



Expedition Manual



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SECTION ONE:
CHOICE Philosophy and Development



1. Philosophy of Development

People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means—if a very important one—of enlarging people's choices.

Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities—the range of things that people can do or be in life. The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible. (UN Development Report p.9)

CHOICE's general goals for development are as follows:

- Establish local institutions that can function ultimately without outside supervision, such as: cooperatives, village committees, and women's organizations that stimulate villager pride, individual dignity, and their own ingenuity.
- Assist villagers with building a network of resources outside their traditional boundaries.
- Guide villagers through a process of self-evaluation to discern a community consensus of their greatest perceived needs.
- Assist villagers in mobilizing their own resources to carry out a chosen solution.

DEVELOPMENT VS. RELIEF

CHOICE assists villagers in development. CHOICE does not just provide relief. When villagers become victims of natural disasters or suffering caused by war, their immediate concern is to stay alive through the assistance of food, clean water, and basic medical attention. This type of support is considered **relief**. Although it plays an extremely important role in saving lives, it is only temporary and is not sustainable.

The villagers to whom we offer our help are not necessarily victims of natural or civil catastrophes; they are people who can maintain a subsistence level of living. This means that they have just enough to get by but lack the resources and education to get out of perpetual poverty. **Development** is simply teaching them the skills they need to help themselves and linking them to resources necessary for progress.

There are numerous reasons why relief is ineffective and often detrimental:

- When the only progress villagers see is accompanied by give-aways, they often come to expect them and they can become convinced they are incapable of making progress on their own. You can give people so many fish that they lose all interest in fishing.
- Give-aways can divert people's attention from the underlying demographic, institutional or political problems that, sooner or later, they must face if permanent progress is to be made.
- Give-aways are expensive.
- Relief can destroy the multiplier effect. If people's adoption of innovation depends on a gift, local villagers will not try to teach it to their neighbors.
- Because charitable agencies usually target those most in need, envy and jealousy can erupt when one group or family receives aid and not another.

The bottom line is that, although relief and give-aways can win people over with the promise of rapid results, they only solve a problem in the short-term. If a person who is afraid of the dark simply turns on the lights instead of dealing with their fear, their problem has not been solved and sooner or later it will be dark again.

HOW EXPEDITIONS FIT INTO CHOICE PHILOSOPHY

People often wonder why we choose to promote and facilitate expeditions for non-professional people. They argue that the money people spend on expeditions would be more practically spent if it were used to directly support projects and programs for villagers. However, there are very beneficial reasons for sending groups on expeditions.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

CHOICE expeditions raise participants' consciousness in a manner not possible in developed countries. The beauty of the land and the warmth and hospitality of the people amaze those who have never traveled to these isolated areas. It is important for us to expand our vision of the world and lessen the perceived strangeness of other cultures. Expeditions allow participants to see how capable the villagers are, and what they can do with such limited resources. When we see what only a few dollars can accomplish in a disadvantaged village, we catch the excitement of being involved in development work and are motivated to participate in other projects.

The expeditions also help to build trust and understanding between the CHOICE organization and the villagers. They stimulate community cooperation, social energy and excitement. For many of the villagers, it is comforting to know that advantaged world citizens are taking notice of them, even though they exist in such isolated areas.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO "VACATION"

Most of us go on some type of vacation each year. We head off to Disneyland or go on a seven-day cruise. CHOICE offers a different option: the opportunity to experience rural village life in its purest form and to understand how a relatively minor donation can drastically change another's life. When you participate in an expedition, you gain a better knowledge of how CHOICE works and where donations go. You can see CHOICE projects in action, understand what we mean by sustainability and experience first-hand how the projects improve the villagers' lives. People choose to go on an expedition rather than a vacation to raise their social consciousness and gain a broader understanding of the world and our neighbors.

Many people are intrigued by the adventurous nature of the expeditions and would choose that over a lazy beach vacation any day. Participants have said that traveling to a poor village with no electricity, potable water or tourist facilities was one of the most meaningful and significant experiences of their lives. Through interacting with the villagers and sharing in their daily experience, families have become closer and more appreciative of many aspects of their own lives. The opportunity to be invited into a villager's home is a lesson in adaptability—villagers can survive with no plumbing, electricity or even walls to shut out pesky siblings. Village life requires a strength most people from developed countries will realize they don't have.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

It is difficult to weigh the benefits of expeditions as compared with simply giving the money to the villagers. Despite heavy investment costs associated with expeditions, we consider the expeditions to be a participant's investment in their own world view, not just a means to pay for on-going projects. You will return from an expedition with a new perspective on the world and your place within it. Our desire is to mold you into a humanitarian who will return to your home committed to take a bigger role in improving your community, city, nation, or world.

SECTION TWO: Pre-Departure Preparation



2. CHOICE Contact List

Expeditions are planned and carried out by CHOICE Humanitarian. Occasionally, CHOICE forms partnerships with third party organizations. We encourage you to get to know everyone on the expedition team. Feel free to contact any of the people listed below or in Appendix A with questions related to their areas of responsibility.

After you have registered and paid your registration fee, all questions regarding registration and finances should be directed to:

CHOICE Humanitarian
Attn: Wade Alexander
7879 South 1530 West, #200
West Jordan, UT 84088
Telephone: 801-474-1937
FAX: 801-474-1919
walexander@choicehumanitarian.org

The CHOICE main website address is www.CHOICEhumanitarian.org.

We encourage you to read this manual and check the CHOICE website first if you have a question.

3. Paperwork, Passports and Insurance

PAPERWORK

Forms to complete and return to CHOICE in order to participate:

- **CHOICE Application:** (www.choicehumanitarian.org – click on the Expeditions tab from the home page. The link to the application is located half-way down the page. Please complete the PDF form on-line and click Save in order to email a version to CHOICE (some computers do not allow this option). Applications can also be completed and returned via fax (801.474.1919), sent via regular mail, and/or scanned into an email.
- **CHOICE Medical Information Form:** (www.choicehumanitarian.org – click on the Expeditions tab from the home page. The link to the application is located half-way down the page. Please follow the same directions as above.
- **Passport Copy:** one (1) photo copy of the 1st page of your passport
- **Proof of Medical Evacuation Insurance:** specific requirements provided below
- **International Flights:** copy of your complete flight itinerary from an airline or travel site

Documents required for travel:

- Current Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- International Vaccination Card (not required, but a good idea to bring along)*
**some countries might require specific vaccines before travel*
- Notarized Child Affidavit if a minor is traveling with only one parent or is under the age of 18 (request form from CHOICE)

PASSPORTS

A valid passport is required for all foreign travel. Should you need a new passport, start early! CHOICE requires that all passports be effective for **at least six (6) months beyond the expedition travel dates**. Most county clerk's offices and many post office locations will process them for you, but plan on a five-week processing time. You can expedite by mailing your application to the passport office via Express Mail, including a self-addressed Express Mail envelope for the return. If you are in need of a new passport or need to update your passport please see <http://travel.state.gov>.

If you are under age 18 and traveling with a guardian or only one parent, you must carry a special immigration form. CHOICE has these forms that must be completed and signed by parent/s and notarized.

INSURANCE

CHOICE expeditions take place in rural locations across the globe where medical services are often unavailable. Therefore, CHOICE requires all expedition participants to purchase **medical evacuation insurance** that will provide coverage while traveling overseas. CHOICE requires at least \$25,000 in medical evacuation insurance to cover proper transportation to a hospital or clinic during medical emergencies. You must provide proof of this coverage to CHOICE.

In addition, CHOICE encourages all expedition participants to purchase standard travel insurance and **trip cancellation coverage** due to unforeseen circumstances that might cause trip disruptions or unexpected flight cancellations. This can be done in conjunction with medical evacuation insurance or as a separate plan. In some cases, it should be purchased within 24-48 hours of purchasing airline tickets. To ensure coverage for **pre-existing conditions**, most policies must be purchased within 15 days of initial deposit.

When seeking insurance coverage, please remember that the “cost of trip” is equal to individual expedition fee + individual airfare. (Ex: \$2195 expedition fee + \$1000 airfare = \$3195 total cost of trip)

Several companies provide the above insurance policies. CHOICE provides a few suggestions:

Travel Guard
3300 Business Park Drive
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54482
(800) 826-1300
www.travelguard.com

Travelex
PO Box 641070
Omaha, Nebraska 68164
(800) 228-9792
www.travelex-insurance.com

Gateway Connexions
Paragon Office Park PO Box 14468
Des Moines, Iowa 50306
(800) 282-4495
www.gatewayconnexions.com

Insure My Trip
100 Commerce Drive
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886
(800) 487-4722
www.insuremytrip.com

Major credit card companies also provide free and/or low cost travel insurance to cardholders. Please be sure that such coverage is actual insurance and not just insurance consultation.

If you are a student or faculty member, the least expensive way to acquire emergency evacuation/medical insurance is the international youth/student/faculty I.D. card (\$20). Most universities offer these through their study abroad office. You will need to provide proof of current school enrollment or faculty employment and a passport-sized photo.

Please remember that CHOICE is not responsible for the cost of medical care or any loss or damage you may incur during or as a result of a CHOICE Expedition.

4. Travel and Money Matters

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND RENDEZVOUS

Submit your application and wait for approval from CHOICE. Once the expedition has been reconfirmed, you will want to secure your international travel. Participants are responsible for obtaining and paying for their own international flight reservations. Many participants choose to use frequent flyer miles, travel agents, or discount airline websites.

Participants will meet at a designated rendezvous site in the project country on the first advertised day of the expedition. It will be at this point that the expedition will begin. You will be given the time and place that the expedition will begin and end so that you may customize your itinerary in any way you choose. A CHOICE and/or hotel representative will greet you at the airport and provide initial transportation (unless arriving outside the standard expedition schedule).

In all cases, wearing a CHOICE t-shirt and/or baseball cap at the rendezvous sight will help your leader and group to recognize you. In some cases, however, these items will not be distributed until you are in-country. You may want to carry a sign that says CHOICE.

EXPEDITION FEE

The expedition fee that you paid includes a number of expenses: hotel accommodations, village lodging, land transportation, hand-cooked meals, certified leadership, training materials, project costs, and other pertinent expedition expenses.

International airfare is not included in the expedition fee. Ground transportation to/from the airport outside of the standard expedition dates is also not included. Participants are responsible for personal purchases, gratuities, and additional meals.

The entire expedition fee goes to support CHOICE projects and expeditions. Depending on the size and location of your expedition, approximately 60% goes to field costs; 25% goes to team coordination (advanced planning and support); and 15% goes to headquarters support and post-expedition analysis.

OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES

Expenses not included in the expedition fee include: airfare/transportation to the rendezvous site in the project country, passports, international visas (if applicable), airport taxes, immunizations, evacuation or travel insurance, and **meals while outside the village**. Any additional side trips will be at your own expense.

You may also want pocket money for shopping, souvenirs, film and/or memory cards, etc. Generally, a minimum of \$150 for each week of traveling, in addition to money for departure taxes, will be adequate for extra expenses, unless you plan to spend more on gifts/souvenirs. Always keep your cash out of sight and on your person if possible. A money belt or neck pouch is recommended to keep these items safe.

The departure tax will vary by country (see Appendix A). **Participants are responsible for bringing and holding aside this money until the day of departure.** It is usually payable in US dollars or the local currency.

TAX DEDUCTIBILITY

CHOICE Humanitarian is a non-profit organization as described by section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, your international airfare (if your trip is solely humanitarian)

and the participant expedition fee are **probably** tax deductible. We suggest that you consult your personal tax advisor regarding your personal tax situation. Any personal travel before and after the expedition is not tax deductible and participants wishing to prolong their trip may jeopardize the tax-deductibility of their airfare. Contact your tax advisor with specific questions.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Expeditioners may cancel their space or transfer their deposit and payments to another person or future expedition based on the following schedule:

Over 90 days prior to expedition

The \$300 per person deposit is 100% refundable or transferable.

45-89 days prior to expedition

The \$300 per person deposit less a \$100 service charge is refundable. The \$300 per person deposit is still 100% transferable.

Less than 45 days prior to expedition

All payments are non-refundable, except when cancellation is necessary because of events beyond the control of the participant. All circumstances will be evaluated by CHOICE on an individual basis.

Conditions in developing countries or the inability to completely fill an expedition group may result in the cancellation of an expedition. If CHOICE Humanitarian cancels the trip, the Expedition Fee is fully refundable. If an expedition participant submits a deposit, but later cancels their trip as the result of a subsequent travel warning or public announcement from the U.S. Department of State, then the Expedition Fee paid, minus any expenses already incurred by CHOICE, is fully refundable. CHOICE recommends that all expedition participants purchase travel insurance that will provide proper coverage for such instances.

CHOICE will not make refunds for accommodations or services included in the expedition fee, but not used by the participant.

All payments received from persons on behalf of a participant are refundable upon request from the participant. Donors can choose also to transfer donations to the CHOICE Humanitarian Expedition scholarship fund.

5. Mental and Physical Preparation

VILLAGE LIVING IS IMPROVISATION

Before you begin, you must balance your romantic notions about third-world villages with the realities of international development. It is always exciting to go somewhere you have never been and gain new insights to share when you return. **But in the middle of that pursuit, the weather can be unpredictable, schedules can collapse, some food may not be to your liking, and the day-to-day work may be repetitious, not demanding enough, or too demanding.**

CHOICE expeditions are conducted under every condition imaginable, from sleeping in tents to living in mud and thatch huts. As a rule, conditions are modest and the food simple but plentiful. Your imagination, enterprise, and ability to improvise and adapt make it fun and interesting.

Be prepared for anything. Carefully laid plans are often revamped in the field to accommodate conditions at hand. Village development is often improvisational. If you will remember the following, you can have the time of your life:

- Be flexible and expect the unexpected.
- Be tolerant of trial and error.
- Find humor in difficult situations.
- Cultural differences are neither good nor bad, but different.
- Enjoy those differences.

AMBASSADORS-AT-LARGE

When overseas, you are viewed as international ambassadors of the United States and other respective nations. You are also considered ambassadors of CHOICE. Courtesy, respect, and responsibility are important. Customs clearance and government approval are critical for continuing our outreach activities in foreign nations. Possession of illegal drugs or artifacts by one team member, for example, would jeopardize the entire mission of this and future expeditions. Each year more and more governments close their doors to foreign programs. Your maturity and general demeanor, under the watchful eyes of the host countries, are important to CHOICE and to all development specialists who will follow you. It is likely that you will be exposed to aspects of a different culture not accessible to tourists. It is this added dimension that makes your mission exciting, but at the same time, requires extra sensitivity, discretion and adaptability.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS

This expedition is not for the soft and pampered tourist. It is rugged and rustic. It can be dirty, uncomfortable, and the weather can be frustrating. Contrasts between what you may be accustomed to and what you will experience may be substantial.

Because of the rugged nature of this expedition and the absence of medical facilities at the project site, there are some restrictions as to who may participate. **Please be aware that you should not consider this expedition if you are an insulin-dependent diabetic, if you have compromised cardiovascular or pulmonary capacities, or if you have other significant physical or mental restrictions.** While we will have a good first aid kit on site, hospitals and medical equipment are not close at hand.

While a physical exam is not usually required before an expedition, it is a good idea. CHOICE requires that you complete a health statement on your application and provide your doctor as a reference to verify your health. The expedition leader needs to know of any allergies or previous illnesses that might affect your participation. Completion of needed dental work before departure

is also advised. All applicants over the age of 60 must submit a required EKG test result as part of the application.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Travel out of your usual environment means contact with microorganisms which are unfamiliar to your immune system. A strong, healthy, and fit body responds to this type of stress successfully. In addition to aerobic fitness, a healthy diet consisting of a variety of foods—with an emphasis on fruits, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates—will help you to prepare for a safe and enjoyable trip. Just prior to an expedition is not the time to go on a weight-reduction diet. You want to have a well-nourished and well-hydrated body prior to departure.

ADVANCE READING AND LANGUAGE PREPARATION

Take time now to learn about people-centered development, to study about your destination country specifically, and to enhance your language skills. The following books are recommended:

Go to the People by James B. Mayfield (available at CHOICE for \$20.00)

Where There Is No Doctor by David Werner (available at CHOICE for \$16.00)

Getting to the 21st Century by David C. Korten

Development as Freedom by Amartya Sen

Despite Good Intentions by Thomas W. Dichter

The End of Poverty by Jeffrey D. Sachs

Banker to the Poor by Muhammad Yunus

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

Travel guides such as Fodor's Guide, Lonely Planet or The Rough Guide are also useful books.

Reading about the local culture and customs is also recommended. Your local library should have books on the area where you will be going. The internet is also invaluable (www.encycarta.com)

The following two books are fiction and good for adults and children:

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Ishmael by Daniel Quinn

6. Briefing Meetings, Teamwork, and Journals

In the past we have held briefing meetings at the CHOICE offices to cover pre-departure information with participants. CHOICE is rapidly gaining recognition across the U.S., so this practice has become difficult. If the group is mostly local to Utah, we will continue with these meetings. If the group is geographically diverse, or the leader is from out of town, communication will happen by email or telephone. These meetings or emails will cover any questions you may have about the village and specific country information. If this manual does not answer your questions, your first resource should be the person(s) listed in Section 2 of this manual.

To keep things organized in-country and give everyone a more focused sense of responsibility, leaders will organize you into groups. Teams will be organized for meal prep and clean up. These may be assigned prior to or at the start of the expedition. Latrine duty and upkeep of common areas and other necessary chores will be assigned to the expedition participants.

EXPEDITIONS ARE TEAMWORK

Many of us are not used to the close living in field conditions, the interaction with poor villagers, and the absence of adequate sanitary facilities. Your ability to get along with others is of paramount importance. All the labors necessary to accomplish project objectives—from portaging equipment to cooking meals—become team assignments to be shared and enjoyed as much as the outreach itself.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING, ASSIGNMENTS, TEAM DEVELOPMENT

You don't have to be a skilled, experienced builder to participate in any project. It is important to be physically fit and friendly. An unpredictable climate may make life more difficult for some. Instructions will be given on each phase of the project and necessary skills will be learned. Once at the project site, we will also have discussions and the opportunity to share experiences learned during the expedition.

As mentioned above, volunteers will be organized into teams and assigned to various facets of the project, whether construction work, demonstrating appropriate technology, writing descriptions of what is taking place, photographing progress, meeting with the villagers, working on their farms, planting or harvesting, helping with the food preparation, or whatever else is needed. It will be important to be flexible and patient as the various phases of the work projects unfold. It is important to realize that while we may think we have a better or more efficient way of accomplishing a task, it is our responsibility to be gracious and work alongside the villagers – using their methods.

Group cohesiveness and “esprit de corps” are important elements of success for this expedition. While the primary humanitarian objectives of the expedition certainly demand priority, the expedition also offers a unique opportunity for CHOICE volunteers to experience rural village life. A singular and intimate view of the traditional rural family will be thrust wide open to volunteers as you live and interact with the villagers. Spontaneous activities such as rising early to catch a glimpse of the pristine sunrise or playing games with the villagers will also help develop an aura of excitement and adventure during your stay.

CONTINUOUS VILLAGE APPRAISAL AND JOURNAL KEEPING

Regardless of the expedition criteria and objectives, all expeditions will have as an objective to learn as much as possible about the people and their living conditions, norms, customs, needs, and wants. We strongly encourage notes and journal entries for your own reference, as well as to help CHOICE and the local facilitator improve future expeditions.

Maximum, long-term benefits from this CHOICE expedition can be nurtured through journal keeping, both as a group and as an individual. The people in your expedition will keep a group journal while in the field, and everyone will be assigned to contribute to this group effort. **We encourage you to begin an individual journal now, even if your expedition does not begin for some time.** During the trip your questions and expectations will probably shift. A journal can help you reflect on those shifts and help you come away from your experience with a greater understanding of your self and your expanded world. A journal will also help you reflect on your experience long after you return home.

Two basic kinds of entries should be a consistent part of your personal journal as well as the group journal:

- Descriptions paint a detailed picture of an important scene or experience. What happened? Why did it happen? Who participated? What were the consequences? How were you affected? Why did you act the way you did? Seek to document your observations and the facts of the experience as completely as possible.
- Reflections on the other hand are characterized by an unfettered romp of thoughts. How does the experience change or confirm your thinking? How does it fit into your life? Would others feel as you do? Would they benefit from such an experience? What may be some unresolved issues of the experience to which you would like answers?

Additional things you may wish to include in your journal are notes from speakers and leaders of the expeditions, quotes, stories, references from your reading materials, names and addresses of people you meet and drawings or diagrams.

7. Immunizations and Participant Health

IMMUNIZATIONS AND SUGGESTED MEDICATIONS

Updating immunizations before travel is a good idea for your general health. Examples of these immunizations are tetanus/diphtheria, polio, and measles-mumps-rubella (MMR). Take your immunization records with you to the immunization clinic so they can be reviewed and updated.

Required Immunizations

CHOICE strongly recommends you contact your local health department and/or International Travel Clinic for the most updated information regarding recommended immunizations for your host country.

You should visit your local travel clinic at least 6 weeks before departure. This allows enough time to get the second shot for the Hepatitis series and other vaccinations, if required.

See Appendix A for specific information regarding your expedition country.

Medication Guidelines

Medication and supplies that you use on a regular basis may be needed on your trip.

- Hand-carry life preserving medication and have an additional supply in your checked baggage.
- Be sure that new medication, such as that used for malaria, diarrhea, altitude and jet lag, does not interact or interfere with medication that you are already using.
- Participants who require daily medications should make sure they have sufficient supply for the duration of the expedition **as well as a one-week emergency supply**. Some medications may be available in the host country, but you should not rely on this possibility.
- Personal medications should all be in labeled, airtight plastic bottles. Such preparation will help eliminate any possible customs problems.
- Participants should take a sufficient supply of emergency first-aid items for the length of the expedition. Other considerations should reflect the extremes to be encountered and the distance the participants will be from medical attention. Try to avoid a medical kit that is too bulky or heavy, as weight restrictions will apply. (See packing list in Appendix A)
- CHOICE will maintain a more extensive emergency medical kit for each expedition.

JET LAG

Symptoms of jet lag are fatigue, decreased mental efficiency, irritability, indigestion, muscle aches and difficulty sleeping. The more time zones crossed, the more severe the symptoms. Travel eastward is more difficult to adjust to than travel westward.

Reduce jet lag by:

- 3 days before travel begin moving your sleep schedule closer to that of your destination.
- Exercise before, during, and after travel.
- Consider stopovers for long trips that will help you gradually adjust.
- Use eye shields on the plane to mimic the night cycle at your destination.
- At your destination, stay in bright sunlight during the day.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine that might interfere with sleep.
- Medications can be used to help you sleep at your destination.
- Over-the-counter medication with antihistamines may cause sleep.

- Prescription sleeping medication, such as Ambient 10 mg, or Sonata 10mg, can be used for several nights after arrival to help adjust to normal sleeping hours. Melatonin 3 mg to 5 mg has been recommended to help the body adjust.

SECTION THREE:
In-Country Information



8. General Foreign Travel Information

WATER AND FOOD

Water in third-world countries is NOT safe to drink unless it has been purified! Bottled water is usually available in cities, and hotels often purify their entire water systems, but it is always important to ask. Many expeditioners will be cautious in the village and then let down their guard in the city and then become ill. **Do not brush your teeth from a tap** unless you have verified that the water is purified. Also, make sure that ice has been purified when served in a drink at a restaurant.

Remember, in moderate weather an active person, consuming an average low-protein diet, needs to drink 1 gallon of water per day, plus eat fruits and vegetables with high water content to stay well hydrated. Take into account that we will be working in the village possibly in hot weather, and increase that intake accordingly. We will always have bottled water available in the village. Some people like to bring drink powders, such as Gatorade or Crystal Light, to allow for some diversity.

Some precautions and preventative measures:

- Bottled water is safer if it is a well-known brand and the label is new.
- Carbonated beverages from cans or bottles are safer because carbonation kills bacteria if there is a contact time of greater than 24 hours.
- Canned juices are usually safe.
- Juices prepared from a concentrate or powder are safer if made with treated water.
- Water filters will remove parasites and bacteria from tap water.
- Boiling water for 1 minute will kill bacteria, parasites and viruses, even at high altitude.

Dining in Restaurants

Be careful. Make sure you stay healthy by being strict about what you eat. If you have no control over how food is prepared, then be extra cautious that the food is clean and hot. Avoid salads, as lettuce is very difficult to clean properly. Food can be risky in some areas, so protect yourself with the following recommendations:

- Well-cooked foods are safest.
- Canned food that has just been opened is safe.
- Sterilized or pasteurized dairy products are usually safe.
- Wash and peel uncooked fruits and vegetables.
- Uncooked fruits and vegetables that cannot be peeled are safer if they are soaked in a concentrated solution of iodine or chlorine (1 tsp of Clorox/liter water for 30 seconds) and then washed with safe water.
- Do not eat salads or raw vegetables that have not been cooked or treated.
- Do not eat uncooked meats or fish.
- Foods served in more expensive restaurants are not necessarily safer than foods sold elsewhere.
- Foods prepared in homes or on the street where there is no running water, toilet facilities or refrigeration are risky to eat.
- Foods prepared earlier and allowed to sit, such as in a buffet, are risky.
- Soap and running water are the best disinfectant for hands.
- Gels and other disinfectants may be used when washing facilities are not available.

Food and Water in the Village

The CHOICE In-Country Director will make sure that there is plenty of bottled and/or distilled water available for you in the village. People cooking for the expedition cook to sanitary standards required by our delicate systems. Any fruit or vegetable served to you by a CHOICE cook has been washed in chlorinated water and is perfectly safe to eat. More information on village food and water can be found in Chapter 9: What to Expect in the Village.

Dining with a Village Family

There may be an occasion when you are invited by one of the villagers to eat with them instead of with the group. This is a nice gesture on their part, and if you decide to accept, you will want to offer to pay for the meal. If you choose not to eat with them, politely tell them that you have made other arrangements. It is, however, a fascinating experience to see how villagers prepare and cook their meals. Try to see that your meals are well cooked, but be gracious, complimentary and not wasteful.

THEFT AND SECURITY

Theft is common in many city areas, so keep a very close watch on all of your belongings. Never leave them unattended. Do not pack or wear gold chains, nice jewelry, or expensive-looking watches. Secure your camera with a strap, and don't carry your money or passport in an outside pocket that can be slit or picked.

A money belt or waist pouch secured by a strong belt is ideal to hold your passport/ID and money. A neck pouch with a reinforced cord can also be used if it hangs unnoticed under loose clothing.

Thieves play several kinds of games that you can avoid if you are aware:

- You or your bag may be squirted with mustard, shampoo, or the like. A friendly person may offer assistance. In the meantime you are separated from your bag.
- An attractive young person may distract you and pick your pocket at the same time.
- Fights and other spectacles may be staged or conversations may develop for the sole purpose of distracting you from watching your belongings.

For personal safety, avoid walking, traveling, or being out after dark in urban or rural areas. If travel is necessary, do not go alone.

DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is very common, and you will probably have a mild case while on your expedition. It should not become a significant problem as long as you are diligent about taking care of yourself.

Remember, the best treatment for diarrhea is PREVENTION. Drink ONLY purified water (watch out for ice cubes; some are OK, some are not). ALWAYS wash your hands before eating or even putting them close to your mouth. Remember the antibacterial gel, and use it often! It is very important that you wash/disinfect both in the village and in the city. (Ironically, most participants stay well in the village and then let down their guard in the city and become ill.)

Current medical advice is not to take anti-diarrhea medication preventively. The known risks, including skin rashes and photosensitivity, blood disorders, and antibiotic induced infections outweigh the benefits.

At the onset of symptoms one or two tablets of Imodium may be taken to reduce cramping and slow intestinal motility. Treating with an antibiotic plus Imodium will often decrease the duration of

symptoms down to 3 to 12 hours. These antibiotics include Ciprofloxacin 500 mg every 12 hours for up to 5 days, Trimethoprim/sulfa (Bactrim DS) every 12 hours for up to 5 days, or Azithromycin 250 mg twice daily for 3 days.

Drink plenty of fluids to replenish what is being lost. Clear, hot soup broth, cooked rice and pasta (without sauce) and dry toast are easy on the stomach and provide needed nutrition. You may also consider limiting fruits and vegetables, except for bananas. Bananas may be helpful since they contain potassium.

If the diarrhea continues, the best medical regimen is a broad spectrum antibiotic, such as doxycycline (Vibramycin) 100 mg daily or an antibacterial combination product, trimethoprim / sulfamethoxazole, (Septra or Bactrim), one double strength tablet every 12 hours for 3 or 4 days.

Please take along some over-the-counter diarrhea medication such as Imodium. By the way, constipation is sometimes as much of a problem as is diarrhea.

FLIGHTS/TRAVEL/CUSTOMS

Lost or Stolen Passports

Before your plane even takes off, make sure that you have a photocopy of your passport packed separate from your passport. Your leader will also have a copy, if you lose both. If you lose your passport in the field, you will need to get to the American embassy as soon as possible and have them issue a temporary passport. It may be necessary to change flights while you wait for a new passport.

Lost or Stolen Plane Ticket

The airport can reissue a plane ticket, but let them know as soon as possible that it has been stolen. Charges incurred usually run around \$100, which is your responsibility.

Lost or Stolen Luggage

- Remember to pack a change of clothes and a swimsuit in your carry-on luggage. The swimsuit can double as underwear, so it is great to have in case of emergency.
- **Keep your baggage claim tickets on you.** Lost luggage is inevitable with large groups and multiple connections.
- Arrangements can usually be made to purchase new clothing/supplies if necessary (often with a stipend from the airlines). Other participants may also have extra clothing and gear that you can borrow in the meantime.

Logistical Problems

Unfortunately, problems with buses and bus drivers are not uncommon. If there is a problem with the bus or bus driver, your leader should keep you informed. We will never put the group's safety in question, but remember that these logistical glitches are inevitable in developing countries. Bring a book or card game in case of these situations.

Difficulty with Customs

- All visa applications should be filled out with "tourism" as the purpose for visit.
- Anything in quantity is suspicious. Even if you are bringing things as innocent as pencils or medical supplies in bulk quantities, customs will raise an eyebrow. Just make sure they know that it is for humanitarian purposes and not for sale.
- Certain countries have specific exports that are illegal. It is best to be aware of the restrictions before group departure day. Keep in mind that anything agricultural or animal (llama fetus,

armadillo shells) is illegal to remove from the country. Artifacts are obviously not allowed to be exported. In some countries, spices are illegal. If you or one of the group members ever run into trouble with souvenirs, sometimes it's just best to play dumb.

CULTURE SHOCK

You must expect some culture shock when traveling in a developing country. There are some characteristic differences that tend to make group members uncomfortable. For instance, villagers often stare openly at the group members, which make people uneasy since most of us try to avoid any eye contact other than the briefest of salutary smiles.

In most rural villages, the women are very modest. They may keep their legs covered at all times, and would think it indecent if group members were to wear shorts, showing their legs.

Another trigger for culture shock will be the work habits of the villagers. While we have left our normal lives behind and are completely focused on the village project, the villagers are still in the middle of their normal lives, which include cooking and cleaning, working normal jobs, plowing fields, and tending to livestock. Villages request our presence and are prepared to work alongside our expeditions, but circumstances often arise after plans are in place. The first rain of the season might happen while we are there and villagers will need to drop everything and plow their fields. A family wedding might happen in a nearby village and half the villagers might be related to the bride. In Mexico, for instance, the villagers will often organize themselves into committees with one committee working the project on Monday and then returning to their fields on Tuesday and Wednesday. The man sitting on the bricks watching the workers might have finished the work in his field early and might not feel obligated to help since his committee is working on the project the next day. We must not assume villagers are lazy or distrustful of people from other countries.

9. What to Expect in the Village

There is a lot to remember while you are in the village. We want to focus on four main issues that will greatly affect your comfort level: hygiene, the kitchen and food, the sleeping arrangements, and the latrines. We live in camping conditions, so keep your sense of adventure and we will have a lot of fun.

HYGIENE

The primary cause of sickness among expedition members is poor hygiene habits. Village life is dirty, and everyone needs to be keenly aware of all his or her actions. Here are a number of steps that everyone needs to follow:

- Wash hands using soap and water or hand wipes PLUS anti-bacterial gel. These are included on the packing list, so everyone should have his or her own supply.
- Follow the above advice after using the latrine, working, playing with villagers, touching any animals, washing dishes, handling any fruit or food, coughing, hugging, etc.
- Wash hands before touching any food or doing any food preparation.
- Keep the latrines clean.
- Allow only participants and in-country staff to enter the sleeping quarters. Dogs and children can carry germs that will wreak havoc on our immune systems.
- Keep the sleeping quarters clean. Someone should sweep daily, and food and crumbs should be removed after every meal.
- All fruit and vegetables need to be soaked in bleach water according to the instructions in the Food Prep section below.
- Do not brush teeth using the tap water in hotels.
- Follow these rules both in and outside of the village. Most people let their guard down in the cities, but often the hazards are just as great there.

FOOD/KITCHEN/TRASH

We must follow strict sanitary guidelines in order to prevent sickness among the group. The In-Country Director will set up the kitchen according to US health guidelines provided by the CHOICE office. If you ever feel uncomfortable about the situation, do not hesitate to speak with your leader. CHOICE purchases food supplies and purified water and takes them to the village.

Water

You will need your own plastic water bottle or hydration system (i.e. Camelback). Start with it full. Local water is likely to be contaminated, but CHOICE will provide purified drinking water in the village.

Food Preparation

- All those who participate in food preparation must thoroughly clean their hands either with soap and bleach water or using antibacterial hand gel.
- All fruits and vegetables must be soaked for a minimum of 30 seconds in bleach water (rinsing in bottled water afterward will remove the bleach taste if the fruit or vegetable is to be eaten raw).
- Keep food covered.
- All food servers and participants must also thoroughly clean their hands.

Clean-Up and Doing Dishes

- Scrape food off of utensils into “bio-degradable” garbage, and then rinse off the remaining food particles in “hand-washing or already used” water.
- Wash dishes thoroughly in tub or pot of hot soapy water.
- Rinse/sterilize in tub or pot of hot water with 1 tablespoon of bleach.
- Do not throw away the soapy or bleach water after use! Rotate dish tubs at next meal. For example, soapy water can be used next time to rinse off food particles, bleach water can be rotated and reused with soap for hot soapy wash water.
- Drying dishes is best done by air, preferably covered by towels or hung in a mesh bag to keep off dust, dirt and flies.

Waste Management

As part of the expedition camp set-up, the waste management area should be established in a location which is in or close to the kitchen, sheltered from wind and rain, blocked off from animals and not too close to sleeping accommodations.

There are often three stations within the waste area:

Station 1: Burnable garbage

Station 2: Biodegradable garbage

Station 3: Garbage to be packed out

Burnable garbage: This garbage bag is for items that can be burned, such as papers, paper boxes and packaging, tissues, etc. It should be emptied every day or two (makes a good fire in the evening).

Biodegradable garbage: This garbage bag is for food that can be fed to the animals or buried. It should be emptied daily after dinner.

Garbage to be packed out: This garbage bag should be kept as small as possible because it must be packed out with the group when the expedition departs. Only items, which are not burnable, biodegradable or recyclable, should be put in this station (plastic wrappers, dead batteries, etc.).

While CHOICE promotes environmental wellness, CHOICE also recognizes the cultural differences found in developing villages. Recycling is often not a priority among these communities, but we are hopeful that such practices will become more routine over time.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

Depending on the total number of volunteers, most participants will sleep in an enclosed building on a cement floor. Others might sleep in the homes of gracious villagers, though this is not as common. You are responsible for bringing your sleep pad (or air mattress) and sleeping bag. Some participants may be housed in tents that will be provided by CHOICE. Men and women will probably be housed together. A suitable area for changing will be provided by CHOICE. Most areas don't require mosquito nets; check with the CHOICE office beforehand.

Keeping the Peace

We suggest that everyone bring earplugs or sleeping aids on all of our expeditions. Twenty-five people sleeping in one small area make a lot of noise between snoring, getting up to use the latrine, and talking in their sleep. When group members start heading off to their sleeping bags, consider it quiet time.

SHOWERS OR BATHING

Most expeditions will have some sort of bathing “facilities”. These are by no means private, so plan on at least wearing a swimsuit. These “facilities” do not allow for daily bathing, but for occasional washing with minimal water. We must always keep in mind that water is a precious resource in these communities and the rule is CONSERVE.

LATRINES

Latrines can be a new experience for many participants. Each village will have a different type of latrine. Most are simply holes in a concrete floor. Some resemble toilets without a seat. Sometimes they are concrete with divided front and back sections for liquid waste and solid waste (these can get especially messy). The best way to approach the latrine issue is with humor—all participants will be just as uncomfortable as you are.

One important factor in latrine comfort is cleanliness. The latrine area needs to be maintained at an appropriate level of cleanliness. This is not any one person’s duty—all need to do their part. Cleaner and rubber gloves will be available specifically for the latrine. If the participants clean and rinse it down periodically, sanitation should never become an issue.

PROJECT

The project is considered a very important part of the expedition, but realize that it is only part of the overall experience. A substantial portion of your expedition fee goes to cover the project costs. This money covers labor and materials needed to complete the project (even after the expedition has concluded). Understand that the project does not stop once we leave the village. Those funds are designated for the entire project, so the work will continue until it is finished.

It is natural to feel as though you are not doing enough or that there is not enough to do. Your role as a participant is as an assistant to the villagers during project work and as a friend and discovery partner otherwise. Expeditions are about meeting new people from new backgrounds; focusing on the role we play in this world and helping the village bring itself out of poverty. The village does not need the expedition group there to help them finish the project. They choose to invite us there to help the process, to provide some funding, and more importantly, to give villagers and ourselves the chance to meet each other and work together.

SHADOWING

Shadowing is an activity designed to give both the villagers and the participants a better look at how each other’s culture works. This is sometimes set up ahead of time by the In-Country Director, but may also need to be set up spontaneously. If it is not feasible in your village, another appropriate exercise may take place.

Shadowing involves each participant being “adopted” by a village family for a portion of a day. You will follow the villager, eat with the villager (if possible), and work with the villager. Some of the best participant experiences have come from an expeditioner attempting to plow a field behind a cow or seeing how much work it takes just to put corn tortillas on the table. It also allows the villagers to have a good laugh at how inept we are without our machines.

Most often, participants return to the U.S. and comment on how amazing their shadowing experience was. Years after the expedition is over, you will fondly remember being a villager for a day.

FREE TIME

Free time during an expedition is not a negative thing. There are some days that are traditionally non-work days in the villages: New Year's Day, Sundays (in some countries), local holidays, etc. We try to avoid having expeditions in the village during these times, but occasionally it cannot be avoided. These are good days to go explore. Free time can be utilized to play games with the village kids, go for a nature walk or hike, organize the sleeping quarters, etc.

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

One of the missions of CHOICE is to promote cultural exchange between the expedition members and a community at work. By living in the village, it is easy for us as visitors to enjoy the local culture. We find that it is often a greater challenge for us to share our culture with our hosts, while at the same time, encouraging them to honor their own culture. The following are some ideas the group will want to consider:

- Bring pictures of holiday festivities, such as Christmas, or special occasions like weddings to share with the villagers.
- Share traditional music from our culture; form a chorus of expedition members to sing national songs, or even campfire songs, or use other musical talents of expedition members.
- Share a sport that is not well known in the village, such as North American football, baseball, or such common children's games as hopscotch, "follow-the-leader", Red Rover, tag, or jump rope.
- Perform a mini-play or skit typical of your culture for the villagers or share some dance or music from your area.

We can also help preserve the local culture by doing any of the following:

- Encourage the villagers to share local games, both those played by the children and adults, and take photos of these games.
- Tape or videotape local music and special programs done by the villagers.
- Tape or videotape interviews with the older people in the village in order to preserve oral history and also to learn about the changes in the village in the last 50 years.
- Tape, videotape, or even just ask to listen to local folk tales and traditions.
- Find out about village crafts (weavings, knits, etc.); try your hand at spinning wool or knitting.
- Learn some words in the local language, and make an effort to learn a few new words each day; try your vocabulary on everyone you meet.
- Encourage villagers to share traditional dances and music.

GAMES/APPROPRIATE PROJECTS OR CRAFTS

You are welcome to bring appropriate games, projects or crafts to share with both the village kids and adults. Soccer balls, basketballs, Frisbees and baseballs are all welcomed and can be left with the schoolmaster for future community use. Jump ropes are good for the girls, as are inexpensive bags of beads with letters on them to make necklaces and bracelets (you must make sure there is enough to make something with EVERY villager). Consider any craft idea that is inexpensive purchased in bulk, lightweight to pack, and would be a good shared activity between the villagers/children and the volunteers. You may also find that the village women have an interesting craft that they can share.

The most important rule here is that we do not take anything to give out to individuals (see "No Gifting" in the policies section). The beading is an exception because it can be a shared craft activity and the beads can be purchased cheaply in bulk. We do not want to create any situation where villagers get in line to receive their gifts from the expeditioners or where jealousy could

result. Any equipment brought along should be the type that can be left in a school or community center, or else it needs to be brought back to the U.S. with the group.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The people, scenery, and historical sites to be visited during this expedition are wonderfully photogenic. A camera is a must, and we encourage all participants to choose their five best photographs for submission to CHOICE Humanitarian following the expedition.

Photo Etiquette

The villagers are not necessarily superstitious about having their picture taken, but they are quite cautious when surrounded by shutterbug tourists. You will find that women, in particular, will turn away if they know you are going to take a picture of either them or their beloved children. A telephoto lens is helpful in obtaining candid photos of people without making them feel uncomfortable.

As a courtesy, if you are taking photos closer in, first ask permission or use expressive hand gestures making your intentions clear. Please respect refusals. Be aware of the sacredness of the ceremonies you may witness; act accordingly when using a flash or maneuvering for shots. Be sensitive to taking pictures of people in prayer. It's also impolite to photograph people bathing in streams or rivers.

Always ask first before photographing the interiors of mosques, churches, or temples. If you wish to take pictures of government buildings, museums, monuments, etc., a modest fee is often charged for a still camera and a higher one for a movie or video camera. Some government buildings may not be photographed. Please ask first!

Some native groups, particularly children in growing tourist areas, have learned to ask for a tip for posing. The government discourages handouts. Away from areas of mass tourism it may not be necessary to pay for the privilege of taking photographs. Yet the best portraits may be obtained if some degree of rapport has been established between you and the person being photographed. A friendly gesture, such as a smile or handshake, is a good idea to establish trust beforehand.

Photo Tips

With its landscapes, colorful markets, architectural and historical sites, and above all its friendly people, each expedition offers a photogenic environment with thousands of subjects popping up constantly. In order to enhance the photographic experience and ensure the quality of your shots, some advance preparation is advisable.

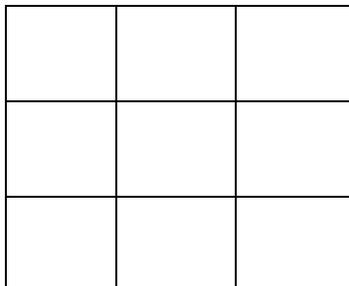
When to Shoot

The intense sunlight and haze that occurs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. causes color to flatten and wash out. Sometimes you can increase the vibrancy of your daytime pictures by deliberately underexposing by a half f-stop (particularly with transparency film). Polarizing filters also help reduce haze. The very best light for rich, warm color photos under the tropical sun is usually between 0700 and 1000. Try to rise with the villagers in the early hours for clear air and crisper light.

Remember also that scenery usually photographs better if backlit by the sun. Shadows are harsh and strong in the tropics, causing high contrast. Tropical sunsets will have the most exotic colors if the exposure reading is taken of the sky overhead, without the bright sun, and then shoot straight into the sunset. A powerful flash is often the only means by which to capture the nighttime activities (although the use of a flash is terribly distracting).

Proper Composition

To properly compose a picture, photographers often use the “rule of thirds”. The “rule of thirds” implies that the focal point of your subject matter (a person’s eyes, a village home, an animal, etc.) may be placed at the intersection of lines dividing the frame into thirds as shown below:



When you are taking a close-up portrait of a person’s face, the eyes should typically fall on the upper horizontal line and the face should fill most of the frame. If you are framing a group of people, make sure you do not cut people off at their joints (ankles, knees, wrists or elbows). It is better to cut off well above the joint rather than just below it.

Many people make the mistake of taking pictures from too far away. Think about why you are taking the shot and make sure that you can focus in enough to tell your story. Faces are better up close; project work is often better represented by showing one or two people working up close than a whole group from far away; a house has more character when you can see the texture of the wood or adobe walls in the photo.

Don’t be afraid to take a lot of photos of one subject. Professionals often only get one or two good shots out of an entire roll or memory card.

The 8 Golden Shots

The following photo shots are ideal and should be captured as often as possible:

- villager-expeditioner interaction (working together, etc.)
- villagers teaching expeditioners
- in-country directors in their roles as mentors, facilitators, educators, etc.
- village leadership
- key learning moments (story moments)
- local technologies and solutions
- villagers using completed projects or participating in workshops
- accommodations and sleeping areas

*Remember to SHARE THE STORY with others – so think of some great captions for each photo!

EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSIONS OR MEETINGS

In order to further promote the idea of public awareness and the participant’s personal growth, there will be discussions while in the village. The discussions will reflect your time in the village. Each expedition leader will choose appropriate topics for discussions. Following is an example of discussions:

- What is CHOICE?
- What is the history of area people?
- What is the real definition of “poverty”? Is there one?

- Why can't the villagers get out of "poverty"?
- What changes will participants make in their own lives? Goal setting?
- The processing (or interpreting) of experiences and observations.

IN-COUNTRY DIRECTORS (ICDs)

The ICD is the decision maker for all matters dealing with the village. They work with each village throughout the year to evaluate needs and plan projects. The ICD will most likely spend time with your group before you enter the village to help you understand local customs. They may or may not stay in the village with the expedition, depending on how remote it is. Every one of our ICD's has a long history of development within their country and can be a wonderful resource for any questions.

FIRST AID KIT

Each expedition should have its own first aid kit. The first aid kits are designed to handle minor incidents and illnesses for participants and also include some items necessary to transport more seriously hurt or sick patients to a hospital safely. We require that only EMT's, paramedics, doctors, and nurses be allowed to use the more advanced medicines and equipment. Please do not treat the villagers unless prior authorization from CHOICE Headquarters has been granted.

You may also choose to bring your own small first aid kit if you have special needs. A blister kit, bandages, pain medication, diarrhea medication, antacid, and sleeping pills are examples of items you might choose to bring.

It is important that first aid kits and supplies not be used to treat the villagers. When appropriate, plans have been made in advance for clinic type settings and appropriate supplies brought separately.

COMMUNICATIONS

There is no phone or mail service at the project site. Even in the hotels, communication with the U.S. can be difficult. Do not plan on communicating with family or friends back home unless it is an emergency. Email can often be checked in internet cafes once we return to the larger cities, though prices and availability of these services may vary.

In case of emergency, your family may contact the CHOICE office at (801) 474-1937. The staff will do their best to forward emergency messages, but there may be days where you will be unreachable. An emergency contact list will be distributed for each expedition.

10. CHOICE Policies

RELIGION

CHOICE Humanitarian has established itself operationally as a non-denominational, non-political organization. CHOICE has built trust and acceptance in the countries where it operates through commitment to humanitarian objectives in both word and deed. Our organizational standing depends on the fact that we have no political or religious agendas. Our only agenda is humanitarian.

On each expedition, it is critically important that participants are aware of their role in maintaining the relationships that have been built by conducting themselves as humanitarian ambassadors. It is vital that each of us be sensitive to the fact that we must leave behind any and all political or religious agendas in order to maintain the trust that has been established. That is why we mandate a few strict guidelines concerning discussion and practice of religious beliefs:

- No religious materials are to be handed out. Expeditions are not an opportunity for people to spread their beliefs. It is intrusive and inappropriate for any of our expedition participants to push their religion on the villagers or their fellow group members. Any religious materials should be kept private and personal. Our success is dependent on the trust we gain in our host countries. Religious agendas would destroy that trust and jeopardize our future in the villages.
- Any religious practices must be done on a group member's own time and in as much privacy as possible. Past experiences have shown that people performing their religious rituals in full view and on the group's time has made for some uncomfortable and resentful feelings. We do not discourage personal religious devotion. We simply ask that it be kept private.
- Don't exclude others. If several group members are all involved in some religious activity, they run the risk of alienating others by excluding them.
- Although we don't want the group members pushing their own religious beliefs on villagers or other group members, we do encourage any group members to participate in the religious activity of the villagers. It is a unique opportunity for a cultural exchange that may only be available once in a lifetime.

NO GIFTING

CHOICE has enacted a strict no gifting policy with regard to the villagers. **Participants are not allowed to give personal gifts directly to any of the villagers in any circumstances.**

Why?

The villagers have few possessions, but what they do possess as individuals is equal in approximate quantity and quality to what every other villager possesses. People from developed countries are accustomed to the idea that the more you have, the happier you are. However, this belief does not apply to the villagers—it really doesn't apply to the rest of us either. Singling out a favorite villager and bestowing some of your excess on them will do more harm than good. Even in a village with rampant poverty and insufficient education, people can still play "Keeping up with the Joneses". Gifting in the villages instigates jealousy and competition, and that is an added complication the villagers don't need in their lives.

What can you do?

We do want the villagers to benefit from the prosperity of our nation, but we don't want a benevolent act to have negative consequences. We allow our gifts to be routed through other means. If gifts are cycled through schools, libraries, or other community centers, it prevents the villagers from feeling that anyone has been singled out and allows everyone to benefit from the gift.

SUPPLIES MUST BE REQUESTED BY THE VILLAGERS

We cannot bring supplies that the villagers have not requested through the In-Country Director (ICD) or other village authority, including clothing. Any requested supplies must be routed through the ICD or other village authority. **Items that have not been requested MUST NOT BE TAKEN.**

Why?

We are trying to promote self-sustainability for the villagers, not introduce them to the vast world of things they don't have and don't need.

What can we take?

If individual participants would like to collect supplies to donate, the following types of items are needed (and should be handed to the ICD upon arrival to the destination country):

- Sports Equipment (soccer balls, pumps, repair kits, Frisbees, etc.)
- Art Supplies (crayons, paint, paint brushes, etc.)
- Pens and Pencils

All supplies will be consolidated and distributed by the CHOICE Humanitarian ICD. Please remember that collecting these supplies is not required, but the villagers will warmly receive your efforts.

Of course, there are small select items permitted on an expedition that will further promote the intercultural exchange between villagers and volunteers: games, nail polish, bubbles, etc. These items can be used during free time, but must not be left with the villagers as a "gift" unless the ICD directs otherwise.

NO VERBAL PROMISES

No participant may promise anything to the villagers. More specifically, we don't want anyone promising future projects, scholarships, or opportunities to work in the United States.

Why?

It is devastating for these villagers to hear participants make promises and later find out that they are unable to keep them. Some participants are so enchanted with their experience that they want to dedicate a part of their lives to the village. They get idealized notions that they can take a villager's son or daughter back to the States and send them to the local high school, or employ the villagers to manufacture bricks for their construction company. But when they return home and the euphoria gradually diminishes, these promises begin to sound unrealistic.

Also, some of the villagers know how to manipulate participants. They may convince a participant that they must help pay a daughter's way through school, when they are perfectly capable of doing it themselves.

DRESS CODE

Expedition participants are required to adhere as closely as possible to country-specific dress codes in order not to offend the villagers, who typically follow a more conservative dress standard. They are almost always more strict for women. Nearly all villages require long pants or a skirt for women and following the lead of the villagers will help us to blend in better. Shorts are fine for tourist areas; though keep in mind that they do brand you as a tourist. Tank tops are allowable if the local women are wearing them.

PERSONAL CONDUCT

CHOICE expects all expedition participants to refrain from those activities that might be detrimental to your own life-changing experience or that of others participating in the expedition: drug use, public intoxication, etc. Please be prudent and considerate during the entire expedition, especially while living in the village.

SECTION FOUR: After the Expedition



11. After the Expedition

SURVEYS

While you are in-country, you will be asked to complete a brief survey. We take these surveys very seriously and continually make changes in our programs based on what you write. We specifically ask for leader evaluation and evaluation of the CHOICE office so that we can improve with each expedition. Your answers, unless otherwise indicated, are kept completely confidential.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Your expedition experience affords some wonderful public relations opportunities, which can be a meaningful memento for you and also help CHOICE with its mission. Community newspapers are always interested in stories about local citizens. They will most likely want to publicize your participation with CHOICE if they know about it. CHOICE solicits volunteers who will agree to write an article and submit it along with photos to one or more local newspapers or magazines. Please let us know if you would like to do this.

We also welcome accounts of your expeditions, excerpts from your journal entries, and any commentaries for use in expedition briefings and publications. CHOICE seeks meaningful stories that draw upon some of the life-changing experiences discovered in the field. We share these stories with our supporters on a regular basis, thus connecting them to CHOICE and showing them how their contributions are managed. Expedition volunteers have an intimate first-hand look into the field, making them a valuable resource to write and share stories with others.

REQUESTED STORIES

CHOICE invites you to submit such stories upon returning from an expedition. Here are some initial guidelines:

***Please limit stories to 500 words or less. Write with a personal and informal style.**

Story Type 1: About a Villager

- What is the problem? What problem is the villager facing? What hardships does the villager endure?
- Who is the focus? Write about a specific individual or a single family. People can relate to these stories much easier than those of entire groups of people. Please be aware of those around when you converse with the villagers. An individual might be ostracized or considered “better than others” due to an interview or “extra attention”. Talk to the villager, remember the details, and write the information down later.
- What is the solution? What is happening in this village to help this individual? What opportunities will soon be available? What is the individual doing to help the process?
- Include clear and interesting photos that help in telling the story.
- Include meaningful quotes from the villagers that help strengthen the story. Please remember to capture names of individuals and communities – this is important!
- Write a narrative, not just facts. Tell us a story. Who is this person you are writing about? What are their hobbies? Who are their relatives? What is their daily routine? Help us to get to know this person.
- Use emotions. These stories are designed to inform our supporters of their contributions at work and encourage them to continue in their support. Tear-jerking stories are powerful! Don't embellish or exaggerate the truth, but make it meaningful.

Story Type 2: A Personal Narrative

- Tell us about a particularly meaningful experience that you had in the field. It could be a humorous account, or maybe a moment that opened your mind to new ideas. Has your view of poverty changed? Were you impressed with a particular event?
- Please include a few photos from the expedition, especially those that depict you interacting with the villagers and strengthen your overall story.

To see examples of these stories visit our blog at: <http://choicehumanitarian.org/blog/>

PHOTOGRAPHS

The CHOICE photo collection in particular depends almost entirely on our volunteers, many of who are talented amateur photographers. We can put your photos to good use in presentations and publications.

We ask that all participants please share their top five expedition photos with CHOICE (via email to walexander@choicehumanitarian.org or jsearcy@choicehumanitarian.org).

PHOTO PARTY OR FOLLOW-UP EMAILS

When the group is mainly from the Salt Lake area, participants often like to get together for a reunion and photo swapping party. When the group is scattered across the U.S., it is still nice to share photos and journal entries with each other through the mail and email. Facebook groups and connections are also useful in helping volunteers stay connected following an expedition.

JOURNAL DISTRIBUTION

The group expedition journal is a great way to preserve memories of the trip, from every participant's viewpoint. The group journal is probably the most important souvenir you will take away with you—it expresses the thoughts, feelings, and evaluations everyone had in the field. Over time, as memories of the expedition begin to grow dim, you will have this memento to sharpen your vision of the past and allow you to revisit your experience.

VOLUNTEER AND DONOR INFORMATION

We would love for you to continue to support our projects after you return from your expedition. The best way you can support projects is by helping to raise money to sponsor them. **We also encourage all expedition participants to communicate with the CHOICE Director of Communications—Pearl Wright—to discuss other opportunities to collaborate and support our organization (pwright@choicehumanitarian.org).**

Here are other ways to help support the work of CHOICE Humanitarian:

- Share your expedition experiences with friends and neighbors—**encourage them to join a future expedition!**
- Share your expedition experiences on **CHOICE blogs** and/or our **Facebook page!**
- Purchase a seat/table at our annual gala where you will find one-of-a-kind auction items.
- Sponsor a project through your own resources or by organizing a fund-raising activity.
- Share your photos and experiences with CHOICE for use in the newsletter and website.
- Join our mailing list and continue to receive monthly email updates and materials.