

# Volunteer's Handbook

## 2014



The Women's Foundation Nepal



## Nepal

Location: South Asia  
Neighbors: India, China  
Land Area: 147,181 sq km  
Capital: Kathmandu

Population: 29,890,686  
Official language: Nepali  
Religion: Hindu (80.6%),  
Buddhist (10.7%)

Currency: Nepali rupee  
Time Zone: UTC +05:45  
International Country  
Code: 977

## Introduction to The Women's Foundation Nepal

The Women's Foundation Nepal (WFN) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization established in 1988 by a group of women who were deeply concerned about the plight of their fellow women in Nepal. Their sense of social responsibility and strong desire to address these gender issues continue to guide their ideals and principles today.

WFN aims to help all women and children, regardless of caste, religion, or race, with a key focus on aiding the rural poor through the alleviation of socio-economic problems and discrimination. This is achieved chiefly through increasing public awareness amongst women in Nepal of the opportunities for economic and social self-development.

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## More information on WFN can be found here:

Official website: [www.womenepal.org](http://www.womenepal.org)

Or search "Women's Foundation Nepal" find us on Facebook.



## Volunteering Opportunities

Join us in creating a better future for the women and children of Nepal

WFN is always on the look out for volunteers who are able to work us with us to fulfill WFN's objectives. Some volunteers live in Nepal while others live half way across the globe, running in-country fundraising events and managing our website.

We offer volunteer placements in many areas as listed below. We will customize your job scope according to our needs and your relevant skills and experiences. Once you have been accepted as a WFN volunteer, our volunteer coordinator will work with you to determine the job scope.

### 1. WFN Office

The WFN is the control tower for all of WFN's programs and activities. This is where we have the greatest need for volunteers. Volunteers may assist with fundraising, proposal and report writing, editing, marketing, website development, accounting and other administrative and IT work. A strong command of English is compulsory here and we welcome volunteers with prior working experience and relevant professional skills.

[Continue ->](#)

## 2. Maheela Textile Production Center

Maheela is a textile cooperative under WFN, established to train and provide employment to women who had been victims of abuse in the areas of traditional Nepalese textile production. Maheela is a very important arm of WFN as 60% of Maheela's profits also go towards funding the rest of WFN's activities.

Volunteers can assist with business development, sales and marketing, textile design and procurement, and website development. We need volunteers with work experience in business development, sales and marketing. We are looking for volunteers who have the professional skills and knowledge to grow Maheela's business internationally.

## 3. Shelter Home

The shelter is home to women and children who had been victims of abuse and neglect, located in the outskirts of the city. During the times when the women are not working and the children are not in school, volunteers may organize activities for them. This may include lessons on dance, music, art and craft and hygiene. Volunteers who wish to teach English or assist the children with their schoolwork must be trained teaching professionals with an understanding of the Nepalese education system.

We are in greater need for volunteers who can help to improve the living conditions at the shelter home. Those with technical and professional skills in construction, carpentry, plumbing, electric circuitry, sanitation and healthcare are welcomed here.



## 4. Childcare Center

WFN operates a childcare center for single mothers, working mothers and the community to leave their young children when they go to work. We are looking for energetic, creative individuals who have experience in working with young children. You may organize games, teach songs and dance, and provide general assistance to the children and our staff.

## 5. Organic Farming

WFN operates an organic farm with the aim to supply the bulk of the food needed at the shelter home. We are still working towards this goal and are in need of those with agricultural knowledge and skills to help us maintain, improve and expand the farm.

## 6. Volunteer from Home

We currently have many volunteers from all over the globe helping us in various ways. Fund raising is of the utmost importance to WFN. This could be in the form of finding sponsors for the women and children at our shelter home, or donation for our various projects. We will supply volunteers with all the information required to do so.



## To Apply

Interested parties are to drop an email to indicate your interest to our Volunteer Coordinator, at

[womens\\_foundation@hottmail.com](mailto:womens_foundation@hottmail.com)

You will be requested to submit your CV, along with a recent photo. We will also require you to complete an official volunteers application form. *Priority will be given to those who commit to stay for 3 months or more and those with working experience.*

## Volunteer Guidelines and Rules

- Volunteers must be able to speak English
- Minimum charge for accommodation, including meals, is one month
- Volunteers are expected to work 5 days a week, 7 hours each day
- The first 2 weeks will be a trial period where the volunteer's job scope may change after according to the needs of the organization after monitoring the progress of the volunteer
- Volunteers are to follow the instructions provided by the Volunteer Coordinator/Program Coordinator and consult them should they face any problems
- Volunteers are to submit a weekly report on their work and experience to the Volunteer Coordinator
- All sensitive matters regarding WFN and WFN's members must be kept confidential
- Smoking and drinking are strictly prohibited in all our premises
- WFN may terminate the volunteer's services should his/her work or behavior prove unsatisfactory
- Priority will be given to volunteers who apply to stay with the Women's Foundation

### Specific to the Shelter and Childcare Centre

- Male volunteers are not allowed at the Shelter
- All activities run by the volunteers and gifts for the children should be approved by the Volunteer Coordinator/ Program Coordinators
- Volunteers not working at the Shelter or Childcare Center should request permission from the Volunteer Coordinator before visiting
- Volunteers are not allowed to take the children outside of the Shelter or Childcare
- Volunteers are not allowed to enter the bedrooms of the children at the Shelter
- Volunteers should not focus on one child or a group of children, at the exclusion of others
- Volunteers should not consume their own food in the presence of the children
- Should volunteers notice any undesirable behaviors or problems amongst the children, you must inform the Program Coordinator immediately

## Pre-Departure

### Flights

You will be responsible for organizing and paying for your own flight to Nepal. The WFN Office is in Kathmandu; hence, volunteers should book a flight to Tribhuvan International Airport.

### Packing List

Do note that Nepal is a predominantly Hindu country and people dress modestly. Women in particular should be careful about what they wear. Female volunteers should avoid shorts, skirts above the knee, low-cut tops, and tight-fitting and skimpy clothes. This is particularly so in rural areas. We will not permit volunteers to wear such clothing in the presence of our children from the Shelter and Childcare Center.

Apart from clothing, you may wish to bring the following:

- Head Torch/ Torchlight (Nepal is prone to frequent power cuts)
- Laptop (Especially if you are volunteering at the office or production center)
- Mobile Phone (Make sure it's unlocked such that you may purchase a local SIM card for us to contact you)
- Electrical adaptor (To ensure your gadgets work in Nepal. The sockets in Nepal vary but a 2 pin (round) plug usually fits)
- Passport sized photos (For VISA application and passes to places of attraction)

You will be able to find most Western comforts in Kathmandu, although, this may not be the case in the rural areas. For volunteers wearing contact lens, we recommend you bring your own lens solution and other peripherals. If you are unsure about any particular item you may need, feel free to check with us.

### Vaccinations

Once your placement with us is confirmed, volunteers should consult their GP or Travel Clinic on the vaccinations recommended for Nepal. Some vaccinations need to be taken a longer period in advance; hence, volunteers are advised to seek medical advice as early as possible.

### Insurance

Volunteers are advised to purchase their own travel and health insurance for the period they are in Nepal.



### Contact with Other WFN Volunteers

We will try our best to put you in touch with at least one past or existing volunteer for you to find out about their experience and seek advice. From our experience, this usually gives the new volunteer a lot more reassurance about his or her stay in Nepal.

## Upon Arrival

### At the Airport

Once you have arrived, you are required to complete a disembarkation card at the Arrival Hall. The English version can be found at the far end of the hall.

### VISA

For volunteers requiring VISA on arrival, the application can be found along with the disembarkation cards. A 15-day tourist VISA will cost USD\$25, a 30-day USD\$40 and a 90-day USD\$100. Please bring sufficient money for this. You will be required to submit one passport-sized photo as part of the application.

Please note that you **MUST** register yourself as a tourist instead of a volunteer. You will also be required to provide an address. Any guesthouse in Kathmandu will suffice.

If you plan to stay more than 90 days, you may visit the Nepal Immigration Office in Kathmandu with your passport and another photo, and pay USD\$2 for every day past your VISA you want to stay, up to the maximum of 150 days per year.

### Accommodation

WFN welcomes volunteers to live in the house (Solidarity Home) of its founder and President, Renu Sharma, and her family. The Solidarity Home is a 4-storey house located in the same compound as the WFN Office. At all times, there are around 10 – 15 people living in the house. Depending on the room availability, you may be required to share a room with the other volunteers. The rooms are not heated and there is no A/C.

The cost to live in the Solidarity Home is USD\$ 400 a month where you may expect the following:

- Airport pickup
- 3 simple vegetarian meals everyday
- A shared bathroom with hot shower
- Drinking water
- A private kitchen (If you decide to cook, it will be at your own expense)

We will also expect volunteers to abide by the following rules:

- Volunteers are expected to do their own laundry
- Volunteers are expected to be home by 9pm. If you will be late, please inform someone in the household
- Only same sex volunteers can share a room (or married couples)

If you do not wish to stay at the Solidarity Home, we recommend you stay in the vicinity of the Boudhanath Stupa. The WFN Office is a 15-min walk from this major tourist attraction. You may look for guesthouses near Boudhanath through online travel sites such as [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com) or [agoda.com](http://agoda.com). Alternatively, our Volunteer Coordinator will be happy to provide you with some recommendations.





## Cultural Sensitivities

Important things to note during your stay in Nepal

There are many cultural and norms practices in Nepal, particularly in rural areas. We expect our volunteers to be culturally sensitive and follow the traditional guidelines in Nepal. Things are changing in Nepal but it's best to follow these guidelines until and unless your hosts invite you to behave differently. When in doubt, common sense and good manners should go a long way.

### Eating and Drinking

Always use your right hand to eat and deal with food. Many Nepalese eat with their hands but you can always request for a spoon.

Once your lips have touched a food item, its container or a piece of cutlery, it is considered *Jutho* (contaminated). For example, if you use your already used spoon to take food from a common bowl, the entire bowl would be considered *Jutho* and may be thrown out. Even when using a serving spoon, the serving spoon should not come into contact with your plate or the existing food on your plate. As such, never eat off someone else's plate or offer anyone food you have taken a bite out of. Do not enter the kitchen until you have been invited to. In addition, it is rude to blow your nose loudly, especially at the dining table.

### Feet and Shoes

Never wear your shoes into any religious site or people's homes. Some homes are more relaxed about this practice. Watch your hosts and do as they do.

Feet should never be used to point to things, especially people. They also should not be used to touch someone or his or her belongings. If you accidentally touch another person with your feet, quickly say a short apology. You should also avoid stepping over any part of the body of someone sitting on the floor or any food item. It is considered ill omened and extremely impolite.

### Head

The head is considered a "sacred" part of the body in Nepal. You should never touch anyone's head or remove anyone's hat from their head, even in jest.

### Relationship between Men and Women

Affection between men and women, even between married couples, is seldom expressed. Kissing, hugging or handholding in public is considered inappropriate. However, it is not uncommon to see two men or women holding arms or walk arm in arm. This is perfectly acceptable in Nepalese society and does not imply homosexuality.

Sexual-related topics are considered taboo in Nepal. You should not engage in such conversations, especially with a Nepalese of the opposite sex. Do note that more than 90% of marriages in Nepal are arranged. Dating is traditionally frowned upon and love marriages are rare. Hence, do be sensitive when discussing these topics.

### Begging

You will encounter many beggars while in Nepal, particularly in tourist areas. Sadly, giving them money usually does not solve their problems. It makes them reliant on others and encourages them (as well as others) to continue to beg. Sometimes, you will meet women carrying babies, asking for powdered milk. It is known that many will take the goods back to the shop to ask for a refund. If you really want to help, it is better to take an individual to a meal.

It is also not wise to give money to street children. It is not uncommon for the money to go to their gang leader or to fund their drug addiction. It would be better if your money goes to established NGOs dedicated to helping street children.

### Religion

Hinduism is the main religion in Nepal. However, Nepalese are tolerant of different religions and interest in learning the many religions of Nepal is welcomed as casual conversation.

### Privacy

This does not exist the same way it does back home. Complete strangers in public may ask you seemingly personal questions, such as your age, your marital status, the number of members in your family. It is also not uncommon for the Nepalese to look over your shoulder as you write or use your mobile phone/ laptop. Do not be alarmed. The concept of privacy in Nepal is simply different and should not be viewed negatively. If you wish to be alone, politely explain that you are tired and want to rest.

# Safety & Health

Nepal is generally a safe country and most visits to Nepal are trouble-free. However, here are some things you should note to keep yourself safe. We also advise you to always have the number of our Volunteer Coordinator on hand so that you will be able to reach her in the case of an emergency.

## Crime

Crime is relatively low in Nepal but there are precautions you should still take. When walking in tourist areas such as Thamel, keep a close eye on your belongings. There have been reports on pickpocketing and bag snatching in these areas. Pickpocketing also happens to both foreigners and locals on crowded public buses. In general, exercise common sense, as you would when traveling in other countries.

The emergency line in Nepal is 100, where it is manned 24/7 by the local police. While many Nepalese police officials understand and speak English, you should speak slowly and enunciate so that your message gets across to the official clearly and without misunderstanding.

## Strikes

Strikes ("bandhs") occur in Nepal frequently. In past years, bandhs have lasted for periods as short as a few hours to as long as several days or even weeks. Although bandh activity generally is not directed at foreigners, those attempting to defy bandhs may be subject to intimidation and/or violence.

## Road Safety

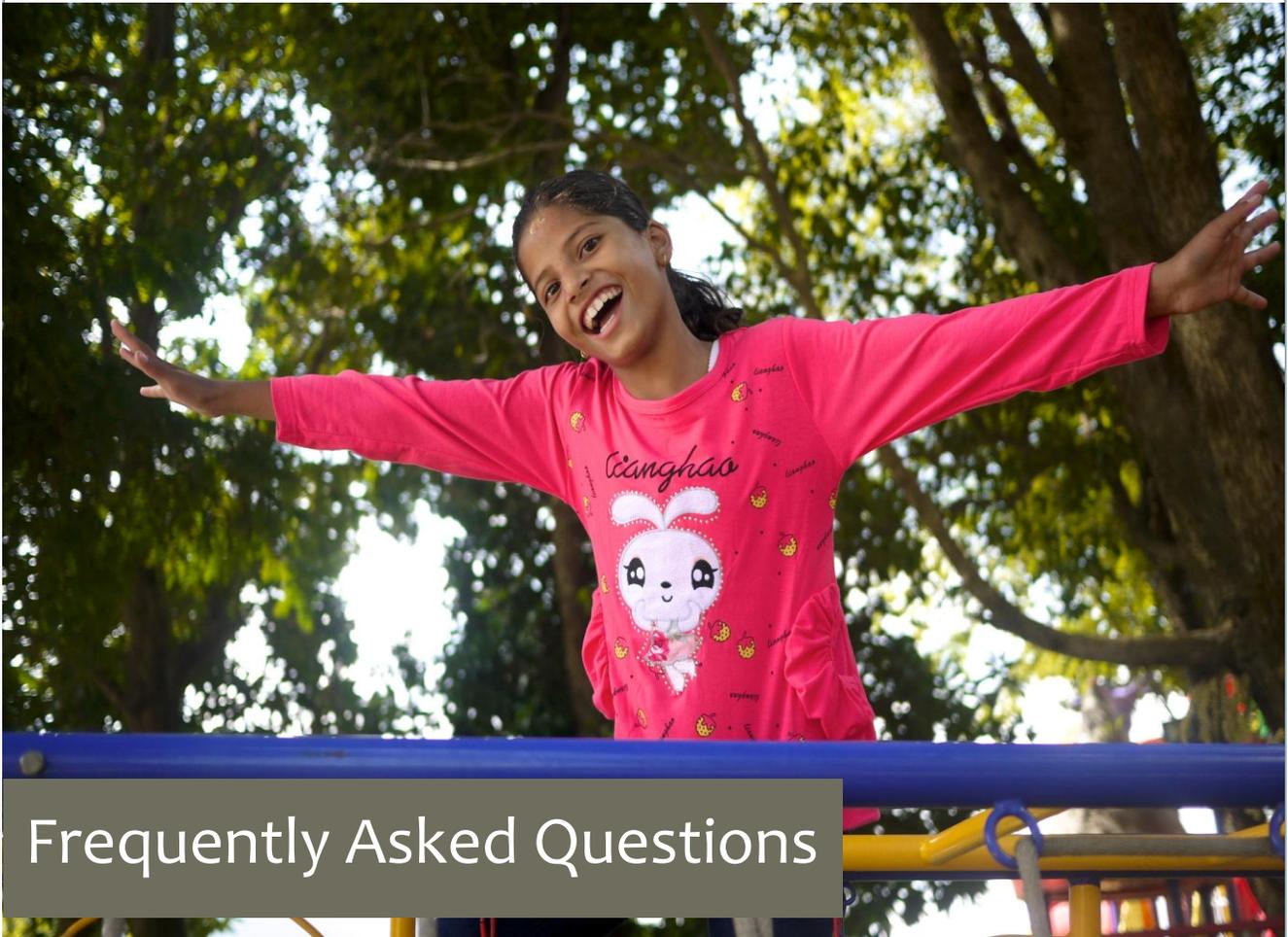
In Nepal, vehicles are driven on the left-hand side of the road. Traffic is not well regulated, and the volume of vehicles on the roads continues to increase faster than improvements in infrastructure. Traffic lights and sidewalks are almost non-existent in most areas. Hence, you should exercise caution while walking along or crossing the roads.

## Health

Nepal is a country with a high risk of gastrointestinal illness. This could be due to the change in diet and climate, or from consuming contaminated food or drink. It is advised to drink only bottled or filtered water. You should check that the food is properly cooked before eating. Raw vegetables should also be avoided unless they have been properly washed. You should bring along some medicine for problems like diarrhea if you have a weak stomach.

Stray dogs are common on the streets of Kathmandu. Volunteers should be aware that stray dogs and monkeys may be infected with rabies. Any animal bites should be carefully handled and immediately brought to a medical practitioner's attention.

If you fall ill and need to see a doctor during your stay with us, we will arrange for one of our staff to accompany you to the hospital. Over the counter medication can also be easily found within Kathmandu though we advise volunteers to bring medicine for common illnesses. If you need emergency medical assistance, dial 102 and ask for an ambulance.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I change or withdraw money?

Money can be exchanged at banks. Many moneychangers can also be found at Boudhanath (where WFN is) or in tourist areas like Thamel. ATMs for money withdrawals are also widely available. Most will charge a transaction fee and will allow you to withdraw a maximum of 10,000 to 35,000 rupees each transaction.

### How much do things cost in Nepal?

Do note that this is just an estimate. A meal (without a drink) at a tourist restaurant will cost on average 300 – 500 rupees. A meal at a local restaurant can be considerably lower. A taxi ride from Boudhanath to Thamel (~20 min) will cost around 300 rupees. A bottle of drinking water will cost between 15 -25 rupees.

### How common are power cuts?

Scheduled power cuts are the norm all year and are worse from November to May. Sometimes there may be no electricity for up to 16 hours a day. You can find the power cut (also know as load shedding) schedule online here. WFN's Office is in District 7.

[http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=pages&page\\_id=8](http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=pages&page_id=8)

### How do I contact my family?

We recommend volunteers bring their laptops here. When there is electricity, the WFN Office has Wi-Fi and you can easily email or Skype your family. There are also plenty of Internet cafes that offer international call services around Boudhanath or Thamel.

### What is the postal service like?

You can buy stamps and drop off your mail at the post office and some tourist shops. You will not be able to receive mail at the WFN Office but we have a PO Box address that may be used upon request.

### Can I get a local number?

Yes, you can buy a pre-paid SIM card here in Nepal and we recommend you to do so so that we will be able to contact you. The shops generally will require your passport and a passport-sized photo. 3G data SIM cards are also available if you own a smartphone or a tablet. Due to frequent power cuts, the Wi-Fi service in the office may be limited. Some volunteers have also bought USB dongles (with 3G SIM cards) that can be connected to their laptops. NCell is the largest mobile service provider in Nepal.

### What is the best way to get around?

Taking local buses is the cheapest way to get around. They are frequent, though often very crowded. A ride will cost between 10 – 25 rupees depending on the distance. Typically, there will be a bus boy at the door shouting out the bus' route as the bus drives along the road. If you are not sure, shout your intended destination out to the bus boy. To get to the WFN Office, you can get off at "Boudha" or "Pipalbot", depending on which direction you come from.

### What kind of food should I expect?

The Nepalese typically have daalbhat (rice and lentils soup) for breakfast and dinner. Around tourist attractions such as Boudhanath or in tourist areas like Thamel, you will be able to find food of many different cuisines, general Western food, Tibetan, Korean, etc. The Nepalese typically drink more tea than coffee but there are many cafés with coffee available in tourist areas. You can also get coffee mix from the supermarkets.

### Where can I get groceries, toiletries and other supplies?

You will be able to find most things you need in Kathmandu. There is a large 4-storey supermarket, BhatBhateni, (similar to Wal-Mart, Carrefour) approximately 30 minutes walk from our office. You will be able to find food, clothes, toiletries, electronics, toys, etc. There are also smaller supermarkets, such as G Mart and KK Mart, near Boudhanath (15 min walk from our Office).

### What is the weather like?

The weather in Nepal varies depending on the time of the year. Different districts in Nepal also have different climates. The following is guide of the climate in Kathmandu. During December and January, it can get very cold (0 – 3 degrees Celsius) at night, while remaining relatively warm in the day. Between June to August, the temperature can go up to 32 degrees Celsius. This is also the monsoon season where it rains frequently. Volunteers can view historical weather data in Kathmandu through [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com).

If you choose to stay in the Solidarity Home, do note that the rooms are not heated. During winter, volunteers are advised to bring enough warm clothing to sleep in. You may also choose to bring your own sleeping bag, though our volunteers have typically found our blankets sufficient. Our Volunteer Coordinator will be happy to advise you on the weather conditions before your arrival.

### What can I do during my free time?

There are many places of attractions around Kathmandu you can visit during the weekends or after your volunteering stint with us. You easily purchase a Lonely Planet guidebook during your stay here to help plan your activities. Some of the major attractions in Kathmandu include Boudhanath Stupa, Pashupatinath, Swayambhu and Durbar Square. There are also cinemas where you can find American movies as well as cafés where you can spend your time reading or using your laptop. Outside of Kathmandu, our volunteers have typically visited places such as Patan, Bhaktapur, Nagarkot, Pokhara and Chitwan National Park.

Nepal is also a country of many festivals. Joining in the festivities is a great way to immerse yourself in Nepalese culture and have fun. You can find out more about the festivals here:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_festivals\\_in\\_Nepal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_festivals_in_Nepal)

### What are some basic Nepali phrases I should know?

Hello	Namaste
Hello (Formal)	Namaskar
Thank you	Dhanyabhad
How are you?	(Tapalaa) kastochara?
I am fine	(Malaa) sanchara
Where is ____	____ kahaachaa?
How much?	Kati parchha?

You will also be able to find many Nepali phrasebooks and language books here in Nepal. Practicing with the friendly Nepalese is also a great way to pick up the language.

*Our Volunteer Coordinator will also be happy to assist you with all other questions you have.*

Volunteer With Us.



The Women's Foundation Nepal