

Seva Mandir

Volunteers Guide

Seva Mandir welcomes volunteers and interns from a variety of backgrounds, although relevant education and/or work experience within the field of interest is highly preferred. Former volunteers and interns include undergraduate students, graduate students, Ph.D.'s, recipients of fellowships, and career professionals, among others. You must be prepared to stay for a minimum of 2 months.

About Seva Mandir

Seva Mandir means the 'Temple of Service'. It is a voluntary organisation working with rural communities of Udaipur and Rajasamand districts for over 4 decades. It is present in over 600 villages in the Jhadol, Girwa, Badgaon, Kotra, Kherwara and Kumbhalgarh Blocks of Udaipur and Rajasamand Districts. Since its inception, Seva Mandir has sought to help the impoverished ameliorate their lives, although the initial focus was upon adult literacy. It eventually became clear that sustainable development could only be brought about by creating and strengthening the general capacities of the rural population, where villagers are encouraged to become self-reliant and responsible for their own development. Accordingly, programs now address the issues of livestock development, wasteland and watershed management, water resource management, community assets development, education, income generation, health, gender equity, and institutions building. Seva Mandir's primary overall objective consists of empowering people's institutions to better address the needs of their adherents.

Seva Mandir is staffed with over 284 full time workers providing skilled services and promoting leadership within villages. These dedicated staff members form the backbone of Seva Mandir and represent the means through which self-reliant and autonomous village-level groups will be achieved.

We hope that you will take some time to view our web site, www.sevamandir.org, in order to learn more about Seva Mandir's programs and area of influence.

We look for volunteers that will:

- Make the most of available opportunities;
- Be self-motivated;
- Be patient when faced with frustrating situations;
- Understand and reflect upon the mission of Seva Mandir;
- Be flexible and open minded
- Be enthusiastic!
- Be respectful of the culture and people

Project Assignment

Volunteers can choose from the various projects offered to them taking into account their interests and skills with our different programs. The project can also be decided prior to the arrival of the volunteers through correspondence, though volunteers are generally encouraged to finalize project details after having spent some time at Seva Mandir learning about the organization in greater detail.

The Volunteers Coordinator at Seva Mandir helps the volunteers mainly around logistics of their stay however a reporting officer (mentor) provides his/her help and guidance to volunteers in commencing their projects. Each volunteer has a Reporting Officer from the Program areas where their project is located.

For example – a volunteer working on Malnutrition Status of Children in a Pre School Centre (Balwadi) Program would be mentored by the In Charge of Women and Child Development Program and the person In Charge of the Balwadi Program.

It is also very important to note that in Seva Mandir we have a multi-level Mentoring for Volunteers. The volunteers are guided by program specialists and Field level experts.

Besides the main projects assigned to volunteers/interns, they can also contribute to the organization by doing 'side projects' and help the staff reduce the workload. You are strongly encouraged to explore side projects from the volunteers coordinator.

Various Departments and Units

Seva Mandir has two separate buildings which are located opposite to each other the same street in Fatehpura. One building is called – Continuous Education Building and the other is called the Administration Building. The following is the list of programs and people in charges at the Head Quarter –

Name of the Program	Abbreviation used at Seva Mandir
Natural Resources Development Program	NRD
Women and Child Development Program	WCD
Health Program	Health
Education Program	EDU
Village Development Fund Program (Gram Vikas Kosh)	GVK
Child Representative Program (Bal Pratinidhi Program)	BPP
People's Management School Program	PMS
Resource Mobilization Program	RMU
Computer Unit (The ICT Department of Seva Mandir)	Lab 1
Administration Department	Admin
Kunzru Library	Library

Some more names ...

Canteen	Canteen
Volunteers Dormitory (in Seva Mandir premises itself)	Mehtab Sadan
Love Nest Guest house	Love Nest
Vidya Bhawan Guest House	Vidya Bhawan

Duration

The volunteer can spend time with Seva Mandir for a time period of anywhere between two months to one year or more to observe and participate in rural development projects. Accordingly there are projects/assignments vary from exposure trip to long term projects, from investigating into a problem to implementing a project. However, It would be important to note that those who have been to Seva Mandir for shorter time periods have found that by the time they understood the nature of development work, it was the time for them to go.

Visas

You are encouraged to come with Entry Visa or Student Visa.

Please note that you are responsible to get yourself registered with local FRRO within 14 days of your arrival in India. Please do read the instructions on your Visas issued on your passports. Before leaving the country you will need to get an NOC (no-objection certificate) from the local FRRO. If you fail to register with FRRO upon your arrival within 14 days then you will have to pay a penalty. If you don't register at all with FRRO then you will not be allowed to leave the country and you could be subjected to 'jail'.

Indian visas begin on the day they are issued and not the date of arrival, so visas should be obtained shortly before departure. Prospective volunteers/interns may wish to contact a current or former volunteer/intern with further questions regarding visas.

How to reach Seva Mandir

Seva Mandir is located in north-west Udaipur, near the police station of Fatehpura Circle, around 7 km from the city railway station and the bus stand. You can reach here by prepaid auto-rickshaw from the city railway station or the bus station, for around Rs. 40 to 50.

The airport is 23 km from Seva Mandir. You will be arriving from either Delhi or Mumbai. A prepaid taxi from the airport to Seva Mandir will cost around Rs. 350. Expect to pay more at night. Most rickshaw and taxi drivers know Seva Mandir and Fatehpura Circle.

Registration (for residency notification)

All overseas volunteers are required to fill out a 'C' form (residence notification) with the local police within 18 hours of your arrival to the city. Therefore, the volunteers are strongly **requested to contact the Volunteers Coordinator immediately upon their arrival to assist them in the process.** You will be required to fill in (hand written) three copies of the 'C' form along with the three copies of the passport and Visa will be required. To overcome the hassles and to save time please get three photocopies of the passport and visa ready.

Work/Office Hours

Seva Mandir opens at 9.30 am and closes at 5.30 pm everyday from Monday through Saturday. The Second Saturday of every month is a holiday. Lunch break is from 1.30 pm to 2.00pm daily. The library opens from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. For volunteers and interns, working hours are more flexible than the aforementioned schedule. The intensity of one's work at Seva Mandir will depend on the extent of fieldwork and personal time constraints. The volunteers are allowed to take leaves with the notification to their reporting officers.

However the students/interns will be entitled to leaves as per the rules of their institutions. Leave requests must be submitted in writing to the Volunteer Coordinator in advance.

Orientation (Getting started with Seva Mandir)

All volunteers and interns receive an orientation to Seva Mandir's organizational structure, programs, and facilities within the first few days of arrival. This is a great opportunity to ask questions concerning prospective projects and to arrange meetings with various Program In-Charges. Orientation will also cover the rules and reporting procedures to be followed by all volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator meets the new volunteer the very first day of his/her arrival and gives necessary instructions. The meeting with The Reporting Officer/Mentor usually happens in first couple of days of the volunteer's arrival.

Please expect the first few days to be spent on understanding the organization and the project assigned.

Accommodation

All the dormitory/guest houses for volunteers/interns are furnished accommodations with a fully-equipped shared kitchen, subject to availability. The volunteers are responsible for their own meals, although bedding and limited storage facilities are provided in all volunteer's hostels. Requests for accommodation must be sent to the Volunteer Coordinator prior to your arrival.

Some Indian families in nearby locale have paying guest facilities for international volunteers at Seva Mandir. We have a list of such host families hence please request Volunteer Coordinator for the same.

Living Stipends

Seva Mandir may provide a small living stipend to some volunteers. Please note that stipends are not provided to any foreign volunteers. However, all approved project-related travel expenses are reimbursed by Seva Mandir.

The living costs in Udaipur are fairly moderate as compared to cities like Delhi and Mumbai. The average expenditure on simple homemade meals and local travel for one month would be around between Rs. 3000 to 5000. This does not include expenses incurred on meals at fancy restaurants.

Language and Culture

There will of course be challenges during your time at Seva Mandir, the first of which is the language barrier for non-Hindi speakers. English is not spoken at the village level, and communication can prove slow and challenging in and around the Seva Mandir main offices.

Indian culture differs greatly from most Western societies, so volunteers should be prepared to adapt accordingly to everyday life in Udaipur. Volunteers will be faced with new challenges regarding work-related norms and overall lifestyle. Some of these challenges may prove frustrating, but it is important for volunteers to keep their experiences in perspective.

A few books that explore Indian culture and history:

- Fiction: God of Small Things-Arundhati Roy; A Fine Balance-Rohinton Mistry; Midnight's Children-Salman Rushdie; A Suitable Boy-Vikram Seth
- History: In Spite of the Gods-Edward Luce; The Great Moghuls-Bamber Gascoigne, India: A History-John Keay
- Regional: A princess remembers-Gayatri Devi; Inside the Haveli - Rama Mehta
- Development Related: Everyone Loves a Good Drought.-Palagummi Sainath; Notes from Another India-Jeremy Seabrook
- Guidebooks: for India or Rajasthan like Lonely Planet or Rough Guide.

Climate

For some volunteers, the climate in India may necessitate some adjustments. Located near the Thar Desert, Udaipur enjoys a cool, dry winter from November to February, and a mercilessly hot and dry summer from April through June. Winter temperatures range from 2° to 28° Celsius. In summers the temperature generally reaches to mid-40° Celsius/low-100s Fahrenheit, although temperatures have been known to hit 50C/120F in some years in the past. Monsoon begins late June and lasts from July to September, after which temperatures begin to cool. Volunteers who have difficulties with extremely hot conditions may choose to plan their stay for the autumn/winter months. However, one should keep in mind that the houses are built to keep them as cool as possible during the summer so one might be surprised at how cold it can get during the winter months at night! We recommend bringing some warm clothes for the winter season.

Health

There are no vaccinations required to enter India, but several are recommended. Check www.cdc.gov/travel, www.tripprep.com or www.csih.org for information concerning vaccinations and disease. All volunteers/interns should consult a doctor and/or travel clinic before arriving in India.

Dress/Clothing

In past recent years Udaipur has become a little less conservative for people's dressing styles. You would find more and more young people wearing western clothes. However, in Seva Mandir we recommend that you wear clothes that are closer to Indian culture.

At Head Quarter of Seva Mandir you could wear western clothes also but please do make sure that they are not too revealing (avoid shorts/backless blouses, skin tight clothing etc). The Indian clothes and dressings are widely praised and appreciated.

However when you are going to village/field then please do strictly stick to Indian clothes (Long Shirts pants). Most volunteers have purchased clothing in India to acclimate to the culture. A simple Indian dress would cost between Rs. 300 – 500. There are shops in Udaipur that make clothes according to one's choice, current fashion and style. A lot of volunteers and staff prefer such arrangements.

Internet/Computer lab

There is available internet access **in the Library** at Seva Mandir Head Quarter. Also **in Computer Lab 2** where the volunteers and staff have access to computers, the internet access is available. Otherwise there are a couple of internet cafes within close proximity to the office. Volunteers may bring laptops for personal and work purposes. There is a WiFi connectivity within the premises however the internet speed could be very slow at times.

From ex-volunteers

Here are some reflections from some of the many volunteers who have spent time working on projects with Seva Mandir.

Ashley Waters (10th June –12th July)- Harvard U.S.A

I learned much more from Seva Mandir than I could have ever contributed to the organisation as a short-term volunteer who spoke no Hindi. Because I entered with realistic goals of learning about Seva Mandir and its role in the villages. I felt content to observe and do my own reading and writing. Every moment here has in some ways shaped my ideas about development work and the NGO sector. Thus I depart enriched, and perhaps wiser, though I leave no tangible legacy. To the perspective volunteer, I encourage realistic expectations, patience, personal and cultural flexibility and initiative.

Anuradha Tambe, Pune, India

I came to Seva Mandir for my rural stint, a part of my management training with Hindustan Lever Limited. Life at Seva Mandir is so completely different from the frenetic pace of my routine work and it gives me the ideal opportunity to think, feel and understand the relevance of work done in the development sector.

I aspire to make a career in Human Resource Development and this would provide me an additional perspective on the challenge it is to work with people who want for all the opportunities that one takes for granted. What makes my stay special is the knowledge that my smallest contribution would impact the end result so directly.

Rebecca Brazier (April/May 1999)- Australia

My time at Seva Mandir has truly broadened my horizons. It has given me the chance to practice

skills I learned back in Australia in a totally different context. This has broadened my perspective on community development and I hope to be able to make use of this new understanding in my professional life back home.

Joe McKnight (December 2009/March 2010)-USA

After four months of volunteering with the Communications & Fundraising department (otherwise known as "RMU") at Seva Mandir, I can safely say that my time here has been phenomenal. So much happened inside the last four months that I should first tell you what I didn't do. I didn't change Seva Mandir, I didn't save lives in the villages, I didn't learn Hindi, and I'm still coming to grips with the fact that I could spend the rest of my life here and still not understand India.

But I did meet an incredible group of people. The staff at Seva Mandir, while understandably busy, makes a valiant effort to include volunteers in their projects. It should be noted though that the enthusiasm of the staff towards volunteers is only the reciprocal of the volunteers enthusiasm. Don't come here expecting for things to fall immediately into place.

When I arrived, I was told there wasn't going to be much for me to do until the following month. I pleaded with the staff member that there had to be something I could help with even if it was office work. Five minutes later I was having a conversation with the In-Charge of RMU and after four months of mostly office related work, I'm sad it's over. At least for now.

For those of you interested in fundraising, communications, or journalism, you should seriously consider working within the RMU department while volunteering at Seva Mandir. I was able to help organize and execute a plan to update Seva Mandir's contact database. I sent emails and thank you letters. I showed visitors around Udaipur. Best of all, I traveled to the field every so often to write stories about various projects Seva Mandir was conducting. These stories were used for fundraising and an array of communication purposes.

The lasting memories were the close relationships that formed between volunteers who came from a myriad of nations, academic backgrounds, and outlooks. It was

incredibly rewarding (and probably healthy) to be able to relate our varied experiences at Seva Mandir with volunteers dealing with the same sense of trying to figure out our place in the organization, in India, and when things got really heady, in the world.

I'll be forever grateful for my time at Seva Mandir. I doubt I could've gotten more out of my time in India than working with an NGO of Seva Mandir's calibre. For that reason and many more, I hope to continue working with Seva in the future.

Please feel free to contact the Volunteers Coordinator for further details, queries, comments and suggestions to the volunteers coordinator Ms. Preeti Shaktawat at preeti@sevamandir.org

We hope that this booklet has given you sufficient preliminary information about our
Volunteer/Internship Programme.

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