



Volunteers' Manual

Dear Volunteer,

We are very happy that you would like to help at one of our *Bookfeeding Libraries* around the world. This manual was developed to provide you with information about basic rules and your responsibilities as a volunteer at one of our projects.

Please make sure you read it carefully and that you understand everything. At the end of this manual, you will find a form attached. Please fill it in, sign it and send it to hello@bookfeeding.org.

Thank you!

Your Bookfeeding-Team

Contents

THE IDEA OF THE BOOKFEEDING PROJECT2

VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITIES2

RULES FOR VOLUNTEERS3

VISA4

INSURANCE4

VACCINATION5

VOLUNTEERS' FEEDBACK5

CONTACT5

VOLUNTEER SIGNED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT6



THE IDEA OF THE BOOKFEEDING PROJECT

The main idea of the *Bookfeeding Project* is to promote free education for children all over the world by building public libraries for communities in need. Our goal is to create self-sustainable and environmentally friendly projects in which everybody can get involved.

Once the libraries have been built and are open for public, locals will be responsible for them. We believe that the co-operation with local communities is the key to a successful implementation of our projects. Everyone from the *Bookfeeding Team* works for free which means that you, as a volunteer bring a valuable contribution to our projects. However, the idea is that every single project can run without “foreign” volunteers. This means the libraries are opened by locals and everyone can come and borrow a book or study there in their free time.

VOLUNTEERS’ RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers are there to **SHARE** their experiences and skills (e.g. language, teaching techniques) but not to **IMPOSE** them. Please be aware that the culture is different. This does not mean it is worse or less civilised. Please avoid forceful teaching methods (“this is how we do it at home and it is better”). Instead, listen to locals and their needs. Try to work **WITH** them. Cooperation, mutual understanding and mutual benefits are the key values we uphold. Ideally, you will come back knowing more than before, learning more about local culture in an understanding manner rather than simply fostering the stereotypical image of poor developing countries we have in the West.

- You must realise that you will encounter many situations where your customs, values or priorities are different from those in the community. **RESPECT** that and don’t try to introduce your better way of living unless asked to. We are there to help the locals to get what **THEY** want not what we **WANT** them to know. To avoid “Westernisation” (a tendency that is very usual among volunteers), only do activities initiated by locals.
- Suggest activities such as teaching lessons, football championship among villages, etc. However, do not proceed unless you have discussed it with locals and found someone who is willing to help. Local input is very important – locals can inform you about cultural differences (e.g. in developing countries it is useless to be punctual with times of lessons or activities, our Western obsession with clock still stays only in the West). Locals also know the tribal languages and have more respect among the people – in the sense that they know how to speak to their own people. They will also be able to advise you on what activities might be successful.
- To sum up – Listen and Learn first, then act. We value volunteers who want to do more. You are free to do so, but first, gain the understanding of the local culture.
- Last example to illustrate you what we mean – our library in Madagascar lies in a village without electricity. At first, we wanted to provide electricity and we made a research on the benefits that it would bring to the village. At the end, we realised that the installation would be too expensive and furthermore villagers would not be able to afford the electricity bills. This means there is no point in bringing electricity to the village now. An alternative that the locals came up with is to get few solar panels which we are working on just now.

RULES FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Our projects aim at creating self-sustainable libraries without dependency on outside sources. An act which is honest and meant well when not thought through can be more harmful than helpful. Therefore, we ask our volunteers to follow a couple of simple rules.
- Please do NOT give money or pay the villagers for things they did not do or little things that should not be paid for (e.g. they would have done the things anyway).
- Unfortunately, as a 'white person' (mainly for African countries) or a tourist, you may face a certain form of discrimination since you are from developed country and that you have more money. Villagers may try to take an advantage of this and may try to ask you for money for little things they do. Do not give them the money. This will only further enforce their idea of vaza/mzungu (white person/foreigner in Malagasy and Swahili language) = they will only ask for more and more money.
- In similar situations, try to reason with them and tell them you did not need this, that they would have done this anyway, or that you are a volunteer who is there to teach and help. Do not give money to people in the village, simply tell them that you do not get paid for being there.
- If you agree to do something with villagers for you and you have agreed on the price before (e.g. here is 200 rupees, can you get me something from the market? Pay someone to fetch you water or cook for you etc.) All that is OK.

Please DO NOT give money to children!!! (or gifts or sweets)

- Do NOT give money to children under ANY circumstances (even if they ask for it)
- Do NOT give them any gifts unless the gifts are for the whole library (then make it clear and leave it in the library)
- NO SWEETS unless you are leaving (so to say goodbye) unless it is someone's birthday or some sort of celebration
- Children will often ask you for things, not so much children from the village as the ones in the town. If you give them something it will only reinforce the idea that every time they ask they will get something. They will think they can just beg on the streets and will make enough money and will not go to school instead they will stay on the streets (often they are sent by their parents). When they grow up, they are too old to go to school and no longer "cute" to beg for money and so they stay on the street. If you want to help and donate your money, buy a book or donate it directly to us. Giving money to a villager only make things worse even though it might seem like a good idea at first. What is only few cents for you might mean a daily wage for them and seeing you giving away this amount of money will only create false image of you and all white people (or tourists) in their eyes. They might also get the idea that you have a lot of money with you and someone might try to rob you.
- We want to introduce the idea of volunteerism where locals participate in running the library without being paid. However, if they see that volunteers bring what for them is "so much money" they will refuse to do things or will ask to be paid and will become dependent on us. Instead, try to introduce the idea of volunteerism – everyone can help to make the community better.

Please do NOT take drugs at our premises!

- This includes local drugs, alcohol etc.
- Do not take these with the locals (even outside the library!)
- A beer with volunteers is fine
- You must understand that our projects are in areas where apart from the volunteers there are hardly any other 'outsiders'. That means that all people from the village and around know exactly who you are and where you are staying. If therefore, something happens while you are intoxicated even if outside of the premises of the library, it will be very bad for our project. Needless to add, if locals see you smoking pot or having a beer with other locals, you might end up paying for it all and be asked to get more since you are 'the one with money' in their eyes.

Please RESPECT local culture and customs!

- Do a research before you go to a country about local customs, traditions and culture. Learn few phrases and respect the people! You are there to help them but not to overtop them or change their traditions. Teach them what they want to be taught, not what you think is best for them. Introducing them to our "Western customs" might make sense to you but it might be very controversial to their own values or they simply might not like it. Talk but also listen. Teach but also learn.
- If something goes wrong or does not seem right -> contact us
- As our projects are self-sustainable, nobody of the *Bookfeeding Team* will be on site
- However, there is a local person who oversees the library, which you can contact if you need help. If they cannot help, you can contact us, and we will try to help you.

Vaza (Madagascar), Mzungu (East Africa) = local way of saying white man or tourist

VISA

- We are a non-profit organization led solely by volunteers. We do not have any paid secretary who does administrative work neither we have time to do all the things ourselves. For this (and many other) reasons we DO NOT help with visa application. Please check the visa requirements prior to your arrival. We do not provide any documents such as invitation letters or confirmation of stay. We also cannot provide information about the requirements for the visa for your specific country and how to apply for that. On our website there is a brief description of general requirements for visa for each project (Our Projects -> (choose project) -> Essentials Good to Know article). Please double check this information and do your own research as to what you need to do to obtain the visa. Depending on your country of origins, this may vary from the information on our website.
- Remember, it is YOUR responsibility, we are NOT able to provide this information. Please avoid emailing us regarding your visas.

INSURANCE

- Like Visa application – we do not help with insurance, you must obtain your own insurance prior to arrival. We do not check if you have one, but we strongly recommend you have it.

- Moreover, this is neither an employment nor a contracted volunteering. We do not sign contract of your working/volunteering hours (or how many weeks) etc. This is a different concept of volunteerism, we can provide some things for free in exchange for your help (e.g. accommodation) but we are not responsible for anything that happens while you volunteer. We are not an organisation that gets paid to have volunteers and our focus is libraries and not to bring volunteers to them. For bureaucratic and legal reasons therefore, the activities you conduct at our projects **are at your own risk**. (E.g. health issues, injuries, robbery) This has been said, we are doing our best to make sure there is no danger or security threat at our sites. Our libraries are in calm, quiet and secure areas.

VACCINATION

- You must do your own research as to what vaccination is required for you to have. Usually most of the developing countries require the same vaccination (typhoid, yellow fever, hepatitis).
- We recommend you have an International Vaccination ID as the police might check at the borders (mainly if you are coming from another African or Asian country)

VOLUNTEERS' FEEDBACK

- One of the ways how we can keep improving volunteers experience is to get feedback from you. After you finish your volunteering experience please send us an email with: a general feedback, any complaints or suggestions you might have and an article which we can publish on our website.
- The article should be about your experience – it doesn't have to be a general one. It can be about a thing that surprised you, your favourite food, your favourite day at the village, people you met there, your feelings or a specific event that happened to you. It can be even a "day from your diary".
- If you found about us through HelpX or Facebook, please leave a review.
- Feel free to share our Facebook page, tag us on your photos or invite your friends to 'like' us. We all are volunteers and as we try to spend the money solely on our projects, we cannot waste them on advertisement and your help is very much appreciated.
- If you would like to continue to volunteer for us (from home) let us know, we are looking for ambassadors of our projects in all the nations around the world. You can always help us search for sponsors, collect books or organize bake-sells.

CONTACT

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us on hello@bookfeeding.org

VOLUNTEER SIGNED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I _____ have read the *Volunteers' Manual* and understood the basic rules and responsibilities as a volunteer at one of the *Bookfeeding* Projects and agree to abide by them. All activities I conduct during the projects are at my own risk.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Bookfeeding Volunteer Co-ordinator

Date