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## **Sunrise Children's Association Inc (SCAI)**

### **Nepal Volunteer Program**

Thank you for registering your interest in becoming a volunteer at Sunrise Orphanage in Nepal, Kathmandu. Volunteering can be an extremely rewarding and life changing experience as it was for the founders of Sunrise Children's Association Inc (SCAI).

Before applying to volunteer with us, it is important to understand what it means to volunteer with underprivileged children in a developing country, so please read the below information carefully. You may also view video's of Sunrise on our website [www.scai.org.au](http://www.scai.org.au), which will give you a good sense of both Sunrise and life in Nepal.

### **Living in a Developing Country**

Living in a developing country is not as easy as living in Australia. It can be a challenging and, at times, an uncomfortable and sometimes frustrating experience. Accommodation is basic in comparison to home; you may have to share a room with another volunteer, beds tend to be quite hard, and you will have to share other facilities with the children and carers (and possibly mosquitoes and other 'wild' life), including kitchen, bathroom and Nepali style 'squat toilet'. Water is generally not hot, but you may get warm water for showering in the afternoons. Water supply is very limited, so it is unlikely that you will be able to shower every day. Nepal has limited power also, with the load shedding schedule varying through-out the year. Power can be off from anywhere from 6-20 hours per day, depending on the season, so we recommend you bring your own torch and supply of batteries.

You may have to do without some of the entertainment you are used to – TV, VCR, stereo, computer, but we don't mind if you bring your own small battery operated equipment for your personal use when the children are not at home. There is an internet cafe 5mins from Sunrise, however this is only open when there is power.

Entertainment with the Sunrise family or other friends/volunteers generally revolves around sporting activities, games, shared meals, occasional local festivals, sitting around chatting or catching up on those books you always meant to read.

One of the most important things to consider is whether you can survive without your family and friends being around you. If you can't bear the thought of being separated from your family, partner, boyfriend or girlfriend for weeks or months at a time then you need to consider whether this program is for you.

You should also be aware that instability is common in many of the developing countries such as Nepal. While Sunrise Children's Association Inc. (SCAI) takes every precaution to ensure the safety of volunteers, you should be aware that you could be evacuated if the situation Nepal becomes unstable. You will need to be flexible enough to cooperate with the program if such a situation occurs. You will need to ensure you have your own comprehensive travel insurance policy as SCAI do not provide insurance. Whilst the unstable political situation has improved over the past 2 years, there are still regular 'bandhs' (strikes), curfews, protests and riots, particularly in rural areas. You must be willing to obey these curfews at all times. We suggest regularly checking the [www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au) website for updates on the political stability of Nepal (you can subscribe to receive email updates if changes occur in Nepal whilst travelling).

## **Orphanage life**

### **So what will I be doing in the orphanage and will my skills be of use?**

A day in the life of a volunteer at Sunrise Orphanage holds many and varied tasks. In the mornings, helping the children get ready for school, joining in their morning exercise and study programs, and enjoying the morning meal with them, traditional Nepali daal baht, is always fun and helpful. In the afternoons, you are requested to help them with their homework, the reading program, joining in snack time, playing games and providing emotional support to the children. The afternoon activities are then followed by dinner at around 6.30pm (depending on the season), followed by prayers, meditation, further homework for the older children and depending on the day, some games, singing, dancing and other fun activities. You will hopefully have the opportunity to escort the children on an outing somewhere too, and there is a beautiful forest 5 minutes walk which always provides a great playground for volunteers and the children.

The carers also appreciate your help, with things like washing, cleaning, cutting vegetables and helping organise the children, so please do not forget about them!

Regarding hours of work, we request that you be at Sunrise daily up until the children leave for school at around 9.30am, and in the afternoons from 3.30pm onwards until bed time, to help them with their homework in particular. Saturdays is their one full day off school and a particularly fun day, so for your own benefit as much as theirs, we also request that you spend a large part of Saturday with them. Between 10am and 3.30pm weekdays when the children are at school you are free to do whatever you like.

As well as the abovementioned jobs at Sunrise, we also have a Community Training and Development Centre a couple of km away that we would greatly appreciate your help at teaching English for an hour or so a day.

We are always open to your suggestions and welcome any activities you may like to introduce also!

We suggest that you have at least one full day (and night) off through the week depending on the length of your stay, so you can rest and rejuvenate yourself. The most important thing is that you jointly establish a clear routine with the management of Sunrise Orphanage - Tulsi Mainali, live in house Father at Sunrise Orphanage and Emma Taylor SCAI Country Director in Nepal.

If you are in any doubt as to what you can do to help simply ask the carers as they may be too embarrassed to give direct instructions or guidance to you. You can also speak to Emma, Tulsi or Sangita at any time if you are unsure about anything. Each volunteer brings a unique skill set and it is always a great opportunity for each new volunteer to contribute to the orphanage in a new and unique way. As a relatively young organisation we are still building the foundations so to speak, hence it is a very special time to be involved and make a real difference to the lives of many orphaned and abandoned children in Nepal.

### **The Program**

Sunrise Children's Association will organise for someone to come and meet you at the Kathmandu airport and take you to your hotel. You will then be given an informal orientation and tour of useful things such as ATM's, money changers, supermarkets, internet cafes, shops cafe's etc to ensure you settle in easily and comfortably.

To ensure you and the children gain maximum benefit from your volunteering experience, we request you volunteer at the orphanage for a minimum of three weeks, following an initial 5-7 days in the tourist centre of Thamel, where you can get your feet on the ground, do some language classes, sightseeing, and immerse yourself in the culture. A minimum of three weeks should enable you to form a friendship with the children and develop enough local skills and knowledge to be able to assist them.

#### ***Week 1: Language and Kathmandu Sightseeing***

We highly recommend you partake in the 5-7 day orientation and sightseeing program, to give you a taste of Nepalese life and culture. Previous volunteers have found the basic language lessons great fun and very helpful in building relationships with the children, carers and people within the local

community. They are run by a professional Nepali language teacher at a discounted volunteer rate. The recommended introductory course is 10 hours (2 hours per day for 5 days, costing around AUD\$50 for the week of classes, or NPR 300 per hour). You can then continue taking further classes throughout your stay if you wish. SCAI can organise this for you, but you are requested to pay the language centre directly.

(N.B. most of the Sunrise Orphanage management team do speak English however English language skills with the children and carers vary in ability, hence it is not a requirement of travel but it can enrich the experience for yourself and the children).

In the afternoons after the language class has finished, a half-day professional guided tour can be organised through our local partners Himalayan Waves Trekking (HWT). A fully qualified tour guide will explain the history of the monuments and can show you around the sights of Kathmandu. It costs approximately AUD\$50 for a full day or approximately AUD\$35 for half a day. SCAI can help you organise but you are requested to pay HWT directly when you arrive.

Alternatively, you can do it yourself, with other volunteers or new friends and the help of a Lonely Planet Guidebook (or similar). This tends to be the preferred option and our recommended option as it gives you more flexibility and costs less. You can get around easily to the local sights by foot, hired bicycle, rickshaw or taxi. We would recommend visiting:

- Kathmandu Durbar Square (original town centre, within walking distance of Thamel)
- Swayambunath (otherwise known as Monkey Temple, a beautiful Buddhist Stupa on top of a small hill, West of Thamel, about 10 mins by taxi or 40 mins by foot)
- Boudha Stupa (Buddhist Stupa, largest Buddhist Stupa in Nepal, about 20mins East of Thamel by taxi)
- Pashupatinath (largest Hindu Temple in Nepal, one of major Hindu temples in Asia, 20mins East of Thamel by taxi)
- Ancient town of Bhaktapur (approx. 1 hour east of city, half to full day trip recommended)
- Patan Durbar Square (approx. 20 mins west of city),
- Beautiful village of Godawari, including Godawari Botanic Gardens (approx. 1 hour South of city)
- Nagarkot (to see beautiful Sunrise behind the Himalayas - recommended particularly if not going to Pokhara, approx. 1.5 hours East of city)

### ***Week 2: Sightseeing***

We do also recommend getting out of the Kathmandu Valley and exploring some of the other wonderful sights of Nepal. The recommended week long program is outlined below. This can be done either at the beginning of your stay if you have an extra week to spare (i.e. following your week long language and local sightseeing program and prior to coming to Sunrise) or at the end of your stay at Sunrise.

- 2 nights and 3 day tour to Chitwan National Park. This includes transport, jungle activities, canoe trip, elephant breeding centre, elephant safari, local village guided tour and evening dance performance, lodging and meals. Please note SCAI do not recommend the jungle walk - as with any jungle there is the risk of running into a wild animal which can potentially be very dangerous.
- 2 nights and 2 day tour of Pokhara. This includes transport, lodging, breakfasts.
- Please note the 3 days in Chitwan and the 2 days in Pokhara includes three 5-6 hour blocks of travel by tourist bus between Kathmandu/Chitwan/Pokhara/Kathmandu.

The total cost for this is approximately US\$135 for the one week tour to Chitwan and Pokhara, payable directly to HWT on arrival. This excludes transport from and to Chitwan/Pokhara and meals. The exact payment amount will be confirmed at the time of booking and the tours are subject to weather conditions and other factors outside the control of the tour operators.

Alternatively we can help you organise your transport and accommodation and you can organise your sightseeing once you are there. This tends to be the preferred option by past volunteers and our recommended option as it gives you more flexibility and costs less. With transport by bus, accommodation, all major sightseeing and an estimate for meals, it is likely to cost \$100-120 for

Chitwan and similar for Pokhara, but flexible depending on your selected activities and meals. Suggested sightseeing includes:

**Chitwan:**

Hotel Riverside including breakfast and pick up from bus station.  
Canoe ride to Elephant breeding centre  
Elephant Safari  
Elephant bathing (approx R100 payable directly to elephant driver)  
Tharu Dance at local community hall

**Pokhara:**

World Peace Pagoda (45 min hike up from lake, by catching rowboat from Lakeside hotel area over lake to starting point) or take taxi up back side.  
Gupteshwori Caves & Devis Falls (across road from each other, about 10mins from hotels)  
Sunrise at Sarankot  
Rowing boat around Phewa Taal (lake) for an hour or two at leisure  
Hiring a bicycle and riding out of Pokhara a few km's (non city end)  
Museums optional

**Language Lessons**

SCAI can book the language lessons for you prior to departure, but we suggest booking any sightseeing tours directly when you arrive here, with our assistance if needed.

**Accommodation and Meals at Sunrise Orphanage**

As part of the volunteer program you will be offered a basic room and meals. Running water will be available but is likely to be cold in Winter and luke warm in Summer – you may get some warmer water in the afternoons with the solar heating. Meals will be served at the orphanage and will be the same as what the children and carers eat. We request you eat with the carers after the children have finished and are ready for bed. Nepalese people eat two main meals a day of daal bhat tarkari, one for breakfast and one for dinner with a lighter meal at lunch time. Daal bhat consists of a lentil soup (daal) that you pour over your rice (bhat). This is served with some sort of vegetable curry and meat a couple of times a week. If you have any special dietary requirements we request that you provide us with details on your application form. Given the large volume of children the carers are preparing meals and caring for, you may need to prepare your own meals in the kitchen if you need to eat something different to what is being served.

**Cost**

As Sunrise Children's Association is a not-for-profit organisation that appreciates your commitment to volunteering your time with the children we only ask you to pay cost price for your board and lodging (i.e. includes meals). The cost is typically AUD\$10 per day, so \$210 for a three week stay. This covers your morning meals, afternoon tea, evening meal.

If you wish to contribute financially or purchase items for the children you are welcome to do so. We ask that you liaise with the management at Sunrise Orphanage in Nepal or Sunrise Children's Association prior to purchasing anything to ensure your contribution is put to use fully and in line with our policies and procedures.

**How do I apply for the program?**

To apply for the program please complete and submit the application form and working with children police checks available on the SCAI website under the volunteering section. You will then undergo a routine interview with Volunteer Co-Ordinator Sarah Thom who is based in Melbourne. The interview is as much for your benefit as it is to make sure we feel you are right for the program. Character reference checks may also be conducted.

**What do I need to do before I leave?**

Upon being accepted onto the volunteer program you will need to pay for your time at Sunrise, provide us with details of your comprehensive travel insurance and organise the things below.

### Travel insurance

As a condition of the program you are required to take out your own comprehensive travel insurance. As a minimum this should include cover for accidents, illness, rescue operation and lost baggage. Even if you have good health insurance at home, you may not be covered while abroad, and not all domestic insurers can provide medical evacuation or medical assistance in foreign countries. Therefore, we advise all volunteers to obtain an information booklet (with appropriate contact numbers) and take it with you when you travel. Sunrise Children's Association Incorporated and/or Sunrise Orphanage will not be held responsible for any liabilities, medical costs or related expenses that might arise including those incurred because of your failure to buy adequate travel insurance.

### Vaccinations

It is important to speak with your doctor or a travel doctor about required vaccinations before travelling to Nepal. Many diseases and illnesses that are no longer prevalent in developed countries are widespread in Nepal hence precautions must be taken; such as Hep A&B, Rabies, Japanese B Encephalitis, Diphtheria & Tetanus, Malaria, Meningococcal Meningitis, Polio, Typhoid, Yellow fever.

**N.B. Some vaccinations are required to be taken several months before travel.** The World Health Organisation recommends all travellers be immunised at least two months before travelling to Nepal.

### Medical

Should you need medical assistance whilst in Nepal, CIWEC clinic (Tel: 977-1-442 4111 or 443 5232) in Lazimpat, near the British Embassy and India Embassy, is used by many foreign residents of Kathmandu and is staffed by Westerners. A single visit costs around USD\$55. Clinic hours are from 9-12pm and 1-5pm Mon-Fri. 24 hour emergency is available after hours at a higher cost. Please see services provided at [www.ciwec-clinic.com](http://www.ciwec-clinic.com). Ciwec now also operates a dental clinic.

### Health and disease prevention

Please...

- Don't drink water from the tap and avoid taking ice cubes in your drink.
- Reputable brands of bottled water or soft drinks are generally fine. Take care with fruit juice, particularly if water has been added. (Good brands of water purification tablets can also be used).
- Only drink/use water that comes in sealed bottles or has been boiled/filtered.
- We suggest you clean your teeth with purified water rather than straight from the tap.
- Wash your hands frequently, as it's quite easy to contaminate your own food, or if water is not available, we suggest you use anti-bacterial hand gel, available in both Australia and Nepal.
- Milk should be treated with care as it is often un-pasteurised. Boiled milk is fine if it is kept hygienically. We don't recommend eating or drinking dairy products such as yoghurt or unboiled milk.
- Don't eat anything that hasn't been cooked, fried or can be peeled unless at a good quality restaurant where they have been treated in iodine water.
- Salads and fruit should be washed with purified water or peeled where possible.
- Try to avoid insect bites by covering bare skin when insects are around, by screening windows or by using insect repellents.

If, after following this advice you do get diarrhoea, this usually lasts 1 or 2 days and is not dangerous. You should drink a lot of water (from sealed bottles!) and not eat spicy food. Diarrhoea also goes along with a loss of minerals. In order to provide enough minerals to your body you should add a mineral powder such as Jeevan Jal (or just 'Jal') to your drinking water. Jal can be obtained for around NPR15 at the pharmacy, as can various diarrhoea tablets. If you are not feeling better within 3 or 4 days consult your doctor and Sunrise Children's Association and/or Sunrise Orphanage staff.

### Culture shock

When entering a new environment where very little is familiar to what you are used to, you will probably be disoriented to start with. Some people call this 'culture shock'. Experts have suggested that there are four stages of culture shock:

1. Initial euphoria
2. Irritability and hostility

3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation

Almost everyone experiences a culture shock to some degree. It can be frustrating and confusing. There are positive steps you can take to minimise the impact:

1. Realise that this is normal and that you will live through it.
2. Be open-minded and ready to learn. You will come to realise that there are different ways to do things and that's okay.
3. Research your new culture. You can begin today, reading as much as you can about the Nepalese culture that you will be experiencing.
4. Look for logical reasons for behaviours in the new culture that you may find strange. With a little analysis, you may find that these different behaviours don't seem so strange after all.
5. Above all, flexibility, humility and open-mindedness will be your most valuable traits. These may have even been the key qualities that led you to volunteer in the first place, so it should not be difficult for you.

### **Local customs**

You should also familiarise yourself with the local customs of Nepal as they are quite different to those of Australian life and it is important not to offend local sensitivities. Below a few of these are listed:

- The dress in Nepal is quite conservative. Most Nepalese cover their shoulders, backs, chests and legs to the knees and do not wear tight or revealing clothing. So please respect this and not wear anything above the knee, low cut or tight tops, or singlets with straps.
- Affection between men and women is seldom expressed and public kissing, hugging, and hand-holding are offensive to most Nepalese and a sign of low morals. It is acceptable for two men to walk hand in hand as friends however.
- Anger is best not expressed openly. It causes you and the person you're mad at loss of face and embarrassment.
- Bargaining is to be expected. Don't bargain if you're not really interested in actually purchasing those goods/services. If your price is accepted, don't try to back out or try to get an even lower price. Bargaining can be great fun if you both walk away being satisfied. Remember you may be bargaining over 20cents, which really isn't worth upsetting a local shop keeper over.
- Cows are sacred. They go and sleep where they want. Watch out for them while driving and don't intentionally injure them in any way (otherwise you could go to jail!).
- Eating is done with the right hand. Only accept as much as you can eat. It is good manners to ask for 'seconds'.
- Left hands are used for cleaning oneself after going to the toilet. It is never used to pass or accept things, whether food at the table or money with a shopkeeper.
- Feet should never be pointed at anyone, drape something over them if you must stretch them out while sitting on the floor. Never step over anyone, and always move your feet to let people avoid stepping over you.
- Gifts are rarely given and seldom opened in front of the person who has given it. Often a 'thank you' is not even offered. Gifts are humbly accepted and this shouldn't be seen as a lack of appreciation.
- Heads are sacred and should be treated with respect. Never take a topi (hat) off a man's head, even in fun.
- Invitations often arrive at the last moment. Don't be surprised or offended, it happens to everyone. If you're busy, even a short appearance is enough.
- Jutho refers to food that is ritually polluted and therefore inedible. Any food which has come into contact, either directly or indirectly, with the mouth becomes jutho.
- Namaste is both greeting and farewell, combined with a prayer-like gesture. It means "I see the god in you".

- Payment after a social occasion is sometimes done by the person issuing the invitation. Nepalese people don't tend to divide the bill or go 'Dutch'. It is expected that the other people will reciprocate at some later stage.
- Rice is a religious object as well as a food of status. Brahmins may not eat the rice you serve them. Don't be offended and don't try to force it on them.
- Shoes are considered filthy. Don't ask others to handle your shoes. Most Nepalese take their shoes off at the door, so please respect this if visiting other people's houses.
- Temples should always be walked around clockwise; the same goes for Buddhist monument and gompas. Remove your shoes before going inside. Dress conservatively. Some Hindu temples forbid non-Hindu's into the main temple, so seek permission before entering.
- Time is flexible, we call it "Nepali time". A person may show up at 4pm for a 3pm appointment so you need to be flexible and not work to a tight schedule.
- Take photographs only after receiving permission. Be sensitive to the fact that some people, particularly the elderly do not understand why you would want to take photos of them, and do not want to be on 'display'.
- Note: Whilst hashish and other drugs such as opium are readily available and sometimes offered to you on the streets, Nepal is very tough on drug abuse, dealing and possession of drugs. This is taken as a serious offence and seriously punished so we strongly recommend you avoid such risks.

We recommend you purchase the Nepal Lonely Planet Guide or read as much as you can online to find out more information on cultural sensitivities.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/nepal/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/nepal/)

### **Flights**

As a volunteer you will need to book and pay for your own return flight to Nepal. Thai Airways has daily flights to Kathmandu. Cathay (via HK) and Silk Air (via Singapore) now operate flights a couple of times a week also. Once you have confirmed your flight details please forward them to us at Sunrise Children's Association so we can organise your program and airport pick-up in Nepal.

[www.thaiairways.com.au](http://www.thaiairways.com.au)

### **Visa**

The following information has been taken from the Nepal Consulate website in September 2008. **We strongly recommend you double check the most up to date information at [www.nepalconsulate.org.au](http://www.nepalconsulate.org.au) before making any decisions or applying for your Visa.**

- To apply for a tourist visa to Nepal you can either go to the Visa office between the hours of 10.00 am and 4.00 PM Wednesday, or post your application to Nepalese Consulate, PO Box 474 Edgecliff NSW 2027.
- The fee for a 15 Day Multiple Entry visa is AUD\$55.00, a 30 Day Multiple Entry visa AUD\$75.00, and a 90 Day Multiple Entry visa is AUD\$135.00. An additional fee of AUD\$15.00 is charged for 'on the spot' processing in the office on Wednesdays.
- All visas issued by the office must be utilized within six months from the date of issue.
- Visa applications received by Wednesday are generally processed by close of business that day. However, we urge you to allow plenty of time for unforeseen delays that may occur.
- Should you require a visa extension these can be applied for from the Department of Immigration after your arrival in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital. They also have an office in Pokhara, Nepal's second largest city. Make sure you allow sufficient time in your itinerary should you require this. Visa application forms can be downloaded from [www.nepalconsulate.org.au](http://www.nepalconsulate.org.au).
- The Nepal Consulate office is located at: Level 5, 203-233 New South Head Road, Edgecliff NSW 2027 (next to Edgecliff Station).
- They accept Australian Dollars and do not have credit card facilities.

- If you are applying through the post please forward them:
  1. Your current passport (with at least 6 months validity).
  2. Fully complete two (2) visa application forms.
  3. Two passport photographs attached to your forms.
  4. Return self-addressed Yellow Express Post envelope or Registered envelope.
  5. Bank cheque or Money order.
- **Personal cheques will not be accepted.** Please make cheques payable to: Nepalese Consulate. **Postal address:** Nepalese Consulate, PO Box 474 Edgecliff NSW 2027.
- If you are posting your visa please allow sufficient time for processing and to allow for delays, which may occur with Australia Post. This is especially important as our office is only open on Wednesday.
- Visa applications with your passport and all other details cited above can also be left at their Reception Desk during business hours Monday to Friday (9:30 am to 5:00 pm).
- **PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE NO REFUNDS AVAILABLE ON VISAS ISSUED BY THE OFFICE.**
- We recommend you take a **Tourist Visa** to avoid complications at Nepalese customs. Volunteers may be treated with suspicion given the political climate, hence travelling as a tourist is the simplest method.
- See [www.nepalconsulate.org.au](http://www.nepalconsulate.org.au) for more information and application requirements)

### **Research**

Whilst every attempt is made to ensure your safety whilst on the program you must take responsibility for educating yourself on the problems that Nepal and her people face. As mentioned above, whilst the political unrest in Nepal has improved over the past 12 years, riots, strikes ('bandh's), curfews, protests are still common, particularly outside of Kathmandu. You must independently assess the situation in Nepal prior to departure and should keep up-to-date with developments. You must observe any curfews and not go anywhere where riots or demonstrations could be taking place (ask if you are unsure).

We recommend going through the below websites as a good starting place for gaining a better understanding about life, travel and the current political situation in Nepal:

- [www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au)
- [www.bcc.co.uk](http://www.bcc.co.uk) (then search Nepal)
- [www.welcomeNepal.com](http://www.welcomeNepal.com) , [www.info-Nepal.com](http://www.info-Nepal.com) , [www.Nepaltravelinfo.com](http://www.Nepaltravelinfo.com)
- [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)
- [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)
- [www.tmvc.com.au](http://www.tmvc.com.au)

It goes without saying that living and working in a developing country is a very rewarding experience, and gives you the unique opportunity to contribute actively to the development needs of the region. Experiencing the daily challenges that millions of people in the third world face first hand gives you a whole new perspective on life and just how lucky we are.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us at [enquiry@scai.org.au](mailto:enquiry@scai.org.au). We look forward to welcoming you to Nepal and Sunrise Orphanage should you wish to pursue the opportunity of becoming a volunteer with us.