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Some questions to ask **before** accepting an overseas placement

**About the agency/organisation…**

* What sort of organisation is it (e.g. Non-Government Organisation (NGO), charity or profit making company)?
* Does the organisation have reputable travel or government endorsements?
* How and why was the organisation set up?
* How long has the organisation been running and how many people does it send overseas?
* Who is the organisation benefiting?

**About the values of the organisation…**

* What is the organisation's philosophy towards development? Whilst many organisations have deep-rooted, sustainable links with communities and local people, others operate on a more commercial basis.
* How was the project identified? Was it from a local perspective, either through a local organisation or via consultation with the local community?
* Is there a local partner organisation with responsibility for designing and managing the project?
* Who will benefit from the project? Will anyone be adversely affected by the project? How will the expectations of the local community be managed?
* Are the interests of the local population being served? Will your activities be welcomed by the local people?
* How can I be sure that the opportunity is not taking away the chance of paid employment for a local person?
* Will the project be sustained after the volunteers leave or has it been set up as a one-off opportunity that will only have short term benefits?
* Is there a genuine need for volunteers or has the opportunity been created as an adventure holiday?
* If you are paying, find out where the money goes. How much goes on travel, accommodation, administration? Is it good value for money?
* What proportion of the cost goes to the local project that is hosting me?

**Safety and Support**

* Does the Foreign and Commonwealth Office approve of travel to this country?
* What kind of insurance do they provide? Does it cover repatriation if you become ill? Does it cover personal injury? Have you seen a copy of the policy to check the cover?
* Will I need my own travel insurance or does the organisation's insurance cover me for the kind of work that I will be doing? (Think both about health and about belongings).
* How volatile is the local political situation?
* Is there a British embassy?
* What happens if something goes wrong - for example if I am very ill or have to get home unexpectedly? Is repatriation included? Does the organisation have contingency plans for a crisis?
* Will you be offered an induction or briefing course before you start volunteering?
* Will you receive adequate training for the volunteering?
* Is there in-country support for the volunteers? This includes practical arrangements such as accommodation and meals as well as support to do the job.
* Will there be an English-speaking representative of the organisation nearby?
* Can I speak with volunteers who have returned from the project to find out about their experiences?

**About the role...**

* Has the volunteer role been clearly defined?
* What hours will you work and how much free time will you have?
* If you’re teaching, who will you be teaching, how many in a class and what age range?
* What skills are required?
* Will you be given any support materials or be expected to take your own?
* In some societies, women (including foreign visitors) have a subordinate role at work and at home. Can you cope with this?
* Who will I be working with? Will I be on my own, is there a group of volunteers or does the role involve working alongside local people?

**About travel…**

* What are the travel arrangements?
* If you have to return early, can you transfer your ticket?
* If you would like to stay in the country longer to travel/sight-see can you get a later return ticket?

**About accommodation…**

* Is accommodation provided?
* Do you have the address of where you will be staying?
* Have you been given a clear idea of the standard of accommodation?
* If you are staying with a local family, are they being paid? Is it sufficient? Why are they having you to stay?
* How far are you from the nearest town?
* How far are you from where you will work?
* Is it safe? Are the streets safe after dark? Is it safe for a single man/woman?

**If you receive too many vague or unsatisfactory answers to these questions, think twice about going.**