



Things to consider as a volunteer

Volunteering can be one of the most rewarding things that you can do in life. You are able to impart some of your knowledge and expertise to those who have never perhaps experienced a good education, have a great time and receive all the rewards of the happiness and joy of the girls' own achievements and how they developed in the time you have been here. For this alone it can provide such a good experience and can challenge, motivate and inspire you to give as much as you want to the girls at Sambhali.

But the word 'volunteer' has a particular meaning to different people. Mostly it means giving your services free to the benefit of the organisation's participants. This is true but also you have to take into consideration that you are working in an organisation like any other you might be working back home and the same considerations and protocols apply in an NGO. In any company or organisation there are systems in place to make sure that it is running as smoothly as possible. Whilst here in Sambhali we are endeavouring to improve our administrative strategies year upon year, and with thanks to the many volunteers who have helped to compile our documentation and databases for future use we are improving. However, sometimes it is all too easy to think that you are doing this work voluntarily so sometimes it doesn't matter if something isn't finished off correctly, for instance when you know back home that in fact you would work out strategies to make sure this is done, if not by you, by somebody else in a correct manner. We understand many volunteers may not have started work yet and will still be studying at university, but similarly this applies - just remember to carry out any required work in a professional manner as you know how.

Sambhali is a very friendly place to be and the overlap between work and socialising sometimes makes it difficult to behave in a professional manner when it is called for, but ultimately you need to take into consideration that you are working for an organisation where ideas and opinions are respected but as with any organisation it is the Director who makes the final decision about a project or completion of a task. Again, as with any company the Director needs to make an assessed judgement of everything that is happening with all the various projects and administrative tasks that are undertaken. It is through his experience and inside knowledge of what has happened over the past few years which helps decide what is a good idea or what could be improved upon with the resources he has to call on at any one time.

As a volunteer, it's best to consider yourself as a member of the Sambhali team, with equal commitment to use your own special skills and expertise, and to work with everyone together for the ultimate goal of improving the lives of the women and girls that are in Sambhali's various projects. In a very short time volunteers have made an incredible difference to the lives of these girls and the enthusiasm and energy they have put in is truly amazing.

As one of our volunteers, we request you to follow three principles:

Modify your behaviour:

Always ask yourself whether what you are doing is in the best interests of the girls and women who are Sambhali's participants. Your "behaviour" in this case includes how you dress, how you use your mobile phone, how you behave in the market and how you interact with new "special" Sambhali friends. Please do not offer or accept presents, money, food or other gifts to any participant unless you describe it to us first.

Be aware of yourself:

Our students and participants are more experienced in human relationships than they might first appear. We find that they are frequently reading your feelings from your face and your eyes more than you are able to read theirs. The best way to provide what the women and girls are entitled to receive from Sambhali is to be thoughtfully aware of yourself just much as you are trying to be thoughtfully aware of them.

Do not ever start any local romantic relationship while you are a volunteer for Sambhali. Our community is socially conservative and the rules governing "romance" are more complex and strict than you are likely to imagine.

Talk to us:

Talking over what happens to you each day with other volunteers and with Sambhali staff will help you stay orientated so that the girls and women receive the most benefit from you. Sambhali requests every volunteer to fill out the submitted "work plan". A daily log, a weekly report of your participation, as well as an overall final report explaining your achievements when you leave.

Expectations:

Please do not be restrictive about what you would or would not do for the Trust, when it's not about you but about the participants and the NGO; after all, volunteering isn't a holiday, it's about helping people. It's very important that volunteers have the right expectations about the volunteering experience - otherwise it could be a difficult/disappointing experience for everyone involved. Come with an open mind, for your knowledge and your expectations. Think of: How can I be useful? What can I contribute? What will they need from me?

You also need to be flexible and adjust to being in a totally different society, whether you are based in Jodhpur or Setrawa. It can be quite a culture shock and you need to accept that some things are very different in India – different ways of doing things, sense of timing, different standards. This refers to cleanliness that you might see in the town centre for instance. Indian people spitting in the street or men sometimes using the wall as a urinal, (not *all* the time!)... these things are part of Indian life. Sometimes it's easy to be critical and judgemental and compare these things to western standards, but Indian people are proud of their heritage, live by their religious beliefs and are very warm and welcoming people if you accept them as they are. Come with the idea of helping and educating the girls and learning about the lives and customs of another culture, and if you can do that, you'll have a great time ... and a lot of fun!

We have provided tons of information on the website, reports, annual reports, the blog etc.

We thank you very much for selecting this project and for making a difference in lives of the people participating with the Sambhali Trust.

Read and accepted by: