

HVT – VOLUNTEER POLICY DOCUMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE & CODE OF CONDUCT

To be Signed by both the Volunteer and Host Organisation

Himalayan Volunteer Tourism (HVT) is an initiative which brings together people who love the mountains and want to contribute towards development and conservation of the Himalayan region. HVT is a common platform for those who believe in sustainable, responsible tourism and want to connect with the locals across the Himalayas and give back to society through their experience, knowledge, donations or time.

Himalayan Volunteer Tourism is an offshoot of SROT Rural Education & Development Foundation, an NGO registered in 2020 and it operates in Tirthan Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Meaning 'source' SROT's vision is to make education accessible to all.

SROT Rural Education & Development Foundation is a non-profit initiative dedicated to offering **alternative education** to the children of the Tirthan Valley, located in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. The project aims at **making quality education accessible and friendly** by means of alternative, value-based, and constructive education.

Volunteer: A volunteer is one who provides unpaid help to people, communities, non-profit organizations, and businesses to assist them in performing activities, events, or services that benefit others. The word volunteer comes from the Latin word 'Voluntarius', meaning willing or of one's own choice. And **Volunteering** is a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labour for community service.

Four indispensable elements of volunteerism...

1. **Selflessness:** The first element of volunteerism should be selflessness. The "genesis" of every noble volunteering initiative is a desire to make life better for others, especially those who are underprivileged. Volunteers are those individuals who are committed to solving a problem in society not for any direct economic benefits but with the objective of putting smiles on the face of others.

What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for others? - George Elliot

2. **Sacrifice:** Selflessness leads to sacrifice. To sacrifice simply means to give up something valuable in order to attain a desired objective. True volunteerism requires a great deal of sacrifice. A response to the call to volunteerism demands a willingness to sacrifice one's time, energy, money and other resources as well as stepping outside your comfort zone all in the name of making a difference in the life of others.

Sometimes to show love will mean "to give, but give until it hurts". And that's what sacrifice is all about.

3. **Service:** Another necessary element of volunteerism is service. One question that keeps ringing in the mind of well-meaning volunteers is; what can I do in my own small way to

contribute to “healing the world and making it a better place.”? The foundation of volunteerism is LOVE.

‘Love cannot remain by itself — it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service.’ - Mother Teresa

4. **Support:** Finally, every worthwhile volunteering endeavour needs the unremitting support of individuals, corporate bodies and even the political authority. Individuals or groups who are volunteering to provide solutions to some identified problems and causing a positive change in society should be acknowledged and encouraged. You should support such ones financially if you have the means. If not, you can equally support with your prayers and that will also count as an invaluable contribution.

HVT was floated with the idea of creating a strong network of Volunteers and Host Organisations wherein for mutual good and with the intent of service each of the parties through the HVT platform can announce/ reach-out/ call for volunteering support or opportunities/ connect and work together for the larger purpose of the community.

The Volunteer Policy of HVT entails obligations on behalf of both the Host Organization and the Volunteer. HVT will...

1. Act as a Facilitator/ Enabler/ Aggregator and its role is to connect Volunteers with Host Organizations and vice versa for social good.
2. Direct its efforts towards providing access to and to connect individuals/ groups with verified credentials and proven skill sets with host organisations who are also verified by HVT.
3. Ensure a safe, learning and contributing space for Volunteers.
4. Grow a community of Host Organisations who with the help of Volunteers can setup, conduct and manage their initiatives and enterprises in a way that it uplifts and empowers them and the local community, delivers a socio-economic impact and showcases a vibrant destination to its visiting guests/ travellers.
5. Take reasonable care while it identifies, scrutinizes and onboards a Host Organization and Volunteer’s safety and security remains top on that list of criteria.
6. Extend support in guiding/ locating and recommending a safe and secure place (homestay/ hostel/ home) that meets a volunteer’s budget.
7. Guide and help Volunteers by making travel and transport recommendations and suggestions to safely reach the project/ volunteering location.
8. Ensure that the Volunteer goes through proper orientation to help him/her know the organization and staff with whom the volunteer needs to work. This would include a code of conduct, enlisted below.
9. Urge that the Host Organisation obtain a signed copy of the Volunteer’s assignment along with the Volunteer Policy, and pass a copy of it to HVT.
10. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the volunteer is well looked after and her/his safety is maintained, HVT does not take responsibility of any untoward incident that may take place during the period of volunteering.
11. HVT does not recruit or refer volunteers to: Work with private individuals without going through a Host Organisation; Substitute for paid workers; Take part in political campaigns; and Engage in activity involving religious evangelising.

Terms of Reference - Between Host Organization and Volunteer

Before and during the placement Host Organization will:

1. Share its Volunteer Policy in writing with the Volunteer clearly stating the organization’s expectations and the rules and regulations to be followed during the course of volunteering.

2. Orient and inform the Volunteer on Do's and Don'ts for volunteers, potential risks of the region (natural and unnatural) and means to handle the same in the event of an emergency.
3. Address the Volunteer's queries and fears satisfactorily and provide sufficient information about the region, placement, responsibilities, support, etc. such that s/he is equipped to work fairly independently.
4. Explicitly state the support that the organization is willing to extend to the Volunteer.
5. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that the volunteer is not subjected to verbal, physical or sexual harassment.
6. Extend maximum support to the Volunteer in the event of an emergency.

Disclaimer: While HVT takes good efforts to verify the credibility of the Host Organisations and the Volunteers, HVT requests that host organisations and volunteers cross verify each other credentials before confirming the engagement. HVT does not take responsibility of any untoward incident that may take place during the period of volunteering either by the Host Organisation (entity offering volunteering) or the Volunteer seeking it.

Volunteer's Code of Conduct

By giving my consent to register and take up a volunteering opportunity, I agree to abide by the following code of conduct:

1. Shall act in good faith with utmost care, skill, diligence, and integrity.
2. Shall be sensitive to the needs of others and respect their culture.
3. Shall act within the authority conferred upon me.
4. Shall keep in mind, at all times, the best interests of the Host Organisation and HVT and the rural community and strive to make a positive contribution.
5. Shall not participate in or take any decision, which might bring about a conflict of interest with the Host Organisation, HVT or the rural community.
6. Shall not make any statement or act in a manner, which is capable of embarrassing relations between any of the parties concerned.
7. Shall not disclose any confidential information to a third party without proper authority.
8. Shall keep both the Host Organisation and HVT informed, at all times, of any developments which concern them.
9. Shall adhere to Host Organisation policies, practices, procedures, dress code, and standards of conduct till the end of the Volunteering period.
10. Shall submit timely output reports as required.
11. If any of these terms are breached, the Host Organisation and or HVT may call-off the Volunteer-ship at any time they deem fit.

Volunteer/ Host Organisation

Date:

HVT-Admin

Date: