

# Voluntourism

Voluntourism combines the leisure activity of tourism with volunteering in other countries for the betterment of local populations. Voluntourism is an international industry with as many as 10 million people volunteering worldwide in [2015](#).

In recent years, concern has grown about the motives and outcomes of charitable voluntourism organizations. While many well intentioned trips occur without issue, sometimes voluntourists take the jobs of local community members or perpetuate systems of oppression.

[Key questions](#) to ask yourself before joining a volunteer organization:

Do you know where your **money** is going?

- Research management and ask for transparency. “A **responsible** organization should be able to show you how their money is being used.”

Did you research **positive** and **negative** reviews?

- Don't be swayed by glowing testimonials on the website. Check for objective reviews or reports in newspapers and blogs.

Are you **qualified** to volunteer?

- Sure, you might get experience, but is that best for the host country? **Assist**, don't lead...

Are you **trained** to work with children?

- If you don't have professional training as a teacher or caregiver, then you shouldn't do it overseas either.

From the LensShift resource “[20 Crucial Questions to Ask Before Working for a Social Good Organization](#)” we have selected four key questions to consider when entertaining a volunteer trip abroad:

- Do the services offered truly meet the needs of the **community**?
  - Consider the community and what they may need, want, or specifically *not want*. Without having a dialogue, it's impossible to know how to effectively assist.
- Are there any metrics or data that show the organization actually **achieves results**?
  - Investigate how an organization measures 'success' and look for organizations with transparent and honest stories of their work
- Are there follow-up programs and plans in place to ensure **sustainability**? Are transitions built in for short-term projects?
  - Projects should have long-term sustainability plans to maximize the investment in a community.
- Does the organization's **public face** match what is happening behind the scenes?
  - Program alumni may have information about the organization's methods and ethics. Most established organizations should have significant background literature available.



LensShift is committed to addressing misguided social impact work and misguided perceptions. We do so by facilitating learning, critical reflection and discourse on social change. Learn more at [lensshift.org](http://lensshift.org).

Some questions from [Matador Network](#) and [The Muse](#) to consider before volunteering in another country. Also,, before taking photos on your travels, please review these guides from [Africa is A Country](#) and [Matador Network](#). This [video](#) from Learning Service suggests similar questions to ask before joining a volunteer organization; Learning Service also offers free online guidelines for “[finding a responsible volunteer placement](#)”

The LensShift Stream “[Exploring Voluntourism](#)” is chock full of helpful resources.