



Volunteer manifesto

Who is this for?

This document is mainly for Calcutta Rescue's volunteers, and anyone considering becoming a volunteer. However, we want other people involved in the organisation to understand the role of volunteers, so this document will also be useful for staff, and Support Group and Governing Council members.

What is it?

It's a positive policy that explains the type of person Calcutta Rescue is looking for as a volunteer, and the attributes and attitudes that help volunteers make the most of their placement.

If you're thinking about volunteering, this should help you decide if Calcutta Rescue is a good match for you.

It will also help you set objectives for your time in Kolkata, guide you during your experience, and explain what you can expect from Calcutta Rescue and its staff.

If you're a member of staff or you're involved in the organisation in some way, this manifesto should inform your expectations of volunteers and the work they will do.

Who are Calcutta Rescue volunteers?

We are effective and confident communicators. We are able to get involved in projects and conversations, even if we don't share a first language with those around us.

We bring our skills, knowledge and experience, and use these to work on a relevant project. We have an open-minded attitude to working in a new country and culture. We want to learn, and we understand that we need to be able to adapt our knowledge and experience to a local setting.

We want to be useful and make a difference to the organisation. We want our work to be more than just 'a helping hand in a foreign land'. We appreciate that we may be working with people who lack many of the things we take for granted, and we are always sensitive to this.

We are also aware of the potential differences between our own culture and the one we've come into, in terms of religion, gender roles, family structures, politics and daily life.

How do volunteers fit into Calcutta Rescue's structure?

We respectfully work alongside staff, across all projects. Our aim is to help improve processes and systems, rather than doing the work of staff. We are outside of the staff hierarchy, which means that we don't manage anyone. This makes it easier for us to see the 'bigger picture' and understand the challenges that staff are facing, so that we can help to find solutions.

Most of us work in an advisory capacity, to identify opportunities for positive, sustainable change. We encourage change where appropriate; we do not enforce it. Some volunteers work on specific projects that staff don't have the time or skills to carry out themselves.

How can we ensure that our work continues to be valuable after we leave?

We bring new ideas and perspectives, but our work is ultimately driven by what the organisation wants and needs.

We collaborate with staff across the organisation to make sure we are thinking holistically.

We investigate what has been done in the past, to learn from previous successes and failures. And we consider how our work may need to be adapted in the future.

We prepare any appropriate notes and reference materials for staff and volunteers to use after we leave. We take responsibility for speaking to new volunteers who will replace us and explaining what we have done. Within reason, we make ourselves available to be contacted in the future if a volunteer or staff member has a question about what we've done.

As a group, we are committed to improving Calcutta Rescue's volunteer experience.

What do we expect from Calcutta Rescue?

- A warm environment of personal and professional support from fellow volunteers
- A reliable and accessible point of contact who understands the challenges of working in another country (currently the Clinical Volunteer Co-ordinator role)
- For staff to spend time with us and freely share ideas, so that we understand their work
- For our voices to be heard, and not dismissed
- To be involved in the daily life of the organisation as much as possible, and not excluded
- That staff take responsibility for continuing the work we do after we leave, assuming our work is of good quality and valuable
- That any useful ideas and suggestions we have are recorded and that they inform the work of future volunteers