



Ethical Volunteering

WORKING WITH AND FOR COMMUNITIES

So you want to volunteer overseas?
Great! We love your enthusiasm
and generosity!

When volunteering is locally driven,
sustainable and transparent and keeps the
best interests in mind for both the community
it serves and you as a volunteer, it can be a
transformative experience.

Before you start looking for a volunteer
placement, think about your why? Do you
want to develop your skills, gain experience or
expand your networks? Do you want to travel
or step outside your comfort zone? Do you
want to make a positive contribution?

Many of these are good reasons to volunteer,
but sometimes doing good can be complex.
This information sheet will give you some

important advice and top tips to make sure
your volunteering experience is a positive one
for all involved.

THE 'HOW?' IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE 'WHY?'

Sometimes in an effort to help people we can
take away their power to help themselves.
Despite the best intentions, volunteering
can reinforce stereotypes of us and them,
take away jobs from local people, create
dependency on handouts and, at its worse,
exploit vulnerable groups.

It's important you choose a volunteer
placement that puts equality and respect
at the centre of your work, where you can
meaningfully contribute to an organisation
that has identified they need your skills.

**“I was particularly
impressed by the approach
to community development,
through the sharing of
knowledge and through
providing trainees with
the tools to enhance
their capabilities in the
workforce. I will never
forget the impact that
KOTO has on the lives of the
youth it supports and the
community it gives back to.”**

–THORUNN ARNADOTTIR, PACE ACTIVITY WITH
KOTO (KNOW ONE TEACH ONE), VIETNAM

I WANT TO VOLUNTEER IN AN ORPHANAGE.

A better alternative: Volunteer with an
organisation that keeps families together,
reunites children with their families or
provides family based care. If you are
teaching, providing care or working directly
with children, make sure you are the best
person to do the job. Ask yourself: If I'm not
qualified to do the role in Australia should I
really be doing it overseas?

Keep in mind: 80% of children in
orphanages have one or more living parent
(Save the Children). Some orphanages
unnecessarily institutionalise children to get
money from volunteers and tourists.

I ONLY HAVE A WEEK TO VOLUNTEER.

A better alternative: If you only have a
short time, just be an ethical traveller –
learn about the country and culture you are
in, spend your money with local providers
and support initiatives that preserve the
culture and environment. Commit to a
longer volunteer placement at home or look
for online opportunities with international
organisations.

Keep in mind: A rotation of short-term
volunteers can mean local people don't
develop the skills or experience to drive
development in their own communities.

I WANT TO BRING SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND CLOTHING TO HANDOUT.

A better alternative: Consult with your
volunteer placement to make sure what
you're bringing is really needed. If it is, buy
it in the country you are volunteering in to
support local businesses.

Keep in mind: Handouts can create
dependency, encourage begging and while
something might be useful in Australia, it
might not be needed overseas. How useful
is a school book if it isn't in your language?



PACE International students learn traditional weaving skills from their host supervisor at PACOS Trust in Malaysia.

FINDING A VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

When you are searching for an organisation to volunteer with, don't be afraid of asking the hard-hitting questions to make sure the work you are going to do will not cause harm in any way.

We've provided you with ten questions to get started:

WHOSE IDEA WAS THE VOLUNTEER PROJECT AND WHO RUNS IT?

Who understands a community better than the community themselves? Volunteer projects should be designed and led by the community to meet needs that the community have identified.

HOW WILL MY SKILLS BE USED?

Volunteer placements should make the best use of your skills by carefully matching you with a role that suits your level of experience.

AM I THE BEST PERSON TO DO THE JOB?

Are you a qualified teacher, social worker or builder? Unskilled volunteers can take jobs away from local people and can cause more harm than good, particularly when working with children or vulnerable groups.

WILL YOU ADVISE ME ABOUT LOCAL CULTURE AND CUSTOMS?

Choose an organisation that provides training for your role, as well as an understanding of the cultural customs and political, economic and social context of the country you'll be working in.

WHAT KIND OF MEDICAL, SECURITY AND SAFETY SUPPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE?

Look for an organisation that supports you while you're away - who could you contact if you have an emergency, a problem with your volunteer placement or are struggling to adjust to your new environment?

WHEN, HOW AND WHERE IS MY MONEY SPENT?

Organisations should be transparent and willing to show you their financial statements. They should invest at least a portion of your fee into the local community.

DO YOU HAVE A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

The answer should be an absolute yes! Make sure all staff and volunteers are screened before starting their roles and are trained on how to implement and abide by the policy.

DO YOU PROTECT WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

Avoid an organisation that offers animal rides or allows you to touch and play with the animals. Choose an organisation that supports conservation and animal welfare efforts.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I LEAVE?

Make sure your role involves working with local staff so they can continue with your work after you leave.

CAN I TALK TO PREVIOUS VOLUNTEERS?

This is a good way of finding out more about the organisation, volunteer placement and country before you commit to the experience.

VOLUNTEERING WITH MACQUARIE

If you would like to volunteer, but are unsure who to work with or how to fit it around your degree, don't worry! We've got you covered.

PACE (PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)

Macquarie University's PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program is embedded in all undergraduate degrees and provides you with the opportunity to volunteer with organisations in Sydney and around the world as part of your course.

Through PACE you will contribute to positive social change through work placements

aligned to your studies and be exposed to some of the key social, business and ethical challenges in today's world.

PACE staff spend a lot of time assessing and working with organisations to make sure they meet international community development guidelines, so you can be assured the work you will complete is ethical in nature.

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

You're socially aware and ready to take on the world. But how do you make an impact? The Global Leadership Program (GLP), an extracurricular program open to all students, gives you the tools you need to drive real change, with a focus on cross-cultural and leadership skills, global issues and innovation. Volunteering, in Australia and overseas, is one of the many options you can participate in for your GLP. The GLP encourages sustainable, locally driven volunteering, and provides an online guide to help you find responsible volunteering opportunities.

10 TIPS TO BE A VALUED VOLUNTEER

1. Be a sponge – listen to your host organisation and the local community. They are the experts!
2. Bring a positive attitude.
3. Be respectful of cultural differences and traditions.
4. Learn before you do – research your host organisation, the country and culture before you go and keep learning when you get there.
5. Do the work that is valuable to the organisation, not just the work that is the most fun.
6. Go with the flow – sometimes your work might change based on the needs of the organisation. Be flexible and open to change.
7. Don't take photos of children and make sure you gain informed consent before taking a photo of an adult.
8. Stop before you Snap! Think before you Tweet! Make sure your social media challenges stereotypes and portrays the local community with dignity.
9. Make the most of your placement - build relationships with the people you are working with, explore your surroundings and try new things.
10. Keep learning & doing when you get home. Educate yourself and take action on the issues impacting your local and global community.

FIND OUT MORE

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