

Health Volunteers Overseas



Improving Global Health Through Education

Health Volunteers Overseas
is a private, non-profit, non-
sectarian volunteer
organization founded in
1986 and headquartered in
the United States.

HVO MISSION

- *To improve the quality and accessibility of health care in developing countries through training and education*
- *Focus on local pathologies & developing local capacity*
- *Place emphasis on local materials*

Snapshot of HVO

- Currently have 63 training programs
- Have sent over 4500 volunteers since 1986
- Volunteers work with over 2500 health care professionals and students at sites

Barriers to Volunteering

- Time
- Money
- Perception of risk –
 - Global security
 - Diseases (SARS, AIDS)
- Family and other commitments
- Lack of information about opportunities
- “What do I have to offer?”

Motivations & Expectations

- Variety of motivations
 - Altruism, professional challenge, adventure
- Expect that
 - their time will be well spent
 - they are making a real contribution
- Frustration

HVO Model

- Recruitment
- Preparation
- Placement



Recruitment

- Role of Sponsors
- Word of Mouth
- Internet
 - Net Connection



Preparation

- Critical to effectiveness
- Intersection of Program Design and Volunteer
- Many dimensions – professional, personal and cross-cultural

Strategies for Preparation

- Briefing Materials
- Talk with returned volunteers
- Interact with Program Director
- Interact with on-site coordinator
- *A Guide to Volunteering Overseas*
- Workshops

Without realizing it, I had formed an idea of what it would be like volunteering there, as I recall many times checking in with myself and sort of truing up my previous wildly misinterpreted opinions and thoughts of what it "should be". I let go of many "shoulds" and many many assumptions during my time there.....

an HVO Volunteer

Volunteer & Program Design

- The Volunteer

- Motivations
- Expectations
- Clinical knowledge
- Creativity
- Match skills and experience with job at hand

- The Program

- Clearly defined goals
- Level of local interest and support
- Room for creativity?
- Integration with local staff
- Match skills and experience with job at hand

Placement

- Support at Site
 - Co-workers
 - Housing
 - Communications
- Feedback Loop
 - What is actually happening
 - Make modifications as needed

Lessons Learned

- Volunteers are not free or even cheap....
 - Infrastructure and support are essential
 - “Care and feeding” essential
 - Different motivations and expectations
- Local support is key
 - Volunteer as a threat/competition/excuse
- Program must be specific and utilize skills and expertise of the volunteer



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