

Choosing a Volunteer Organisation

This list specifies some of the questions you may wish to ask the volunteer organisation; it is not exhaustive. In addition, prospective volunteers are strongly advised to consult the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) web site (www.smartraveller.gov.au) for country specific information and to register their travel itinerary.

The volunteer organisation

- Is it a registered charity?
- Does it have any government, political or religious affiliation?
- Does it have the benefit of an Australia-based administration for its project/s?
- Does the volunteer organisation have a Code of Practice for volunteers/volunteering? Is it site-specific?
- Does the organisation comply with the ADA's Code of Practice for listing of volunteer organisations?
- Does the organisation have a strategic plan aimed at empowering the local host community, and has it ensured that volunteers will be enhancing rather be competing with the local dental services?
- Does it provide both cultural and clinical orientation prior to the commencement of the volunteer period?
- Does it provide travel insurance cover?
- Does it provide professional indemnity insurance?

Cost and conditions

- What will it cost? (e.g. flights, accommodation, meals, ground transport, incidentals)
- Is there a clear breakdown of costs?
- Is there any subsidy available from the organisation or from elsewhere?
- Will my expenses be tax deductible?
- For how long is my commitment?
- Will a 'Volunteer Appointment, Agreement and Consent' or equivalent document been provided in advance, and which requires a contractual agreement?
- Do I need a Working with Children check?

The volunteer country

- Is the general locale safe?
- What is the climate like?
- What are the country's requirements for visiting health professionals, e.g. registration, insurance, proof of qualifications?

- Is there 'hands-on' administration and supervision at the proposed site?
- Are there cultural issues of which to be aware, e.g. dress requirements, hair style, tattoos, gender issues, religious, taking photographs, interpersonal communication? Is there any briefing provided prior to departure to the site?

Travel to the volunteering site, accommodation and local travel

- Who arranges travel to the country?
- What are the visa requirements?
- How do I travel to/from the site?
- What local transport will I need to use? Will it be provided?
- Are the accommodation and working environment safe?
- What is the standard of accommodation?
- Will I have to share a room?
- What kind of food is available, e.g. local only, western, vegetarian, gluten-free?
- Are there lifestyle restrictions while at the accommodation, e.g. is alcohol allowed?
- Will there be access to internet, telephone networks? Will my mobile 'phone work?
- What is the local currency?
- What is the best way to access cash during the visit? Can I use a credit card?

The volunteering site

- Will I need to take any dental materials, equipment, consumables? Will I incur excess baggage charges?
- What materials and equipment are available?
- How many other volunteers will be with me at the site? What is their experience in volunteering at this site or similar sites? What is their gender, age, skill level, etc.?
- Is there a local dentist?
- Is there local nursing/ administrative/ interpreting assistance available?
- Is there local technical assistance, e.g. dental technician, equipment service?
- How far is the clinic from the accommodation?
- Are there clean toilet/ hand washing facilities at the site?

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The surgery and treatment

- How many surgeries/ chairs are there?
- Is a 'utility' room available?
- What is the equipment like, e.g., instruments, chair, unit, light, steriliser?
- Do the surgeries reflect a safe working environment, with particular reference to electrical installations?
- What materials are available locally?
- Are there radiography facilities?
- Is there air conditioning?
- What patients will I be treating, e.g. age, gender, previous dental care, etc.
- What do we do to support the local dental personnel?
- What kind of dentistry is expected of me, e.g. routine restorative care, extractions, endodontics, etc.?
- Will patients have appointments?
- What is the expected patient load?
- What are the hours of work?
- Are there written guidelines for treatment plans and treatment provided?

Personal health

- Are there any endemic diseases (e.g. malaria, tuberculosis)?
- What vaccinations will I need?
- Can I take medications for personal use?
- Are (safe) medications available locally if I need more?
- What happens in the case of an emergency should I fall ill or become injured? Are there protocols in place, inclusive of accessible medical and hospital facilities?
- What is the standard of local medical care if I become ill or injured?
- Can I be easily repatriated if I have a medical (or family) emergency?