



Volunteer Conduct Standards

During your participation in a Village Volunteers program, it is important to always remember that you represent Village Volunteers and your home country. Below are key matters which all volunteers must clearly understand. Should you have any questions, please contact our team at info@villagevolunteers.org.

Understanding the Village Volunteers Approach

The Village Volunteers approach is one of consideration, kindness, and a commitment to human rights. Through collaboration with local communities on a wide variety of projects, volunteers have the opportunity to strengthen ties across the boundaries of international borders, race, gender, age, and culture.

In preparation for your journey, we will ask that you follow the below guidelines.

- ☐ **Approach your international service experience with an open mind and heart; see yourself as a student rather than an educator, as a helper rather than a leader.** Village Volunteers asks that before departure, volunteers understand the realistic limits of their abilities to solve a community's problems. This approach can sometimes seem frustrating, as volunteers frequently feel that they can offer many solutions to a village's problems. These feelings are usually deceptive, however. A community's problems are often complex and interwoven with its cultural practices, beliefs, and history. Answers are rarely found on the surface or developed in a matter of weeks. Come without preconceived ideas, and your opportunity to learn will be greatly enhanced.
- ☐ When volunteers are placed in a village program, their safety and needs are paramount to the hosts, Program Director, and the Village Volunteers team. **Remember that Village Volunteers does not assume to manage specific projects from a distance; much freedom is given to you and your Program Director in identifying your volunteer activities.** It is in working together that mutual understanding is rooted.

- We understand that it is important for volunteers to feel engaged in the community. However, we ask that you remember that the pace of life is typically much slower in village communities. Still there is much value in simply taking time to absorb your environment and learn from those around you. **Don't expect to enter a village and feel like you are immediately useful and fully engaged. Be patient.** Try not to get frustrated with the slow pace. You may feel that there is simply not enough time to “make a difference,” but understand that your very presence is valued and *that does make a difference*.
- **Be tolerant and understanding of conditions that may arise during your stay.** At any moment, the best-laid plan may have to be put aside because of a death in the community, inclement weather, lack of funding, or a multitude of other factors. Life in a rural setting is unpredictable, particularly to those who are just visiting. If you tend to need to feel in control, try to control those impulses. The benefits to you will be a greater peace of mind and appreciation for the intangible contributions you are making to the community.
- Distinct responsibilities come with being a Village Volunteer. By making the commitment to assist people of another culture, you have accepted an obligation as an ambassador of good will to carefully adhere to the policies, goals, and principles of Village Volunteers.
- All of the villages are struggling economically. However, they also have tremendous hope for the future. Your participation as a Village Volunteer supports the goals of the village communities. Your helping hand is magnified a hundred-fold by the good will that it brings. By volunteering with Village Volunteers, you are not only contributing directly on the ground, but you also join us in supporting the long-term goals of our partner communities. Village Volunteers' international volunteer program was established to make our work in fostering sustainable development solutions possible.

Partner Organization Operations

The Village Volunteers philosophy is to empower our partner organizations to run their programs in a way that meets the needs of their villages. **If you feel that something is not done as you would do it, please refrain from taking matters into your own hands, as the partner organization's policies and procedures may not be transparent to you.** Village Volunteers

encourages suggestions, however we have the utmost respect for the leadership that drives their decisions.

Money

In a community where there is much need, volunteers will invariably be asked for help. It is very difficult for Village Volunteers and our partner Program Directors to curtail this natural tendency when local individuals are in great need.

Even if you feel that you would like to help, **under no circumstances should you hand money to or purchase items for anyone.** This sets an unrealistic precedence for future volunteers. When people ask you for help, tell them that it's against Village Volunteers' policies and that all assistance needs to go through our partner organization.

If you would like to provide assistance to specific individuals after you return from your program, Village Volunteers would be happy to facilitate a donation to a specific program, project, child, or family. If you wish to fund raise, we can assist you in this process, as well.

Village Children

During your stay in a village community, you may encounter children who you feel have compelling needs. If you would like to sponsor one or more children, **we ask that you channel your assistance through Village Volunteers.** We can facilitate the sponsorship of educational fees and general orphan support once you return to your home country.

Under no circumstances should volunteers transport children away from their home. This sets an unrealistic precedence for future volunteers, presents a liability for volunteers, and is not appropriate.

Although you may want to adopt a child and feel that your guardianship would be important to the child's well-being, many governments have strict adoption policies. It is highly unlikely that a foreigner would be allowed to adopt a child out of the country.

Volunteer Projects

Village Volunteers understands the generosity and desire of each volunteer to have an impact while abroad. You can have the most impact by participating in projects that have been developed with appropriate curriculum. These can be found in the *Sustainable Village Resource Library* found on our website.

If you are interested in starting a project in a village, out of respect for the partner organization and its leaders, we ask that you fully engage the Program Director and Village Volunteers prior to any activities.

Personal Conduct

Under no circumstances are violent, sexual, or any other inappropriate behaviors tolerated during your stay in a village. Possession of drugs and participation in drug-related activities are also strictly prohibited. We strongly discourage alcohol consumption while volunteering.

Any unacceptable behavior, as documented by a Program Director, will serve as grounds for immediate dismissal from the Village Volunteers program without refund.

Dress Code

Out of respect for the local women, female volunteers are highly encouraged to dress conservatively. Bare midriffs, low-cut shirts, shorts, and short skirts (above the knee) should be avoided.

Male volunteers should avoid wearing shorts or sleeveless shirts.

Please consult with us on your visible tattoos and unusual piercings. If you are ever in doubt as to whether your attire is appropriate, please consult a Village Volunteers staff member, a Program Director, or a Volunteer Coordinator.

Water Usage

Please note that water is a precious and labor-intensive commodity in rural communities. Be aware of your usage, and ration water as much as possible when bathing and doing laundry.

Alumni Policy

Your experience and the friendships you make in the village can last a lifetime. Volunteers often wish to return to these communities. We support your ongoing desire to be involved and offer you an alumni discount on your return program fees. Our partner programs have an exclusive relationship with Village Volunteers in hosting visitors and will not host alumni volunteers who have not re-registered through Village Volunteers.

Acknowledgment of Volunteer Conduct Standards

Thank you for your attention to the above matters. Please sign the acknowledgement below and return the signed copy to Village Volunteers prior to departure for your trip.

I have read and understand Village Volunteers' Volunteer Conduct Standards document and agree to abide by the terms and conditions. I understand that any violation of the terms and conditions, as established by Village Volunteers, will result in my immediate dismissal from a Village Volunteers program. Should this occur, I understand that all fees paid to Village Volunteers will not be refunded, and I accept responsibility for all expenses that might be incurred, including altered airfare arrangements, in-country travel, hotel stays, etc.

Volunteer's Name (Printed): _____

Volunteer's Signature: _____

Date: _____