

Volunteering overseas

There are around one hundred agencies in Britain that place volunteers abroad on work projects. At the end of this information sheet are details of websites and directories that can help you find an opportunity that is right for you. Volunteering overseas can be an extremely rewarding experience, but is not something that should be entered into lightly. Below are some of the things you need to think about before parting with any money.

Practical points to consider

- Length of time is a critical factor as projects vary from short term placements of a few weeks to longer term projects of two years or more.
- Most organisations will ask you to pay an administration fee for arranging the trip for you.
- It is important to check whether the project provides for travel, accommodation, food and pocket money.
- Most projects ask for people with particular skills or experience.
- Many agencies are small and will place a limited number of volunteers.
- Some organisations are aimed at those of a particular religious creed.
- Applications to do overseas voluntary work should be made well in advance.

Emergency/Relief Work

In the wake of a national disaster such as war or flood the international community often responds by providing emergency aid. The aid provided attempts to meet basic human need - safe water, food security, shelter and medical care. Experienced relief organisations respond in these situations and they rarely require extra emergency staff. Relief workers are highly qualified, specialists in their professional fields and have overseas experience. Inexperienced personnel are not needed in emergency situations. Local staff may be recruited as needed and there is no need for unskilled foreigners.

Raising the money

Unless you have savings or will be doing paid work overseas, you are likely to have to raise some or all of your own expenses before you go. Some agencies suggest ways of raising money. You don't necessarily have to be put off an overseas placement simply by the cost if it is what you really want to do there are ways of raising the money. If you have endless time and patience you can look in the *'Directory of Grant Making Trusts'* that should be available in the reference section of the library. You may find organisations listed which can help you, although many do not offer funding to individuals. Be selective or you will spend more money contacting them than you might receive in a grant! Local contacts may work better; you could contact the local branch of the Lions, Rotary Club or Round Table. If there is a local paper where you live, they might do a short article about your trip. Free local newspapers would also be worth approaching. Often a local approach like this can be far more fruitful than approaching larger organisations. Check for books on ideas for fundraising; you could organise a club night, a dinner, sponsored walk or swim. Some

organisations may suggest ways to fundraise, and by many it's considered to be part of the whole experience.

Checking Out Organisations

It is important that you check out an organisation thoroughly before handing over any money or leaving the country. Ask if you can be put in touch with people who have been on their projects before. If possible try to speak to someone who has volunteered with them in person rather than trusting testimonials. Look at insurance very carefully; will you need your own travel insurance, does their insurance cover you for the kind of work that you will be doing, what would happen if you needed to get back to the UK? Think carefully about the kind of work that you will be doing; is there a genuine need for volunteers to do this or has the opportunity been created as an adventure holiday? Spend some time researching the country that you want to go to, check out the political situation, climate etc.

Finding voluntary work overseas

The Overseas Directory

www.timebank.org.uk/

Timebank have set up a free online directory of organisations looking for volunteers to work abroad. You can search by category and find details of organisations with a brief explanation of their work and a list of the areas they operate in.

Other resources

Information on agencies that place volunteers abroad can also be obtained from the directories listed below. Copies of these directories should be obtainable from:

- Your local public library
- A careers library
- Any major book store
- Direct from the publisher

➤ *International Directory of Voluntary Work*

Ed: Victoria Pybus, £10.99 (2000)

Vacation Work, 9 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HJ. Tel: 01865 241978. Website:

www.vacationwork.co.uk/

A thorough guide to short term and long term voluntary work overseas. Includes a section on the agencies that operate within the major global regions. Details whether agencies provide for travel, accommodation, expenses etc. Also explains age and skill requirements.

By the same publisher:

➤ *Directory of Work & Study in Developing Countries*

Toby Milner, £9.99 (3rd edition)

A handbook on opportunities in over 400 organisations in over 100 countries.

➤ ***Kibbutz Volunteer***

Ed. Victoria Pybus. £10.99.

A guide listing full details of 200 Kibbutzim.

Other publications

➤ ***Christians Abroad*** (Christians Abroad (World Service Enquiry)

1 Stockwell Green, London SW9 9HP.

Tel. 020 7346 5950. Website: www.wse.org.uk

Produce a free guide for people considering voluntary work abroad.

➤ ***Finding Voluntary Work Abroad***

Mark Hempshell, £9.99 (1999)

How to Books Ltd, 3 Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RE. Tel: 01865 793806. Website: www.howtobooks.co.uk.

email: info@howtobooks.co.uk

A beginner's guide to doing voluntary work overseas.

➤ ***Thinking About Volunteering Overseas***

➤ ***Volunteering and Overseas Development: A Guide to Opportunities***

Both produced by: Returned Volunteer Action (RVA), 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1TH.

Tel: 020 7278 0804

RVA is an organisation for serving and returned overseas development workers. It gives returned volunteers the opportunity to share their experiences with those considering overseas voluntary work

➤ ***A Year Between: The Complete Guide to Taking a Gap Year***

Central Bureau

10 Spring Gardens

London

SW1A 2BN Tel: 020 7389 4004

Website: www.britishcouncil.org/cbeve

A directory and guidebook for people considering a gap year after school, college or university. 1999. £9.99.

The Internet

➤ The National Centre for Volunteering lists some organisations that accept volunteers for overseas work on its website: www.volunteering.org.uk

➤ For information of relevant agencies for gap year activities visit www.gapyear.com

➤ www.peridot.co.uk will take you to the 'Gap Year Handbook' which includes a section on volunteering abroad

- www.oneworld.org has a short list of voluntary opportunities overseas.
- Genral information www.idealists.org
- **Working Abroad** www.workingabroad.com hosts information about organisations recruiting volunteers and has previous volunteer feedback stories
- **The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)** also provides information about-short term jobs abroad, internships (stages), international university information to students and recent graduates www.ciee.org

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