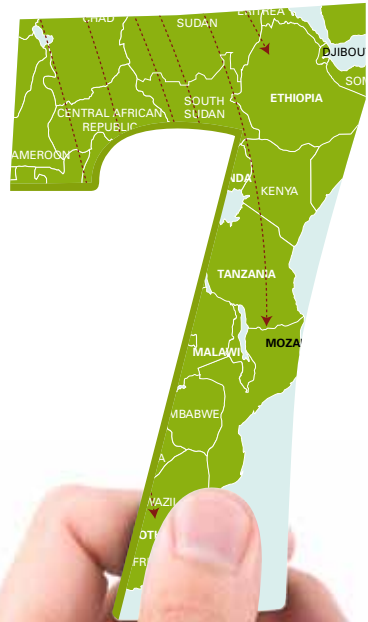




# Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter



**7 principles** encouraging  
good practice in volunteering  
for global development

# 1

Reflect on my motivations for and expectations of my volunteer placement.

# 2

Familiarise myself with my role description and host organisation before departure.

# 3

Respect local customs and adopt the role of learner and guest.

# 4

Act always in a professional manner and be flexible and adaptable.

# 5

Take due care of my personal safety and physical and mental health.

# 6

Channel the experiences and knowledge gained while overseas into Irish society.

# 7

Accept and sign a copy of the Volunteer Charter principles.





Ireland has a long tradition of sending people overseas in a development context. Comhlámh provides advice and support before and after your placement

[www.volunteeringoptions.org](http://www.volunteeringoptions.org)

**Uganda:**

Average years of schooling: **4.7**

% of Population living on less than \$1.25 per day: **38%**

**Guatemala:**

Average years of schooling: **4.9**

% of Population living on less than \$1.25 per day: **12%**

**South Africa:**

Average years of schooling: **8.5**

% of Population living on less than \$1.25 per day: **14%**

**India:**

Average years of schooling: **5.1**

% of Population living on less than \$1.25 per day: **33%**

**Cambodia:**

Average years of schooling: **5.8**

% of Population living on less than \$1.25 per day: **23%**

Comhlámh's **Volunteer Charter** is a guide for people who are going to volunteer overseas in developing countries.

It sets out **7 principles** that aim to encourage responsible, responsive international volunteering.

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# Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter

## **Who developed it?**

The Charter has been drawn up by Comhlámh, the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers. Comhlámh has over 35 years' experience of engaging with overseas volunteers and development workers.

## **How was it developed?**

Through extensive consultations with the three main groups involved in volunteer placements: volunteers, sending agencies, and host projects.

## **Why has it been drawn up?**

Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest among Irish people in volunteering in developing countries. More and more people are going overseas as volunteers, sometimes for very short periods. Although there can be many differences between the work done on short-term and long-term volunteering placements, all international volunteers will be engaging with the same broader issues. These include having realistic expectations about what volunteering can achieve, and adopting the role of learner and guest while overseas. The Charter encourages people to think about these issues and to place their volunteering experiences within the wider context of global development. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the improvement of the volunteering experiences of international volunteers, and ultimately to the quality of life for host communities affected by volunteering. It does not replace sending agencies' and host projects' specific guidelines and rules for volunteers, but rather complements them.

## What about the responsibilities of sending agencies?



A Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies has also been developed. This sets out the responsibilities of organisations that arrange volunteer placements, including some of the steps they take to support the Volunteer Charter. Organisations that have signed up to the Code will be willing to provide copies of this Charter to volunteers, and to discuss the Code in exchange.

## Why should volunteers support the Charter?

By agreeing to sign the Charter, you will be showing your support for the principles it sets out. As a volunteer, your attitude to your placement and to your host project and community will be crucial to the success of the work you will be involved with. Your support will help to ensure a spirit of partnership, solidarity and respect between you, your sending agency, and the host project and community with which you volunteer.

Established in 1975, Comhlámh is a member and supporter organisation open to anyone interested in social justice, human rights and global development issues.

Comhlámh aims to support and promote responsible, responsive overseas volunteering and support volunteers in a long-term, ongoing commitment to development. Comhlámh's publication "Working for a Better World: A Guide to Volunteering in Global Development" (2nd edition, 2007), has information and advice for volunteers before, during and after a placement. It also contains a directory of over 100 organisations that arrange volunteer placements in developing countries. This information is also included in the website [www.volunteeringoptions.org](http://www.volunteeringoptions.org). Additionally, we offer workshops for volunteers before they go overseas and after they come home, as well as advice for people thinking about volunteering.

Email [info@volunteeringoptions.org](mailto:info@volunteeringoptions.org) for more information.

To find out more about joining Comhlámh and supporting our work, please visit [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org) or call 01 478 3490. Your membership can help us campaign for a better and more just world.

**Principle**

As a volunteer I agree to:

- 1. ■ Reflect on my motivation for and expectations of my volunteer placement.**



## Have you:

### **Spent time considering your motivations for wanting to volunteer overseas?**

Before making a decision about whether to volunteer overseas, it's important to consider your motivations for wanting to go. Motivations can have a big impact on your expectations for the volunteer placement, and thus eventually on your experience when you go overseas. Reflecting on your own motivations is a critical part of your preparation.

### **Considered the issues that will inform the context in which your placement will take place?**

For example, have you considered issues of global inequality and poverty, and how these might impact on the work of your host project? The idea of development is a complex one that is affected by a wide range of issues. While these can sometimes appear to be abstract and theoretical, the impact that they have on people's everyday lives is very real. Having some knowledge of the bigger picture will help you to understand the forces that might shape events at the local level of your placement.

### **Thought about what your expectations are for the volunteer placement?**

Through considering what you expect to achieve in your placement, and being as realistic as possible about this, you can start to prepare yourself for working and living with your host community. It's important to remember that many volunteers express frustration at how little can be achieved in the face of large problems, therefore try to adjust your expectations accordingly. A large part of being a volunteer is about forging relationships with other people and taking advantage of opportunities to learn from other cultures. Host projects say that it is important to be aware that volunteering is a mutual exchange, and that it's not only about personal gain.



## **Made contact with former volunteers, with the help of your sending organisation?**

Talking to former volunteers can help you get a better idea about the ethos of the organisation you'll be volunteering with, the type of work you may be doing, and some of the issues that you will encounter while in your placement.

## **Read the information resources provided or suggested by your sending organisation?**

This may include information about the history and development of the project you will be working with, the role of volunteers in the project, the living conditions, and the health and safety considerations in the area where you will be located. All of these resources will help to give you a better idea about the work you will be doing and to adapt more easily to the new environment.

## **Taken time to research the country and region in which you will be volunteering?**

For example, this could be information sourced through using the Internet, books, and newspapers on the history, geography, language, culture and politics of the country. Knowing as much as you can about the country will help you to understand what you see when you arrive, and help to avoid false or uninformed assumptions.



*The potential volunteer might want to think about what impact their presence in a community/orphanage/school for a period of one month to one year will have on the lives of the supposed beneficiaries.*

Fionuala, volunteer in Guatemala and Timor Leste

## Before you go...

Use the table below to help assess your motivations for wanting to volunteer abroad. Score yourself for each item on a scale of 0-10, with 0 meaning that the statement is in no way a reason for your going and 10 meaning that it is a very important reason. Be as honest as possible: no one but you will see your answers!

Motivating reason	Score
To see the world	
To get away from life/work at home	
Solidarity with the oppressed	
To gain a first-hand knowledge about political issues	
To help people	
To get away from an unhappy relationship	
To add something different to my CV	
To contribute something	
Last chance to explore the world before settling down	
To change the world	
To gain relevant professional work experience	
To work for justice	
Everyone else is doing it	
To challenge myself	
To respond to a religious motivation	
To try something different and to experience different cultures	
To broaden my mind	

## 2. Familiarise myself with my role description and host organisation.



*You can't be too prepared. It's enough of a challenge to be in a new country with new people: you want the job to be as straightforward as possible.*

Joe, volunteer in Sri Lanka



*I think one of the most important things I ever heard during any of my pre-departure trainings was "If we fail to plan, we plan to fail!" Essentially, in my opinion, the more conscientious and dedicated to fully preparing yourself before departure you are, the better an experience you will have overall from every point of view, and the more effective you will be in your work.*

Andrew, volunteer in India

## Have you:

### **Read and signed the role description provided by your sending organisation?**

Familiarising yourself with the role description will help to give you a better idea about the exact aims of the work and the amount of time each week you will be expected to commit to the project. The presence of a detailed role description may also help to ensure that your work has been planned, and that there is a need for your presence.

### **Asked the organisation any questions that you may have about the role?**

Ensuring that you have as much information as possible about the role can help you to make certain that you are prepared for all aspects of the work. For example, find out as much as possible about the working conditions and culture, the hours you will be expected to work, the challenges you may encounter, and whether in-country support will be available.

### **Taken part in all training and induction provided by the organisation?**

Participation in training and induction provided by an organisation is a very important part of a volunteer placement. Training may be provided pre-departure and/or in-country. Useful training topics that have been highlighted by former volunteers include language skills, training on working with children and vulnerable adults, an introduction to development issues, country and programme orientation, health and safety briefings, using images in development, and intercultural training.

Comhlámh offer a number of pre-departure trainings and resources which you can find details of on our website [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org). You may also want to read the Dochás Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, which is included at the end of this Charter.

### **Where possible, and with the assistance of your sending organisation, discussed the role with previous volunteers who worked on the project?**

The opportunity to discuss your role with a former volunteer who worked on the same project can provide an invaluable source of information. If you are continuing the work of another volunteer, it can be very helpful to make contact with them to talk about what they did in the role, and their suggestions for future developments.

## Principle

As a volunteer I agree to:

# 3. ■ Respect local customs and adopt the role of learner and guest.



*As I had volunteered with the same organisation in Brazil before, other volunteers were looking to me to give them support...then half way through the placement I realised that I was actually still a learner.*

Martin, volunteer in Brazil



## Have you:

### **Considered how to be sensitive to the local culture?**

By talking to former volunteers and familiarising yourself with the culture in which you will be working, you can begin to prepare yourself for some of the cultural differences you may encounter in your placement. This may include being prepared for the living conditions, for changes in diet, and for different ways of socialising. People may be confused or uncertain about why you are working in their community and what you are trying to achieve. Be prepared to answer their questions, to spend time with them, and to build relationships based on understanding, not assumptions.

### **Taken part in training or induction about intercultural issues provided by your organisation?**

Participating in any training and induction on intercultural issues that your sending organisation provides can give you further insights into important topics to be aware of while in your placement.

### **Tried to learn some of the local language?**

Former volunteers and host projects have repeatedly stressed the importance of trying to learn at least some of the local language of the host community. Being able to communicate with your hosts will help you to make the most of your time in a placement.

### **Agreed to respect and work to uphold the aims of your host project and sending organisation?**

As a volunteer, you may be very involved in the day-to-day life of your host community, and you need to be willing from the outset to assist with achieving the project's aims. You may be seen as a representative of your sending organisation, and as such, will need to be familiar and in agreement with its aims and values. How you are perceived in the host community will impact on the experience of future volunteers.

## Agreed to respect staff and other volunteers who work with your host project?

Some host organisations have stated that problems can arise when volunteers may not realise that differences exist between the way of doing things in the host country and what they are accustomed to at home. Respecting the expertise and experience of other staff and volunteers, and accepting that things may be done in different ways, are a very important part of the volunteer experience.

Organisational structures and management systems may be different in other cultures, and volunteers may need to bear this in mind throughout a placement. It is vital to work with the community you go to – there can be disastrous results if local communities and organisations are not asked for their input.



*Sending organisations vary hugely with regard to their core values and aims, their motivations in sending volunteers overseas, their commitments to host organisations and the resources they are willing to invest in training and preparation of volunteers. Research the sending organisation fully before you commit yourself and ensure that you are happy about how the money you contribute will be spent and what sort of training and support you will receive at home and overseas.*

Suzie, volunteer in the Dominican Republic

Travel with the open-minded attitude that you are 'here to learn' rather than the narrow-focused 'here to help'. This will help you ask the questions from which you will learn, rather than assuming that you always know the answers. Visit [www.volunteeringoptions.org](http://www.volunteeringoptions.org) for more information.

MEXICO

BELIZE

HAITI

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

EL SALVADOR

NICARAGUA

COSTA RICA

PANAMA

VENEZUELA

GUYANA

SURINAM

FRENCH GUYANA

COLOMBIA

ECUADOR

BRAZIL

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*In my time in Guatemala, all our relationships and fondest memories were made while sharing meals. This could never have worked without being prepared to eat tortillas, beans and chilli three times a day for five months.*

Mark, volunteer in Guatemala



## Principle

As a volunteer I agree to:

# 4. Act always in a professional manner and be flexible and adaptable while in my placement.

## Will you:

### **Always approach your placement in a professional manner?**

Returned volunteers have pointed out that some volunteers may take a less than professional attitude to their placement. For example, they may turn up late, leave early, not respect local dress codes, or behave in a manner that is more appropriate for a holiday than for providing a service to a local community. By agreeing to have a professional attitude towards your placement from the beginning, these issues can be avoided. It is also advisable to be aware of your sending/host organisation's procedures for raising issues of concern, should any arise during your placement.

### **Stick to the role description that you were given?**

A good role description will have been developed following consultations between the sending organisation and the host organisation, with inputs from previous volunteers. It should therefore reflect what a volunteer is most needed for, and how she or he can best contribute to the aims of a project. Attempting to change this description, without proper consultation with and permission from the relevant people, could affect the project's outcomes.

### **Show respect to your colleagues and host organisation by being punctual and fulfilling the working hours that you agreed to at the start of your project?**

Sometimes, volunteers may not complete the hours that they consented to at the beginning of their work. This can lead to problems in terms of work not being completed, and also of lowering morale amongst other volunteers and staff. Be aware of what is requested within any placement that you are signing up to, and consider whether you are willing to undertake this before making a final commitment.

### **Within reason, be flexible in response to needs as they arise throughout your placement?**

While it is very important to adhere to your role description, one essential characteristic emphasised by former volunteers is the need to be flexible when undertaking a volunteer placement. There can be a number of reasons why you may need to be flexible: it could be to fill in if there is nobody else available for the job; to adapt to changes caused by a lack of resources; or simply to respond to the changes in a project's objectives that take place over time.

### **Agree to follow your sending organisation's guidelines on giving gifts and/or financial support while on your placement?**

Even when volunteers are aware that they may face poverty and huge inequality in terms of wealth while on their placements, many return saying that they were not adequately prepared for the requests for financial assistance from colleagues and others in the community, and that they were ill-equipped with knowledge on how best to help. Sometimes volunteers give money and gifts with the best of intentions but this can cause resentment, uncertainty, and undue pressure for everyone concerned. Most sending organisations will have clear guidelines and policies regarding this issue, which have been drawn up to reduce negative impacts.



**Reasons why volunteers have made an impact are:** long term commitment that they are willing to give to the organisation; patience to understand and assimilate the development context and responses; openness and initiative in identifying areas of work and making positive contributions; and cultural adaptability.

Gram Vikas, Host Organisation, India

## Principle

As a volunteer I agree to:

# 5. Take due care of my personal safety and physical and mental health



*The only person responsible for your health is you... and if you get ill it will have a negative impact for you and others involved in the project.*

Luke, volunteer in India



## Have you:

### Arranged relevant health and travel insurance for your overseas placement?

Some sending organisations will provide this insurance, while others will not. Find out whether you need to make arrangements yourself, and ensure that you have proper coverage before going abroad for a placement. Be aware of what your insurance covers, and how to access assistance, if necessary.

### Checked that you have all the relevant vaccinations for the area in which you will be volunteering?

Again, these will be provided by some organisations, while others will require that you make your own arrangements. Be sure that you receive all the relevant vaccinations for the area to which you will be travelling – avail of expert advice about this topic to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information.

### Thought about how to protect your financial interests while abroad?

In the excitement of preparing for volunteering, it is not uncommon to place low priority on thinking about protecting your financial interests while overseas, including your social welfare rights. Issues to consider include continuing your pension payments, ongoing PRSI contributions, and tax rebates. Comhlámh provides information on protecting social welfare and pensions, email [info@comhlamh.org](mailto:info@comhlamh.org) for more information.



*Personal health can't be stressed enough. You are no good to anyone when you are sick for months when a good rest could have cured you initially. I was amazed at how fragile my body was in Africa, I was more prone to illness and I could feel my immune system weaken even if I had sufficient sleep. Also it is good to know what to do and who to call in the event of an accident, where you will be treated, whether you will have to be flown to another location, etc.*

Jane, volunteer in Zambia.



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*I believe that those who were working in a volunteering capacity should pass on the small bit that they may have learned. I feel lucky to have experienced what I did and feel I owe it to the people there to promote awareness of their everyday difficulties.*

Jane, volunteer in Zambia

## Health and safety:

While sending agencies can provide volunteers with guidance and training on this topic, it is also your responsibility as a volunteer to abide by that advice and to use your common sense. Additionally, your general research into your placement should include finding out about the local health and security situation. When you are volunteering with other people, you also need to consider the impact of your actions and whether they will have an effect on the safety and security of those around you. Ask yourself the following questions to help you decide whether you are thinking about the relevant health and safety issues – have you:

- Made certain that your sending organisation/host community has details of your next of kin in case of an emergency, and that your next of kin has your overseas contact details?
- Participated in any health and safety training provided by your organisation?
- Familiarised yourself with the organisation's health and safety guidelines, and agreed to uphold these?
- Agreed to take due care while overseas to ensure that your actions will not affect the safety and health of the people that you will work with?



*[My placement organisation] provided excellent backup and training in the months before departure in the areas of fundraising, the medical/immunisations issues involved, language training, conflict resolution, etc. Once in Tanzania, there was a further week of training to help the volunteers adjust to life on a camp in rural Tanzania, language training, how to relate to the local population, health issues and so on. The summer finished off with a feedback weekend in the UK, where the successes and failures of the summer were analysed and noted for further improvement of the programme.*

Declan, volunteer in Tanzania

# 6. Channel the experiences and knowledge gained while overseas into Irish society.

## Do you:

### **Agree to participate in any debriefing available after your placement?**

Debriefing can offer you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences, and to provide any comments or suggestions you may have for the future development of a programme. Comhlámh provides a group debriefing service, and also provides support in helping to organise personal debriefing.

### **Commit to being available on your return to correspond with potential volunteers about your overseas experiences?**

As a volunteer, you have the privileged position of being able to learn about your host community and experience what it is like to work in a developing country. These experiences can provide an invaluable source of information for people who are considering the possibility of volunteering overseas. Many organisations look for returned volunteers to talk to potential volunteers, either on a one-to-one basis or in groups. By agreeing to provide information to potential volunteers, you will have the opportunity to assist them and to provide them with personal insights into what their experiences might be like.

## **Agree to consider participating in events arranged by your organisation that relate to your placement?**

Sending agencies often look for returning volunteers to participate in events such as information events or group talks. Again, by agreeing to participate in these, you will have the opportunity to discuss your experiences with a wider audience and to raise awareness in Ireland about issues affecting the developing world.

## **Agree to examine and consider the various opportunities available to remain involved in global development issues on your return home?**

As one returned volunteer has stated, “commitment doesn’t end at the airport”. Volunteering overseas forms part of a continuum that encompasses the point when you first decide to go to a developing country, to your activism when you get home. There are many different ways in which you can remain engaged in working to effect change. Some examples include:

- Joining a solidarity or campaigning group;
- Educating on development issues;
- Becoming a volunteer fundraiser for your sending organisation or the projects you worked with in your host country; and
- Supporting fair trade and sustainably sourced produce through your purchases.

As a returned development worker (RDW)/volunteer, Comhlámh provides free support, advice and guidance to facilitate your return to Ireland, to deal with reverse culture shock and to assist you with settling back in. This support ranges from social events to information on social welfare, pensions, health, etc, to engaging you in ongoing debates on development in Ireland. As an RDW/volunteer returning from a short or long-term assignment (of three months or over), you are entitled to 12 months free membership of Comhlámh from the date of your return to Ireland.

Simply email [info@comhlamh.org](mailto:info@comhlamh.org), or register via [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org) to activate your membership.



## Principle

As a volunteer I agree to:

# 7 ■ Accept and sign a copy of the Volunteer Charter Principles.

**Have you:**

**Provided your organisation with a signed copy of this Charter?**

By doing so, you are signalling your support for the aims and values that it sets out.

If we only go overseas to help, but do not work to challenge the root causes of global injustice, our actions will not help to prevent the recurrence of present problems.



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*We as volunteers should be honoured to be invested with the responsibility organisations delegate to us, and as such we should always treat our volunteering placement with the utmost professionalism. We are ambassadors for ourselves of course, but also for our country and will set a precedent for any volunteers who may follow us.*

Andrew, volunteer in India



INDIAN  
OCEAN

# Glossary of terms

## Developing countries

We have many different names for those countries that are not as wealthy as ours, and all of them are problematic! These include "Third World", "poor countries", "Global South" or "South". In this Charter, we use the term "developing countries", because it is the most generally accepted term and because we encourage volunteers to focus on issues of development when thinking about overseas volunteering.

## Development

Development is a complex issue, with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. A basic perspective equates economic growth with development. The United Nations Development Programme uses a more detailed definition: according to them, development is "to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community."

Development, therefore, is empowerment: it is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their problems.

Most definitions of development now include a sustainability dimension, which encompasses human development whilst preserving the environment for the future generations. Refer to the resources section to find out additional sources of information on development.

## Host communities

Host communities are the people with whom volunteers work and live with while undertaking their overseas placements.

## Host projects

Host projects are the organisations or community groups in the destination country that receive volunteers.

## Sending agencies

These are agencies, organisations or commercial companies that arrange volunteer placements in developing countries. All have offices outside the destination country and recruit volunteers through these.



## Resources

### Country & travel information

[www.dfa.ie](http://www.dfa.ie)

The Department of Foreign Affairs website, which includes information on Irish embassies and some travel advice.

[www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

The British government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office site, which includes travel advice and planning tips.

[www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net)

**OneWorld** website offers news and views from over 1,600 organisations that promote human rights awareness and fight poverty worldwide. The site has a large amount of information, including guides to selected countries.

[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

**Human Rights Watch** has links to frequently updated articles about the human rights situation in countries worldwide.

[www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)

**AlertNet** is the Reuters Foundation's site, and includes a "country profile" section, with basic information on countries and links to recent news articles about them.

[www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

**ReliefWeb**, which is administered by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, aims to assist the international humanitarian community in the effective delivery of emergency assistance. It provides country updates from around the globe, in addition to a dedicated map centre.

### Volunteering & Development information

**Print:**

*Working for a Better World: A Guide to Volunteering in Global Development*, 2nd ed., Comhlámh 2007. Available directly from Comhlámh.

*The Coming Home Book*, Comhlámh, 2010.

*80:20 Development in an Unequal World 6th Edition*, 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World, 2012.

*The Rough Guide to a Better World*, Rough Guides and DFID, 2005.

**Web:**

[www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org)

[www.volunteeringoptions.org](http://www.volunteeringoptions.org)

a general overview of the role volunteering has in development, including a database of organisations offering volunteering opportunities.

[www.irishaid.gov.ie](http://www.irishaid.gov.ie)

Irish Aid is the Irish government's programme of assistance to developing countries. Information about its activities, and about a wide range of development issues, is available on their website.

[www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

the Irish Association of NGO's involved in development. This includes the **Code of Conduct on Images and Messages**.

[www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

Information about the Irish government's position on the MDGs can be found at [www.dci.gov.ie/mdg.html](http://www.dci.gov.ie/mdg.html)

[www.dcu.ie/~cis](http://www.dcu.ie/~cis)

**DCU's Centre for International Studies** has an online resource centre with comprehensive links to sites that cover topics including general resources in international relations and resources in development education.

[www.galwayowc.org](http://www.galwayowc.org)

**Galway One World Centre** has a resource centre that is open to members of the public.

[www.kade.ie](http://www.kade.ie)

**Kerry One World Centre** has a resource room development education lending library service that is open to members of the public.

[www.centreforglobaleducation.com](http://www.centreforglobaleducation.com)

**Centre for Global Education, Belfast** provide education services that will enhance awareness of international development issues.

[www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com](http://www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com)

**Waterford One World Centre** works with a range of local groups to educate and empower people to take action on global issues of social justice and human dignity.

## Medical resources

[www.tmb.ie](http://www.tmb.ie)

**Tropical Medical Bureau** The site includes a section on vaccinations that are recommended for a variety of destinations.

[www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith)

**World Health Organisation** includes a section on health risks and precautions to take when travelling, and regularly updated disease maps. You can access the WHO's Weekly Epidemiological Record at [www.who.int/wer/en](http://www.who.int/wer/en)

[www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)

**International Association for Assistance for Travellers** provides information about health risks for travellers

[www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org)

**Mobility International** empowering people with disabilities through international exchange and international development to achieve their human rights.

[www.dublinaidssalliance.ie](http://www.dublinaidssalliance.ie)

**HIV/AIDS** A complete directory of countrywide support groups, organisations and clinics.

## Useful boards and on-line forums

[www.worldvolunteerweb.org](http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org)

**World Volunteer Web** This site supports the volunteer community by providing a global one-stop-shop for information, resources, and organisations linked to volunteerism.

[www.aidworkers.net](http://www.aidworkers.net)

**Aid Workers Forum** post a query here on any aspect of aid work. There is also a section on volunteering in developing countries. See the "Living in the Field" section for suggestions on what to bring with you when you go to work overseas.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree)

**Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree** This site has a frequently used bulletin board where people can post any type of query they have relating to travelling in different regions of the world, eg, information on visas, accommodation, getting around.

## Further studies in development

[www.kimmagedtalk.ie](http://www.kimmagedtalk.ie)

Development Studies Centre, Kimmage Manor offers a range of development-related courses and seminars, some of which are open to the public.

[www.comhlamh.org/trainings-courses-comhlamh-trainings-and-courses.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/trainings-courses-comhlamh-trainings-and-courses.html)

Comhlámh run a number of short courses related to development. A Courses and Career information leaflet with a full listing of all graduate and post-graduate course related to development in Ireland, can be downloaded from the Comhlámh website.

## Jobs noticeboards

[www.comhlamh.org/jobs-noticeboard.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/jobs-noticeboard.html)

[www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie)

[www.dochas.ie/pages/news](http://www.dochas.ie/pages/news)

[www.alertnet.org/thepeople/jobs/index.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/thepeople/jobs/index.htm)

[www.devnetjobs.org](http://www.devnetjobs.org)

[www.eldis.org/news/jobs.htm](http://www.eldis.org/news/jobs.htm)

[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)

[www.oneworld.net/job/list/professional/](http://www.oneworld.net/job/list/professional/)

<http://reliefweb.int/jobs>

[www.unjobs.org](http://www.unjobs.org)

## Working from Ireland

[www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)

The Volunteer Ireland website includes links to volunteer centres throughout the country, as well as a database of volunteer opportunities available nationwide.

[www.comhlamh.org/resources-index-contacts-list.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/resources-index-contacts-list.html)

The INDEX contact list contains further information on development education and solidarity groups working in Ireland, many of which would welcome the involvement of volunteers.

[www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie)

The Community Exchange website has a section that is dedicated to volunteer positions, which is frequently updated.

[www.howyoucanhelp.ie](http://www.howyoucanhelp.ie)

This website is hosted by Dóchas, the Irish umbrella group of development NGOs. It provides suggestions on how you can help aid agencies to continue to give the right kind of aid.

## Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

The images and messages used to portray people, places and situations in the developing world can have an enormous impact on people's perceptions and attitudes. People have different opinions on what constitutes 'acceptable' in relation to images and messages in development and depending on their end use, different people may champion certain images and messages but reject others. Images and messages may be used for a number of different reasons such as:

- To inform (media/education)
- To sell (marketing/fundraising)
- To convince (advocacy/policy)
- To account for (reporting)

Each of these is legitimate and worthwhile – the Code applies to them all. The Code is driven by a strong commitment to the following values:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned
- Belief in the equality of all people
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice

Download a copy of the Guide to Understanding and Implementing the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages at [www.dochas.ie/code.htm](http://www.dochas.ie/code.htm)

Comhlámh is a signatory to the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. Please send any feedback on our adherence to the Code to [info@volunteeringoptions.org](mailto:info@volunteeringoptions.org)

### The Code's Guiding Principles:

1. Choose images and related messages based on values of respect, equality, solidarity and justice;
2. Truthfully represent any image or depicted situation both in its immediate and in its wider context so as to improve public understanding of the realities and complexities of development;
3. Avoid images and messages that potentially stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places;
4. Use images, messages and case studies with the full understanding, participation and permission of the subjects (or subjects' parents/guardian)
5. Ensure those whose situation is being represented have the opportunity to communicate their stories themselves;
6. Establish and record whether the subjects wish to be named or identifiable and always act accordingly;
7. Conform to the highest standards in relation to human rights and protection of vulnerable people.

# Comhlámh's

## Volunteer Charter

*(my copy)*

I've read the Volunteer Charter, and agree to do the following:

1. Reflect on my motivations for and expectations of my volunteer placement;
2. Familiarise myself thoroughly with my role description before departure;
3. Respect local customs and adopt the role of learner and guest;
4. Act always in a professional manner and be flexible and adaptable while in my placement;
5. Take due care of my personal safety and physical and mental health;
6. Channel the experiences and knowledge gained while overseas into Irish society; and
7. Accept and sign a Code of Conduct embodying these principles.

Name of sending organisation: .....

Volunteer's signature: .....

Date: .....







## Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter

*(return to my sending organisation)*

I've read the Volunteer Charter, and agree to do the following:

1. Reflect on my motivations for and expectations of my volunteer placement;
2. Familiarise myself thoroughly with my role description before departure;
3. Respect local customs and adopt the role of learner and guest;
4. Act always in a professional manner and be flexible and adaptable while in my placement;
5. Take due care of my personal safety and physical and mental health;
6. Channel the experiences and knowledge gained while overseas into Irish society; and
7. Accept and sign a Code of Conduct embodying these principles.

Name of sending organisation: .....

Volunteer's signature: .....

Date: .....



Comhlámh supports and promotes responsible, responsive overseas volunteering and provides support to volunteers in a long-term, ongoing commitment to development.

Comhlámh works to develop and promote good practice standards among volunteer sending agencies through our Code of Good Practice. In doing so, we hope to ensure that overseas volunteering has a positive impact: for the volunteer, the sending organisation, and the host agency and community.

To find out more about the information, training and support services Comhlámh provides for volunteers, visit our website [www.volunteeringoptions.org](http://www.volunteeringoptions.org) or phone 01 478 3490.



**Irish Aid**

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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