

People generally volunteer to do something meaningful and experience a new culture. However, some volunteer-sending organisations may be more concerned with creating a 'life-changing' experience for the volunteer, with less focus on the purpose and the needs of local communities.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR TO MAKE SURE YOUR TIME OVERSEAS IS SPENT MAKING A GENUINE DIFFERENCE:



THINGS TO LOOK FOR: ...IN A VOLUNTEER-SENDING ORGANISATION

1 TRACK RECORD

Look for evidence of past achievements and how programs are monitored and evaluated.



2 INTEGRITY

A growing number of organisations have ceased orphanage volunteering. Find out who at rethinkorphanages.org



ORPHANAGE

3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Some volunteer-sending organisations recruit volunteers for their own programs; others partner with organisations in the destination country and may not have end-to-end accountability for the project or your safety.



4 SELECTIVITY

Expect to apply to volunteer and be vetted as if you were applying for a job or university. You should also receive pre-departure support and possibly training.



5 CREDIBILITY

Emotive language like 'saving the world' or 'giving children the love they need' may be used to recruit volunteers, but it's not an indicator of quality.



...IN A PROGRAM

6 THE 'NEED'

Make sure your role will enhance local capacity – e.g. by providing training to, or working with, local people to meet a short-term skills gap.



7 SUSTAINABILITY

Check there's a project end date, not a long-term dependency on volunteers.



...IN YOURSELF

8 SKILLS MATCH

What do you have to offer? Skills in high demand include digital, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising, language and computer skills.

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9 SUITABLY QUALIFIED

Avoid placements for which you are not skilled or qualified. Find out what training and/or support you will receive to accomplish your tasks.



10 LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

How will you apply your learnings back home? Employers will be interested in evidence of impact, not just the fact that you have volunteered overseas.

