



Guidelines for International Volunteers

The following has been adapted from the *Guidelines for International Volunteers* by Doctors for Global Health (DGH). DGH works with organizations in the United States, El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, Uganda and other areas to "promote health and human rights with those who have difficulty making their voices heard." The following guidelines are based on the characteristics of past DGH volunteers.

1. **The ability to work as part of a team is vital.**
2. **Volunteers are expected to become a part of the communities in which they work,** so that they may learn, accompany, and contribute from within.
3. **Generally, the longer a volunteer can stay, the better.**
4. **As soon as a volunteer is selected, she/he should begin working with the volunteer organization** and its local partner organization, if possible. In this manner, the volunteer can demonstrate their commitment prior to their travel abroad and more easily incorporate into projects upon arrival abroad. Pre-travel activities may include collecting medical equipment or books, reviewing medical literature on specific subjects, contributing ideas or mobilizing resources for a project, etc. Likewise when a volunteer returns home, her/his commitment to the host community and the community of international volunteers will be reflected through presentations, teaching human rights, and in other ways to share the voice and lives of those within the community.
5. **Knowledge of the local language is helpful, demonstrates interest and dedication to the host community, and may be essential for work.**
6. **All volunteers are expected to be respectful of the society and culture in which they will work.** Respect for women's rights is essential. Volunteers work under the direction of and alongside local people. Often village health promoters and midwives teach the volunteers, allowing volunteers to benefit from the knowledge and experiences of various local health care professionals.
7. **Volunteering is demanding, but extremely rewarding.** The amount a volunteer learns and contributes is directly linked to her/his effort. The work volunteers do involves long hours and is not necessarily glamorous. Weekends are not guaranteed off, nor are all evenings. It is hard work, sometimes physically and often mentally, but always rewarding.
8. **Based on a volunteer's situation and level of training,** special requirements and circumstances may apply.
9. **Contact the host site directly for information regarding the specific details of the placement.**
10. **Find out if the volunteer will be responsible for scheduling and/or the cost of airfare and transportation to the site. Also inquire whether or not the site requires volunteers to be covered by health insurance.**
11. **Volunteers are expected to learn about the country in which they would like to volunteer.** Volunteers should learn about the cultural, social, health and human rights history prior to volunteering. Various hazards including, but not limited to, illness, violence, and political unrest, are inherent in any work in developing nations. Volunteers are ultimately responsible for their own well-being during their volunteer position.