamic culture living as part of a community abroad, life in the UK can often seem dull, self-centred or fruitless. Whilst it is helpful to steer away from phrases such as 'life-changing', many volunteers will see their time overseas as a turning point or a formative experience and it is important not to neglect this.

Evaluation and de-briefing

All sending organisations should create a formal and structured means of requesting and analysing feedback from volunteers. For short placements, this may take the format of an evaluation form, or a written report for the sending organisation. For longer or more challenging placements, however, there should be a one-to-one debrief meeting with support personnel from the sending organisation, preferably the volunteer's UK project manager/mentor.

A day- or weekend-long debrief which reunites all volunteers who went overseas with the sending organisation can also be beneficial. The advantage of a longer evaluation is three-fold:

1. It enables the sending organisation to gain a real insight into how placements function; how their work is benefiting people overseas, whether support was adequate, what could be improved and, very importantly, identifying what was done well!
2. It provides the sending organisation with feedback on the host organisation. If it has been a while since someone from the sending organisation has visited the partner organisation, the most recent source of news may be the volunteer who has just returned from a placement.
3. Thirdly, it can help to cushion the impact of reverse culture shock for volunteers. One of the most common feelings expressed by returned volunteers is one of isolation, a feeling that no-one *really* understands what it was like for them. Meeting other volunteers who have been on placements can provide a good opportunity to share experiences, identify common problems, create a network of support, and have good fun reminiscing!

Making changes

An evaluation process is of no use if steps are not taken to act on volunteers' feedback. Tangible changes must be made where necessary from volunteers' recommendations. This can be as simple as providing more pre-departure information, making budgets clearer, or making placement descriptions more explicit. However, it can also mean being willing to make larger structural changes to an organisation, for example, rethinking pre-departure training, reviewing aims and objectives of

placements, changing partner organisations, or providing more in-country support. It is not always easy to change the way an organisation works, but doing so where necessary is an investment in productive and enjoyable placements which attract lots of volunteers.

“I review partner organisations on a rolling basis. One placement a volunteer did was not very well-planned by the partner organisation; they hadn’t thought through tasks to give the volunteer, and offered things which weren’t suitable for the volunteer’s skills. I stopped working with that organisation because it wasn’t helpful or enjoyable for anyone.”

Shiraz Vira, founder of Camvol

Positive feedback

The evaluation process is equally valuable for identifying what the sending organisation is doing well. This can easily be forgotten amidst attempts to constantly improve placements. The evaluation process is as much a chance for volunteers to give positive feedback to the sending organisation, which should be celebrated and built on for the future.

Recognising volunteers’ contributions

One of the most significant ways an organisation can help volunteers to feel valued is to recognise their contribution both to the sending organisation and the partner organisation or community. Make sure recognition of a volunteer’s work is given in publicity leaflets, newsletters, photo exhibitions, and other promotional material. Inviting volunteers back to speak at events, or to meet new volunteers is also important as part of consolidating and valuing their placement. Some organisations give a statement or certificate of service as a way of formally recognising the placement experience. Organisations should also consider that former volunteers may ask for a reference for further employment, study or volunteering.

Getting returned volunteers involved in the UK

Many organisations hope that volunteers will become further involved with the organisation in the UK after their placement. This can be to help with fundraising or campaigning, to be on a database for prospective volunteers to contact, to speak at events, or to sit on the next year’s committee for example. It is important to highlight this during the application process. Some organisations make it a condition of the placement, for example volunteers on VSO’s Youth for Development are expected to complete a compulsory Global Education Project on return. Others simply acknowledge that it would help a volunteer’s application if they would be willing to stay involved; volunteers with Cambridge Volunteers in Nepal and Kenya Education Partnerships are asked at interview if they would be willing to sit on the following year’s committee.

The placement debrief is also a good opportunity to discuss ways returned volunteers can contribute to the activities of the sending organisation. Volunteers are likely to feel most enthused at this point, and have lots of fresh ideas for things they can do. Don’t overburden volunteers, but do empower them to translate their experience into meaningful outcomes. This doesn’t have to be a career in international

development, it can simply be keeping a diary of their experience, speaking on a local radio station, helping with a fundraising event, gaining more information about development work, or looking for ways to do another placement in the future. Small, regular contributions from volunteers can often be more helpful than one-off larger events.

Consider asking returned volunteers if their feedback can be used on the organisation's website to help prospective volunteers, and whether they would be willing for future volunteers to contact them to ask about their experiences.

Providing physical and psychological support

In a small number of cases, volunteers may require professional psychological or medical assistance. Whilst most sending organisations cannot provide this, it is important to remind volunteers that should they experience any physical symptoms of illness they should inform their GP immediately and tell him/her where they have been on placement, for how long, and when they returned. It is not uncommon for volunteers to avoid illness overseas, only to come down with something on their return, when their immune system is often at its lowest after weeks working abroad and a tiring journey back.

Host organisations

Asking for feedback

Sending organisations should ask for feedback from host organisations too. Host organisations will be able to evaluate the ongoing importance of volunteers to projects, and comment on their work. Useful ideas for next year's volunteers or issues arising from the placement can be discussed, and it is a chance to negotiate any necessary changes.

Evaluating volunteers

It is important that the host organisation evaluates the work of the volunteer. This should be in a written format which records:

- The volunteer's role (specific tasks)
- How successfully they performed these tasks
- The volunteer's strengths and weaknesses
- Reference to the volunteer's character (flexibility, ease to work with, cultural sensitivity)

This is useful for:

- The host organisation: to reflect on how useful the placement was, what was achieved
- The sending organisation: to know quality of volunteers, extra training needed etc.
- The volunteer: as a reference for future employment, for areas to improve

Key points

- Sending organisation should have a clear debriefing process for volunteers.
- Sending organisations should ask for feedback from volunteers and partner organisations.
- Appropriate changes should be made where necessary and positive feedback celebrated!

Section 10: Useful links

GENERAL

Humanitarian Centre website

<http://www.humcentre.org/hub/public/careers%20information.htm>

- In conjunction with the Cambridge University Careers Service, the Humanitarian Centre runs a series of talks on summer placements. The presentations from these sessions can be found at this link. The information is useful to both sending organisations and prospective volunteers.

<http://www.humanitariancentre.org/hub/public/HC%20library%20catalogue.htm>

- The Humanitarian Centre Resource Centre contains information which is of use to both sending organisations and volunteers. The catalogue can be found at this link.

Ethical volunteering

www.ethicalvolunteering.org

Comhlamh (Irish Aid) Code of Good Practice

www.comhlamh.org

BS 8848: 2007, British Standard for activities outside the United Kingdom, FAQs

<http://www.bsigroup.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/Industry-Sectors/Services/BS-88482007/FAQs-for-BS-8848/>

FCO website, travel advice

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas

- Give travel advice by country
- Travel advice on entry visas
- Offer a large number of publications which are helpful in gaining a sense of what living overseas might entail

Review of organisations which send people abroad

<http://www.abroadreviews.com>

Institute for Volunteering Research

www.ivr.org.uk

- UK-based volunteering, but includes reports of particular relevance on volunteer management, engaging with youth volunteers ('What young people want from volunteering'), and volunteer's views on their involvement and support

Volunteer England

www.volunteering.org.uk

- UK-based volunteering, but useful reports on volunteer management and a 'good practice bank' to share information between organisations

Reuters AlertNet

www.alertnet.org

- Information and news on humanitarian emergencies.

Eldis

www.eldis.org

- Sharing development policy, practice and research

SPECIFIC TOPICS

- **Volunteer Management**

Volunteer England

<http://ecommerce.volunteering.org.uk/>

Range of publications including:

- 'Deciding Whether to Involve Volunteers'
- 'Selecting Volunteers', 'Recruiting Volunteers', and 'The Volunteer Recruitment Book'
- 'Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit'
- 'Essential Volunteer Management'
- 'Supervising Volunteers'

Voluntary Service Overseas

http://www.vso.org.uk/resources/position_papers.asp

VSO Position Papers

- 'The Role of Volunteers in International Development'
- 'Managing the Placement of Volunteers'

- **Fundraising**

Ezine articles

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Fundraising-For-Your-Volunteer-Program-Overseas&id=1497729>

- Helpful information which can be given to volunteers to help with fundraising ideas

- **Health and Safety**

www.hse.gov.uk

- Information on Health and Safety Law, risk assessment requirements and first aid. Risk assessments are a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm

- Government risk assessment information
- There are five basic steps:
 - Initial Identify all different activities
 - 1. Identify possible hazards
 - 2. Identify who might be harmed by the activities and how

3. Identify current precautions and risk control systems, the level of risk still present with these precautions in place, and how risks can be reduced.
 4. Record all findings and implement them
 5. Review the assessment and update as necessary
- All accidents must be recorded in an accident report form.

Sample risk assessment

www.hse.gov.uk/risk/template.pdf : Blank template risk assessment form

Organisation: _____ Placement: _____

Location of placement: _____ Assessment undertaken (date): _____

Assessment undertaken by: _____ Assessment review date: _____

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What precautions are currently in place?	What further actions are necessary to control the risk?

Department of Health

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4123441

- Pdf download of Health Advice for Travellers. This page also displays a link to help users apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

Fit for Travel

www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk

- Travel Health information for people travelling abroad from the UK, including advice on malaria prophylaxis and recommended vaccinations

Dr. Jane Wilson-Howarth

www.wilson-howarth.com

- Books and advice on travelling and working abroad. Dr. Jane Wilson-Howarth is a practicing GP who specialises in travel health and also works at The Travel Clinic, Cambridge: www.travelcliniccambridge.co.uk/

Lonely Planet and Rough Guide books: both have good sections on health and staying safe abroad.

Returned volunteers

<http://vso.org.uk/volunteering/case%5Fstudies/>

- Reports and case studies of returned volunteers

Section 11: Appendix

Sample Budget

This is an example of how a budget might look for a volunteer on an eight-week placement (discounting money a volunteer may take for souvenirs/ personal in-country travel before/after the placement).

<u>Preparatory costs</u>	
Administrative fee to sending organisation (for all training and orientation, support and arrangements)	£300-£500
Return Flight	£500
Vaccinations and medical equipment (including malaria prophylaxis)	£200
Essential equipment (sturdy shoes, sleeping bag, mosquito net)	£100
Travel insurance and visa	£100
<u>In-country costs</u>	
Accommodation and living expenses (including food)	£400
Internal travel costs	£100
Contingency/emergency funds (ideally)	Up to £300 (ideally)
<u>Total</u>	£2000-£2,300 (approx)

Sample Role description

This is an example of an AIESEC placement description formed from several 2008 examples. The description gives clear details of basic information such as location, partner organisation and position, as well as more specific indications of desired outcomes, and what experience a volunteer can expect to gain. This placement description was formulated by the partner organisation, Oxfam India, to fill a specific need.

EXAMPLE: AIESEC

Internship information

Organisation name: Oxfam India

Organisational position: Resource Mobility Head

Placement location: Bangalore, India

Start and end dates: 01.09.2008 - 12.2008

Duration: 8 weeks (minimum), 12 weeks (maximum)

Internship description

Internship focus: Corporate Responsibility, HIV/AIDS, Finance, Accounting, Development Studies, Marketing, Human Resource, Cultural Education

Working hours: From 0900 – 1800 (total of 48 hours per week including Saturdays)

Payment: Salary in US \$83, monthly

Department in which the intern will be working: Fundraising and presentation delivery

Job/task description 1: Raising funds for Oxfam campaigns (especially HIV/AIDS)

Job/task description 2: Visiting different offices throughout the city to promote Oxfam campaigns, thus gaining varied exposure.

Job/task description 3: Delivering presentations

Job/task description 4: Conducting research both online and field-based through surveys and monitoring

Results expected from intern: To be a dedicated and hard worker, complete monthly targets.

Key learning points that the intern might obtain during the internship: Skills of communication, and interpersonal skills which are a key factor for successful marketing. Experience of the way fundraising occurs for issue-based projects in NGOs.

Preparation required from the intern before arrival: The intern should have sufficient knowledge about the organisations and its various endeavours.

Skills required

Computer: Internet User skills (required), PC user skills (required)

Personal skills and knowledge: Community Development (preferred)

Professional skills: Project Management (required), Presentation skills (required), Marketing skills (required), Team management skills (preferred), Financial Management skills (required)

Languages: English (required)

Sample Timetable

This is an example of Development in Action's annual timetable 2009 for 2 and 5 month volunteers in India.

Date	Event
November 2008-February 2009	Recruitment events throughout the U.K.
5 th February 2009	Deadline for first round of applications
21 st and 22 nd February 2009	Selection weekend for first round of applicants
2 nd April 2009	Deadline for second round of applications
18 th and 19 th April 2009	Selection weekend for second round of applicants
20 th and 21 st June 2009	Training weekend for 2 month placements

4 th July-6 th September 2009	2 month placement duration, including orientation week
18 th and 19 th July 2009	Training weekend for 5 month placements
7 th September 2009 -12 th February 2010	5 month placement duration, including orientation week

Checklist: Health and Safety

Sending organisations should consider the following:

- Visas
- Travel insurance
- EU health insurance card (for placements in the EU)
- Vaccinations
- Malaria prophylaxis
- Equipment and clothing appropriate to the placement (e.g. strong walking boots, mosquito net, rucksack)
- Medical kit (e.g. suncream, insect repellent, sterile needles, plasters)
- Risk assessment for placement activities
- FCO travel recommendations
- Emergency contacts
- Nearest medical facilities to each placement
- Existing medical problems of volunteers
- Threat posed by animal/insect bites
- First Aid training for volunteers
- Certificate of fitness from volunteer
- Methods of available communication in each placement area
- A volunteer's access to money
- CRB check (where applicable)
- Contingency plan

Checklist: Information the sending organisation needs (for each placement)

- Full details for each volunteer (name, date of birth, gender, address etc)
- Medical information for each volunteer
- References for each volunteer
- Previous work experience and skills of the volunteer
- Duration of placement
- Location of placement
- Partner organisation's expectations of volunteers
- Skills each placement requires

Checklist: Information the partner organisation needs (for each placement)

- Full details for each volunteer (name, date of birth, gender, address etc)
- Medical information for each volunteer
- Sending organisation's expectations of placement
- Volunteer's expectations of the placement
- Duration of placement
- Previous work experience and skills of the volunteer

Checklist: Information the volunteer needs (for each placement)

- Details of application process (including deadlines)
- Skills required for placements
- Location of placement
- Duration of placement
- Paid or unpaid volunteering
- Language requirements
- Partner organisation who volunteer will be working with
- Costs of the placement
- Health and safety information
- Full contact details for the UK-based sending organisation and for the partner organisation
- Emergency contact
- Project manager/mentor contact details
- Details of training and orientation
- Accommodation and food requirements on placement
- Internal travel arrangements
- Cultural differences
- Access to money and methods of communication whilst on placement