

expeditions

CHOICE HUMANITARIAN

Pack your bags, your world is about to change!



Expedition Manual

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SECTION ONE:

CHOICE Philosophy and Development



1. Philosophy of Development

People are the real wealth of nations. Sustainable development is about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. It is 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 and exercise creativity, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living, and to participate in the life of the community. Without these fundamentals, 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, schools, 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 does not just provide relief or temporary assistance. CHOICE works to assist villagers and communities in sustainable development. 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. Sustainable **development** is simply teaching them the skills they need to help themselves get out of poverty and linking them to resources necessary for progress.

There are numerous reasons why relief can sometimes be ineffective and often detrimental:

- When the only progress villagers see is accompanied by giveaways, 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 and learning to fish.
- Giveaways 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.
- Giveaways 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 giveaways 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

Expeditioners volunteering abroad are invited by the communities and plug into a project that was started long before they arrived and will continue long after they are gone. They will support one specific phase of a project that a community is managing. When an expedition leaves, community members, alongside our in-country teams, continue the work. This means communities own the project from start to finish, and that the role that the expeditioner plays remains well-defined in its limited scope.

CHOICE Humanitarian native in-country teams help rural communities become their own agents of change and to create their own paths out of poverty; humanitarian trips are one way to help accelerate that work.

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.

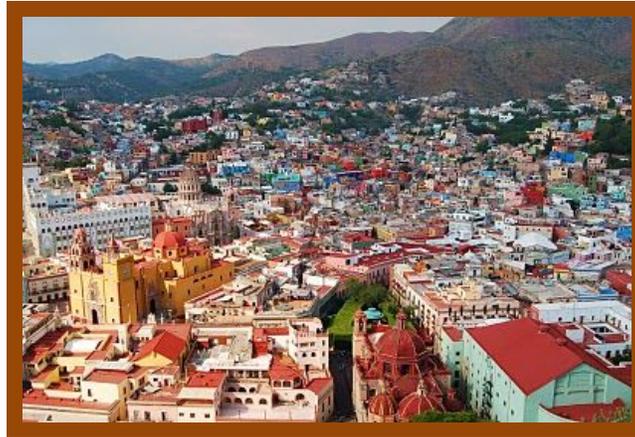
Many people are intrigued by the adventurous nature of the expeditions and would choose that over a lazy beach vacation any day. Participants have said that traveling to a poor village with no electricity, potable water or tourist facilities was one of the most meaningful and significant experiences 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 worldview, 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

Each expedition is 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.

After you have completed the online expedition application and paid your registration fee, all questions regarding registration and finances should be directed to:

CHOICE Humanitarian
Attn: Expeditions Program
7879 South 1530 West, #200
West Jordan, UT 84088
Telephone: 801.474.1937
FAX: 801.474.1919
expeditions@choicehumanitarian.org

All required paperwork can be submitted through the online expedition application. If you have any questions about submitting online paperwork, please reach out to the Expeditions Team.

You can learn more about CHOICE Humanitarian here: www.choicehumanitarian.org

A helpful list of frequently asked questions can be found here:

https://www.choicehumanitarian.org/expedition_faqs

If you have questions, we encourage you to read this manual and check the websites above.

3. Paperwork, Passports and Insurance

PAPERWORK

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

- **CHOICE Expedition Application:** On each expedition trip page, you will find the expedition application specific to that expedition. In order to secure your spot on an expedition, you will be required to fill out a complete application before the start of the expedition.
 - o Each application will ask for personal information about the participant, including birthdate, passport information, roommate preference, etc.
 - o In order to complete your application, you will need to pay a \$300 deposit per person. This deposit will count towards your expedition fee and is nonrefundable. (See Terms and Conditions for more information.)
 - o Once you complete your application, you will be sent a confirmation email with a summary of your application information. You will also be sent a link to create an account with your email and confirmation number.
 - o Once you create an account, you can log back into your application and add any additional information about flights, group members, etc. You will also be able to pay the remainder of the expedition fee.
- **Passport Copy:** one (1) photocopy 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) – for more information, see travel information for specific country.
- Notarized Child Affidavit if a minor is traveling with only one parent or is under the age of 18 (you can request a 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 without a parent or legal guardian, 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: \$2,395 expedition fee + \$1000 airfare = \$3,395 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

If booking international flights with CV Travel, you can also purchase medical evacuation insurance for an additional cost. 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 your spot on the expedition has been confirmed, 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. Please reach out to the Expeditions Team if you have any questions about securing flights.

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. If you are arriving before the start date of the expedition, please reach out to your Expedition Leader and coordinate with them to know where and when to meet in-country. 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 the country. You may want to carry a sign that says CHOICE.

EXPEDITION FEE

To reserve a space on an expedition, a nonrefundable \$300 deposit is required with submission of the Expedition Application. Participants will not be confirmed as a member of the Expedition until CHOICE has received a fully completed Expedition Application and payment of the \$300 deposit. The balance of the Expedition Fee is due 60 days prior to departure (unless stated otherwise). For more information on expedition fees, our cancellation policy, etc., please see the Terms and Conditions page.

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, 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.

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.
- Be present in the moment.

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. For example, possession of illegal drugs or artifacts by one team member 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, food restrictions, 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 signed doctor's note indicating their physical ability to join the expedition.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Travel out of your usual environment means contact with microorganisms that 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)
Extreme Poverty Eliminated 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
The White Man's Burden
Banker to the Poor by Muhammad Yunus
Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin
Creating Capabilities by Martha Nussbaum

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

Before the start of each expedition, CHOICE will hold an Expedition Orientation meeting with all expedition participants and the Certified Expedition Leaders. This meeting will be held 4 to 6 weeks before the expedition and will cover specific expedition details and itineraries. The orientation meeting will also cover any questions you may have about the village and specific country information. If you are unable to attend the meeting in-person or by video, it will be recorded and sent out by email. If this manual does not answer your questions, please reach out to CHOICE or your Certified Expedition Leaders.

To keep things organized in-country and give everyone a more focused sense of responsibility, leaders may 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. There will be responsibilities for each participant no matter age or physical ability. It is important to be physically fit and friendly. An unpredictable climate may make life more difficult. Be prepared with a rainjacket and sturdy work boots to prepare for different kinds of weather. 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 is an important element 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 expedition, 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 yourself 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.

Suggested Immunizations

Although there are no 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.
- At your destination, stay in bright sunlight during the day.
- 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 your water 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 preventive 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 meat 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 very 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. Each expedition will travel to the village with an in-country chef and cook team that will prepare all meals on the expedition. 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.

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 do not 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. Avoid keeping your cell phone or wallet in your back pocket as they can easily be taken when in larger crowds.

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

Traveler's 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. Don't accept food or beverages from village members. Remember hand sanitizer, 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. Gatorade or another drink with electrolytes will help you recover liquids. 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. Let the EMT Medic on your expedition know what your symptoms are and keep him/her aware of how you are feeling.

Please take along some over-the-counter diarrhea medication such as Imodium. By the way, constipation is sometimes as much of a problem as 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 your country's embassy as soon as possible and have them issue a temporary passport. It could be necessary to change flights while you wait for a new passport.

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 will 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.

CULTURE SHOCK

You can anticipate 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. Just smile back and look for ways to connect!

Keep in mind that in some 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. Villagers 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 antibacterial gel. These are included on the packing list, so everyone should have his or her own supply. You should bring this everywhere with you while in the village.
- 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.
- 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.
- Be cautious when buying snacks or food in the cities as well.

- Do not accept food from the villagers. Graciously decline any food or beverage offered to you in order to prevent sickness. We cannot guarantee the cleanliness of their food preparation or kitchen environment.

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 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 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

Participants will be asked to clean up after themselves after meals including washing their dishes.

- Scrape food off of utensils into biodegradable 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. Check with the in-country team for specific dish-washing procedures.
- 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. Check with the in-country team for village-specific waste management procedures.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

Depending on the total number of volunteers, most participants will sleep in an enclosed building or community center, on a cement floor. Others might sleep in the homes of gracious villagers, though this is not as common. You are responsible for bringing a sleeping pad (or small air mattress) and sleeping bag. Some participants may be housed in tents that will be provided by CHOICE. Men and women will sometimes 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". Some are not private, so plan on at least wearing a swimsuit. Most "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. Bring wet wipes and dry shampoo to keep with you while in the village.

LATRINES

Latrines can be a new experience for many participants. Each village will have a different type of latrine. Some 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. We recommend always carrying an extra roll of toilet paper and hand sanitizer with you when in the village.

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, in-country expertise, 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 long after the expedition is over.

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 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: Day in the Life

Day in the Life 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 connect with us as well as they teach us.

Most often, participants return and comment on how amazing their shadowing experience was. Years after the expedition is over, you will fondly remember working with 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.
- Record local music and special programs done by the villagers.
- Record 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. (Make sure to ask their permission first!)
- Record 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

We encourage you 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 with the group.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The people, scenery, and historical sites 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 sometimes 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 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. 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 under exposing 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).

The 8 Golden Shots

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

- villager-expeditioner interaction (working together, playing together, laughing, 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, your Certified Expedition Leader will lead group discussions while in the village. The discussions will reflect your time in the village. The following is an example of the types of discussions that will take place:

- What is the CHOICE Model?
- What is the history of area and the people?
- What are the day-to-day jobs of the in-country team members?
- What is the real definition of "poverty"? Is there one?
- What changes will participants make in their own lives? Goal setting?
- Sharing experiences and observations.

IN-COUNTRY DIRECTORS (ICDs)

The ICD is the decision maker for all matters dealing with the village. They work with 10-100 villages throughout the year to evaluate needs and plan projects with local leaders and government. 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 ICDs has a long history of development within their country and can be a wonderful resource for any questions.

FIRST AID / EMT UTAH PARTNERSHIP

In partnership with [EMT Utah](#) CHOICE places at least one EMT Utah certified paramedic/EMT volunteer on most expeditions. These volunteers support all minor and major medical and trauma related events that may occur. In the event an EMT Utah volunteer is not placed on an expedition, Certified CHOICE Expedition Leaders will be supplied with a comprehensive emergency medical jump kit/ first aid kit. The first aid kits are designed to handle minor and major 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.

We encourage you to bring your own small first aid kit. 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 often no phone or mail service at the project site. Increasingly, cell phone communication/reception is improving in our project areas. As a result, do not plan on communicating with family or friends back home while you are in the village unless it is an emergency. Email can often be checked in internet cafes/hotels 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

NO PROSELYTIZING

CHOICE Humanitarian has established itself operationally as a non-denominational, a-political organization. CHOICE has built trust and acceptance in the countries and communities 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 work 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 participants who feel comfortable to participate in the religious activity of the villagers, as appropriate. It is a unique opportunity for a cultural exchange that may only be available once in a lifetime.

NO INDIVIDUAL 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.** This can be something as big as a bike or as little as a sticker or piece of candy.

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 does not 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 do not need in their lives.

What can you do?

We do want the villagers to benefit from the prosperity of our nation, but we do not want a benevolent act to have negative consequences. We allow our gifts to be routed through other means. If you would like to donate items such as school supplies, art supplies, etc., please do so under the direction of the in-country staff and community leaders. 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.** Please email expeditions@choicehumanitarian.org with any questions in this regard.

Why?

We are trying to promote self-sustainability for the villagers, not introduce them to the vast world of things they do not have and do not 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 in-country director upon arrival to the destination country):

- Sporting Equipment (soccer balls, pumps, repair kits, volleyballs frisbees, etc.)
- Art Supplies (crayons, paint, paint brushes, etc.)
- School Supplies (pens, pencils, notebooks, etc.)
- Books that are oriented towards youth/elementary English learning

All supplies will be consolidated and distributed by the CHOICE Humanitarian in-country director. 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. Small pocket sized photo album with pics from your home city/state, family, pets, hobbies etc. could also be a great tool to facilitate interactions and share your family story. These items can be used during free time, but must not be left with the villagers as a “gift” unless the in-country director says 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 other countries, etc.

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 their country 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. Some villages require long pants or a skirt for women and following the lead of the villagers will help us to blend in better. Please ask your Certified Expedition Leader if you have any questions about village or country specific dress guidelines.

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. This includes drug use, public intoxication, etc. Please be prudent and considerate during the entire expedition, especially while living in the village. Alcohol consumption is not permitted while staying in the village.

SECTION FOUR:

After the Expedition



11. After the Expedition

SURVEYS

While you are in-country, or soon after your return, you will be asked to complete a brief survey. We take these surveys 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 expedition stories upon returning from an expedition. Here are some helpful suggestions:

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

Story Type 1: About a Villager

- Write about a specific individual or a single family. Who is the focus? 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 problem that the community-managed project will help to address? What problems could the villager be facing? What hardships does the villager endure?
- What are potential solutions to the challenges the villager faces? 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. Remember to ask permission from the villager to take their photo.
- 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/>

EXPEDITION PHOTOS

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. After the completion of the expedition, your Certified Expedition Leader will share with you a Google Photos Album where everyone from the expedition will have access to upload and share photos from the expedition.

We encourage all participants to share their top five expedition photos with CHOICE (email to eponder@choicehumanitarian.org or expeditions@choicehumanitarian.org)

EXPEDITION REUNION

When the group is mainly from the same area, participants often like to get together for reunions. When the group is scattered across the world, it is still nice to remain connected. 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 one of the most important souvenirs 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.

POSTCARDS

While in the field, you will have the opportunity to take some time to write a personal postcard to yourself about feelings and experiences that you would like to remember from the expedition. We will send these postcards out to you 6 months after the completion of the expedition. They serve as great reminders of the expedition as we get caught up in day-to-day life.

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 future projects or expeditions. **We also encourage all expedition participants to communicate with the CHOICE Director of Marketing—Emily Ponder—to discuss other opportunities to collaborate and support our organization (eponder@choicehumanitarian.org). Please check out our list of Volunteer Opportunities and Internships on our website for more ideas on how you can volunteer with us! (<https://www.choicehumanitarian.org/volunteer>)**

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

- **Become a member of The Village! See <https://www.choicehumanitarian.org/membership> for more information!**
- Look for ways your business or company can become a corporate partner with CHOICE. Email Marissa Bernards mbernards@choicehumanitarian.org for more information.
- 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!**

- Volunteer or get involved in upcoming CHOICE Events! You can purchase a seat/table at our annual gala where you will find one-of-a-kind auction items, attend our annual breakfast of humanitarians, sponsor a hole at our golf tournament, or run in our 10k event! See our website for more events coming up soon. <https://www.choicehumanitarian.org>
- 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. See our website to sign up.