

VOLUNTEERING



*'Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great.
You can be that great generation.'*

Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

India is a multidimensional country, diverse in history, religion, politics, landscape, language, and customs. As the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and influenced by the rule of both the Mughal and British empires, India's layered history is an integral part of what it means to be Indian. This complex cultural landscape provides visitors with an experience of incomparable historical and spiritual depth.

In recent years, economic reforms have transformed India into one of the fastest growing economies. However, low-income areas abound, and high levels of illiteracy and malnutrition continue to affect social progress. Issues like these along with the caste system — the traditional social hierarchy of Indian society — contribute to the extreme socio-economic divide within the population. Throughout its history, India has proven to be a centre of social activism, change, and resilience. Our Partner Programmes in India reflect these values and strive to provide necessary services that improve the lives of those living on the margins of society.

Volunteer Programme

Our Aim

Our Aim is to operate a volunteer programme in India, in partnership with sustainable community initiatives, bringing people together to work side-by-side while sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding.

We hope participants return home with a deeper understanding of how communities are affected by adversity and poverty, and that this will inspire them to carry on making a difference.

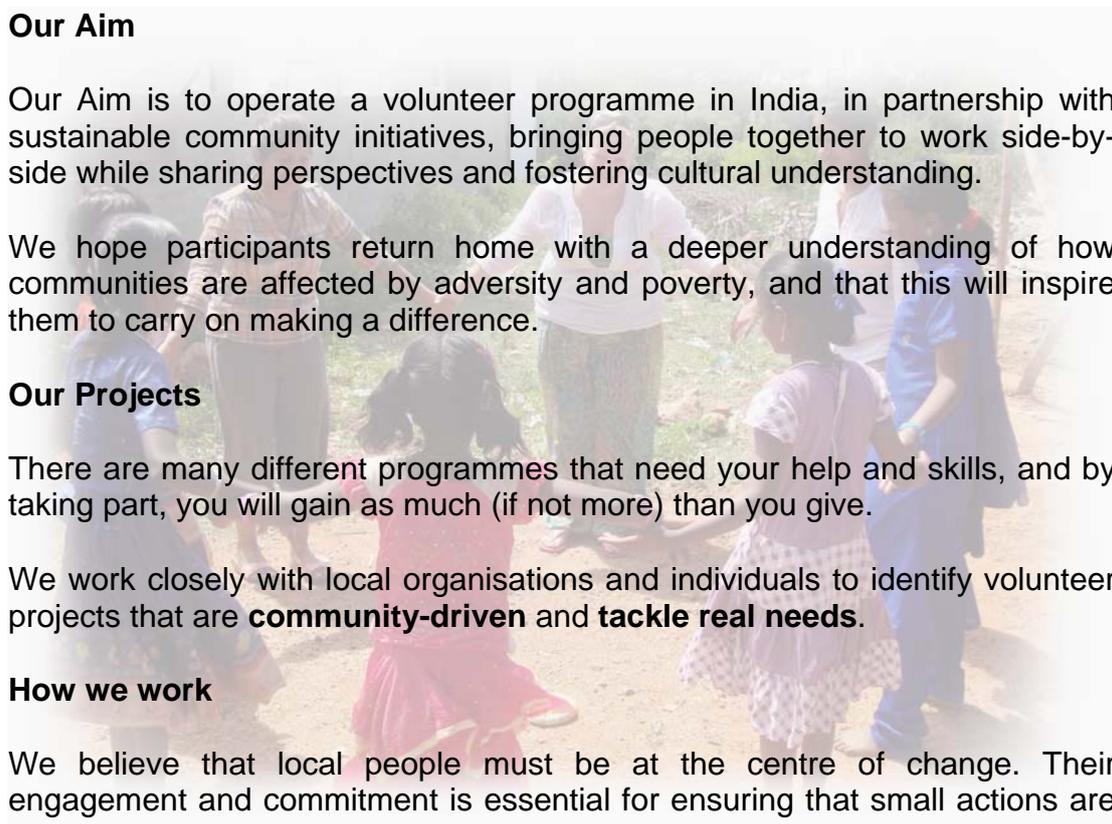
Our Projects

There are many different programmes that need your help and skills, and by taking part, you will gain as much (if not more) than you give.

We work closely with local organisations and individuals to identify volunteer projects that are **community-driven** and **tackle real needs**.

How we work

We believe that local people must be at the centre of change. Their engagement and commitment is essential for ensuring that small actions are



translated into lasting improvements in people's quality of life. Therefore, we support and complement the efforts of local organisations which have already built strong relationships with local people.

Our key aim is not to duplicate or set-up new projects that cannot be sustained. We work with our partner, The Ford Trust, (a well established local NGO), so that their assets and expertise are brought together to achieve common goals. As far as possible, we ensure that all resources are channelled straight into local communities and support local businesses by buying food, tools and equipment in the areas where we work.

What's included in the Programme

- Personally met at Madurai airport / bus terminus
- All meals and accommodation arranged*
- Orientation / sight seeing tour arranged
- A chance to volunteer in one or more of the following areas;
 - Child / Adult Education
 - Community health
 - Community development
 - Women's empowerment
 - Environment and sustainable development
 - Care of the Elderly
 - Working with Special Needs
- signposted to facilities such as internet and telephone
- Free time to explore local area and assistance with planning independent excursions.

What we ask from volunteers;

- Impeccable conduct – you are representing Kamla Foundation and your country,
- Conservative dress – to fit in with and not offend the local community,
- Adequate preparation – consider ways in which you can use your knowledge, experience and skills to help the local community,
- A report of your volunteer experience (with pictures) – to be used in future publicity and also to help prepare future volunteers,
- Become an Ambassador for the Foundation and help promote/support its work in the future.



(*There will be a charge for accommodation, meals and any other related expenditure incurred in line with the development of your placement.)

In the long term:

Volunteers have the opportunity to remain connected with local communities through their own endeavours, helping to supply simple solutions to everyday problems.

It is this vision that drives this programme of work and ensures all our projects address needs highlighted by the community. As ever this work remains a delicate balance between offering the opportunity for innovation and change and answering the needs of extremely vulnerable people.

Legacy



Kamla Foundation aims to be the bridge for individuals, with the interest, passion, dedication and the will, to apply knowledge and skills, and be part of finding solutions that can bring about **lasting change to communities trapped by poverty.**

Finally, Volunteers and partners may emerge from new parts of the landscape but what will not change are the people seeking solutions to the needs thrust upon them by poverty, and where that need exists, Kamla Foundation aims to be a catalyst to bring about action, lasting change and **truly unlock the potential of the individual.**

Millennium Development Goals

Kamla Foundation supports the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These are a set of specific targets to be met by 2015. The goals were created and agreed by 189 world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

The eight MDGs to be met by 2015 are to:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- achieve universal primary education
- promote gender equality and empower women
- reduce child mortality
- improve maternal health
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ensure environmental sustainability
- develop a global partnership for development.

Find out more about MDGs at www.un.org/millenniumgoals

Our Partner in Tamil Nadu

The FORD Trust is a community based organisation involved in community empowerment and development. It currently works in 27 under developed villages and hamlets in Sivagangai and Pudukkottai Districts of Tamil Nadu, India. It is registered under Indian Trust Act 1882.

The major activities of the Trust are;

- Formation of Women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Micro Credit Services
- Skill Training on Local Resource Based and Eco Friendly Economic Activities
- Capacity Development of Women Leaders
- Bio diversity Conservation and Animal Welfare
- Health Promotion including prevention of STD/HIV/AIDS
- Restoration and Renovation of Old Water Resources and Promotion of Organic Farming
- Child Rights and Development

The Ford Trust was registered as a charity on May 27, 2002 and constituting as a Board of Trustees. Its mission is to *"promote and protect a Humanistic society irrespective of caste, creed, region, religion, language or ethnicity"*.

The programmes of work are planned and implemented by a locally elected Committee; "the Advisory Committee" of which the women group leaders are members. At present, there are five paid staff members working across various rural locations. There is at least one volunteer in each village assisting the field staff in reaching out to the most vulnerable members of society.

Partnership Work

Kamla Foundation and the Ford Trust are committed to social justice, sustainable development and human rights. The right to communicate freely is a basic human right and a necessity for sustainable development. Access to information is essential to informed decision-making at all levels. Both organisations are committed to the dissemination of information and promotion of sustainable development initiatives, in response to the needs of under represented and marginalised sectors of society. These are the core values which initially attracted us to work together.



The Projects

Child / Adult Education

Education is the key to escaping the poverty trap. There are so many children in India in various settings; Children's Homes, Day Care Centres and State Schools that need more teachers to deliver the essential skills to master reading, writing and arithmetic. Often classes are so large that learning takes place by old fashioned rote methods with minimal resources.

Volunteers are required to teach English (as it is widely used in the political and business world) and vital to excel in most careers. You can introduce new methods of teaching to boost the children's attainment and help understanding. You can also take lessons in creative arts, sport, music, IT or whatever else interests you. Volunteers do not need a formal teaching qualification - it is more important to have enthusiasm and interest in a subject to make it come alive. However it would be good preparation to visit some local schools in your home town and talk to teachers for ideas, suggested materials and resources.

You will have the opportunity to work in children's home, day care centre or local school. See the *Projects* section for more information about these settings and read Anisha's Report in the *Volunteering* section to learn more about teaching in India.



Community Health

Many people in rural areas of India do not have access to basic health care facilities, and also lack awareness about health. Many suffer from diseases that could be controlled and cured. Moreover, the doctor-patient ratio is very poor, with one doctor caring for approximately 10,000 patients. Most health care services are urban-centred and no treatments are available in rural areas. There are various efforts from the government of India and NGOs to provide basic health care for needy people in rural areas.

Our partner, the Ford Trust cooperates with hospitals and clinics in many rural villages of India. The medical centres in rural areas are understaffed, lack resources and need proficient hands to help the doctors, nurses and medical staff. Many hospitals, in cooperation with local communities, conduct health care programs on basic prevention, nutrition and sanitation.

Volunteers can work in hospitals, small clinics, old age homes, orphanages and shelter homes to assist the staff in the treatment of patients. They can educate and guide these marginalised people about sanitation, hygiene, nutrition and provide first aid to people with small injuries. Equipment is basic but staff and some locals have a good grasp of English. In addition to general clinic work, volunteers may also perform a number of home visits with the local staff.

As a volunteer in a health project, your duties will depend on your qualifications and knowledge. Qualified doctors and nurses can perform full day-to-day treatment of various diseases, counselling and testing and teach patients about first aid and prevention. Medical students work under the supervision of qualified medical personnel.

Community Development

Several new community organisations have been established in India during the last decade. They are making great strides in fighting poverty and creating sustainable development. These organisations give the Indian people new tools and hope for the future. Our partner organisation, the Ford Trust works for improvements in health, education, social services, environment, women's and children's rights and rights and care of older people. When you volunteer to work with centres for outreach-training, informal education, vocational training and women's development, you will be contributing to the local community and providing its people with new sustainable skills and opportunities.

As a volunteer in community development you will assist in a range of grass root level work e.g., vocational training, nutrition care and also helping women with skills training. Other opportunities include rural development, agriculture, education. You may also have the choice of working in women's empowerment and working with orphans/disabled children.

Women's Empowerment



The situation of most Indian women is very poor, due to the existing social, cultural and economic systems. Women in India, especially in rural areas, are deprived of basic human rights like education, health, nutrition, involvement in politics etc. Violence against women and rape are common. In addition, the literacy rate of women compared to men in rural areas is very sub

standard. The Ford Trust is working in partnership with key organisations in Tamil Nadu to empower and support marginalised women. They are involved in literacy programs, motivation programs, leadership and capacity building, training in women's rights and responsibility, also microcredit and cooperative

groups for income generation activities. Your energy and commitment will be of great importance in helping to improve the situation for these women.

As a volunteer, you will assist disadvantaged women to gain knowledge, skills, awareness of their rights and confidence. You may work in several programs in education, health, training, drug addiction, abolition of exploitation of women, etc. You may also work in various women's rights organisations to prepare and deliver women support training, evaluate women's situation, recommend necessary provisions for the establishment of equality between sexes or to empower women in general.

Environmental and Sustainable Development

Urbanisation and population growth are worsening the natural environment of India. Yet there are environmental projects such as organic farming, irrigation management, water management and sustainable development taking place even in the rural areas. The goal of these projects is to experiment and conduct research for sustainable development through organic farming, training program and alternative traditional medicines. If you choose a conservation project you will learn about rural development, Indian traditional medicines and practices, organic farming and more.

As a volunteer, you might be involved in a broad range of environmental and sustainable development projects depending on your interest and skills. You may be asked to carry out research and documentation work, field visits or training programs. Work in some conservation projects may be physically demanding.

Working with Elderly People

Elderly people need mental as well as physical support and almost constant care. Good old age homes provide shelter, care, therapeutic aid and counselling to the needy senior citizens of India yet most just provide the basics and are not very stimulating. You can use your energy, skills, and time to brighten the day for the elderly people in this home. This project warmly welcomes those who offer love, respect and compassion for the old and want to help enrich their lives.



As a volunteer, you can help the elderly residents with cooking and serving meals and also entertain them by singing, reading aloud and general interaction. You can share any sort of useful skill. You could also help with therapeutic activities and provide them with basic care.

Working with Special Needs

Mentally and physically challenged people are so often neglected in Indian society. Rural Tamil Nadu has very limited access to special needs education as there is lack of awareness, poverty and empathy in the communities, leading to a shortfall in education and care possibilities.

If you are an enthusiastic and sensitive person this project needs you to work with disabled children. One of your roles will be to provide attention, care for and show affection to such uncared for children. Volunteering with disabled children in India will make a significant difference to the children's morale and sense of self worth.

Generic Project skills required for volunteering

What the Foundation seeks in a Volunteer is enthusiasm, motivation and a desire to help make a difference. We seek committed individuals to help strengthen the projects and programmes, so a willingness to learn and work hard is required. Having an interest to work for the benefit of the poor, marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and to the development of their skill set, knowledge and competence is essential.

You are advised to prepare by spending time in local schools, care homes, health centres, according to your specific interests in order to gather information and resources to help your task in India.

It's a physical and emotional experience and volunteers hopefully come away knowing a great deal more about themselves than they did beforehand.

