

# Food for Life Global Volunteer Handbook



## **EQUAL VOLUNTEERING / EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

Food for Life is a nonsectarian and non-discriminating organization that respects all religions and cultural traditions. It was founded as a charitable branch of the Hare Krishna Movement in 1974, but has volunteers from all religious and racial backgrounds involved in programs all over the world. Food for Life's mission is to "Unite the world through food." The organization bases its belief in the following code:

An intelligent person by virtue of true knowledge sees with equal vision, a learned and gentle priest, a cow, elephant, dog, rich man and a beggar.  
- *Bhagavad gita 5.18*

The organization's official policy therefore is: All persons regardless of their birth, culture, color, race, sex or religious affiliation have equal opportunity to serve within the organization. The members of the organization's management committee and presently active staff, however, must decide upon the type of service a volunteer may undertake.

In order to apply the above policy, the organization must periodically offer opportunities for work experience within service. Further to the policy, therefore:

Food for Life Global is a service organization offering welfare assistance to the disadvantaged and in the interest of rehabilitation, providing opportunities for clients to take part in the operations and management of the organization.

The above policy must be upheld in all circumstances and for all time.

## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

Food for Life Global was founded on four principles: Health, Welfare, Education and Hospitality.

All four are important to the organization's effective, healthy operations and safety. Each member or volunteer of Food for Life Global is a valuable asset to the organization and the clients it serves. Staff members and/or volunteers, therefore, must be provided a balanced and achievable workload within a supportive environment, wherein they feel needed and can peacefully undertake their tasks with confidence and control.

In pursuance of an exceptionally high standard of health, the organization recognizes the importance of hygiene and nutrition.

The health and welfare of staff members, volunteers and clients is of the utmost importance to the organization. The official policy in this regard, therefore, is:

1. Kitchens must be cleansed daily with fresh water and disinfectant.
2. There shall be no wearing of clothing or footwear that has been used outside the kitchen area, while working in the cooking or serving area.
3. All kitchen staff must wear clean aprons, hair nets and gloves provided by the management.
4. There is to be no eating in the kitchen area.
5. No implements from outside, including eating plates, spoons, cups, etc., are allowed in the kitchen area.
6. All grains, spices and flours must be properly stored in sealed bins and airtight containers.
7. Only fresh natural (preferably organic) ingredients, and fresh clean water are to be used in food preparations.
8. All menus are to be balanced, nutritious and inclusive of the following food categories: Grains, pulses, milk products, vegetables, fruits, nuts and sugars.
9. Under no circumstances is meat, fish, eggs or other animal derived products to be allowed inside the kitchen area or used in preparing meals.

The above standards and policy must be upheld in all circumstances and for all time, except in cases of disaster emergency relief wherein the following rules will apply:

1. Kitchens must be cleansed daily with fresh water.
2. All kitchen staff must wear clean clothes and hair nets while preparing or cooking meals.
3. There is to be no eating in the kitchen area.
4. All grains, spices and flours must be properly stored and sealed.
5. All menus are to be as balanced and nutritious as possible, and inclusive of the following food categories: Grains, pulses, and vegetables.
6. Under no circumstances is meat, fish, eggs or other animal derived products to be allowed inside the kitchen area or used in preparing meals.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

A fundamental requirement of all Food for Life volunteers and staff members is to maintain good personal hygiene at all times while engaged in Food for Life services. The standards all volunteers must to adhere to are as follows:

- Morning bathing is mandatory
- Thorough washing of hands before all food handling services
- Fresh clothing is to be worn during food handling services
- No intoxication at the food relief base
- No eating of meat, fish or eggs at food relief base

Failure to comply with these standards could jeopardize the volunteer's service and they may be asked to leave.

## **SERVICE ATTIRE**

All Food for Life volunteers are required to wear the Food for Life T-shirt or apron while performing volunteer services, unless otherwise advised. Official Food for Life Volunteer attire will be provided on-site to all volunteers.

## **ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SERVICE TO POTENTIAL USERS**

The guiding principle behind every service or activity undertaken by Food for Life Global volunteers and/or staff is to respect every living being as an equal and valuable member of the one global family.

Our mission is based on the ancient culture of Vedic hospitality, originating from India. The foundation of this ancient culture of hospitality was the social etiquette known as "*attithi narayana*", or to respect and cater to an uninvited guest like God. In the interest of reviving this cultural tradition, Food for Life Global members must practically demonstrate equal respect and care for every man, woman and child on earth. The following statement shall be our official policy:

All persons regardless of their birth, culture, color, race, sex or religious affiliation have equal rights to be beneficiaries of the services provided by the organization; namely: food, counseling, accommodation and medical care, etc.

## **STRATEGY:**

In pursuance of the above policy, Food for Life Global operates in a variety of circumstances and offers its service to an unlimited variety of people, through mobile kitchens, emergency relief, home and school free food delivery, budget restaurants, and open-house venues. The organizations strategy and/or policy is based on the following statements by its founder, A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami, Srila Prabhupada:

“Let the whole world come – we can feed them.” & “No one should go hungry.”

This policy must be upheld in all circumstances and for all time.

## **SANTIFIED MEALS**

Food for Life Global strictly follows an ancient Hindu tradition of sanctifying a portion of all cooked meals before serving to the public. Staff members and volunteers are required to uphold and support this policy under all circumstances. The sanctification of meals begins from the point that staff members or volunteers begin physically handling the food ingredients. Under no circumstances is any food ingredients or partially cooked meals to be consumed during the preparation stage or at the completed stage of cooking until an assigned person has performed the sanctification procedure.

In preparing food, staff members and volunteers must try their best to follow these rules

- The kitchen work-area should be as clean as possible. Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food and keep them clean while cooking.
- While preparing food, do not taste it. Good cooks and kitchen assistants smile a lot while cooking and try to infuse the food with positive vibrations.

## **KARMA-FREE FOOD**

A truly conscious person will understand their dependency on the Earth. After all, we come into this world empty handed and we leave the same. Ultimately, therefore, we are never the proprietors of anything but are merely borrowing from the Earth. When food is first sanctified (before we eat it), we acknowledge those blessings and subsequently the food is purified of any negative karma. Hence, the term “*karma-free*” food.

Even in the gathering and preparation of meals, there is a small degree of violence (bad karma) when we cut the plant or inadvertently kill bugs and microbes. If, however, we offer our food to God first, that food becomes pure, *karma-free*, and spiritually nourishing! Hindus call such food “*prasada*,” or the mercy of God.

## **TRAVEL TO DISASTER ZONES**

Food for Life recommends all volunteers research the latest travel advisories provided by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> before embarking any relief work.

## **RISKS FROM FOOD AND DRINK**

The following information is based on information taken from the CDC web site:

Contaminated food and drink are common sources for the introduction of infection into the body. Among the more common infections that travelers can acquire from contaminated food and drink are Escherichia coli infections, shigellosis or bacillary dysentery, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, Norwalk-like viruses, and hepatitis A. Other less common infectious disease risks for travelers include typhoid fever and other salmonellosis, cholera, rotavirus infections, and a variety of protozoan and helminthic parasites (other than those that cause giardiasis and cryptosporidiosis). Many of the infectious diseases transmitted in food and water can also be acquired directly through the fecal-oral route.

### **Food**

To avoid illness, travelers should be advised to select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, the traveler should be advised to avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, meat, fish, unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and to eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been peeled by the traveler personally. Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth and should be thoroughly reheated before serving. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street food vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness.

The incorrect assumption is often made that food and water aboard commercial aircraft are safe. Food and water may be obtained in the country of departure where items may be contaminated as well.

### **Water**

Water that has been adequately chlorinated, by using minimum recommended water treatment standards used in the United States, will afford substantial protection against viral and bacterial waterborne diseases. However, chlorine treatment alone, as used in the routine disinfection of water, might not kill some enteric viruses and the parasitic organisms that cause giardiasis, amebiasis, and cryptosporidiosis. In areas where

chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, travelers should be advised that only the following might be safe to drink:

- Beverages made with boiled water.
- Canned or bottled carbonated beverages, including carbonated bottled water and soft drinks.

Where water might be contaminated, travelers should be advised that ice should also be considered contaminated and should not be used in beverages. If ice has been in contact with containers used for drinking, travelers should be advised to thoroughly clean the containers, preferably with soap and hot water, after the ice has been discarded.

It is safer to drink a beverage directly from the can or bottle than from a questionable container. However, water on the outside of beverage cans or bottles might also be contaminated. Therefore, travelers should be advised to dry wet cans or bottles before they are opened and to wipe clean surfaces with which the mouth will have direct contact. Where water might be contaminated, travelers should be advised to avoid brushing their teeth with tap water.

## **Treatment of Water**

Travelers should be advised of the following methods for treating water to make it safe for drinking and other purposes.

### **Boiling**

Boiling is by far the most reliable method to make water of uncertain purity safe for drinking. Water should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil for 1 minute and allowed to cool to room temperature; ice should not be added. This procedure will kill bacterial and parasitic causes of diarrhea at all altitudes and viruses at low altitudes. To kill viruses at altitudes >2,000 m (6,562 ft), water should be boiled for 3 minutes or chemical disinfection should be used after the water has boiled for 1 minute. Adding a pinch of salt to each quart or pouring the water several times from one clean container to another will improve the taste.

### **Chemical Disinfection**

Chemical disinfection with iodine is an alternative method of water treatment when it is not feasible to boil water. However, this method cannot be relied on to kill *Cryptosporidium* unless the water is allowed to sit for 15 hours before it is drunk. Two well-tested methods for disinfection with iodine are the use of tincture of iodine (Table 4–1) and tetraglycine hydroperiodide tablets (e.g., Globaline, Potable-Aqua, or Coghlan's). These tablets are available from pharmacies and sporting goods stores. The manufacturers' instructions should be followed. If water is cloudy, the number of tablets used should be doubled; if water is extremely cold (<5° C; <41° F), an attempt should be made to warm the water, and the recommended contact time should be increased to

achieve reliable disinfection. Cloudy water should be strained through a clean cloth into a container to remove any sediment or floating matter, and then the water should be boiled or treated with iodine.

<b>Table 4–1. Treatment of water with tincture of iodine</b>		
Tincture of Iodine	Drops* to be added per quart or liter	
	Clear water	Cold or cloudy water†
2%	5	10

\* 1 drop = 0.05 mL. Water must stand for a minimum of 30 minutes before it is safe to use.

Note: tincture of iodine can come from a medicine chest or first-aid kit.

†Very turbid or cold water can require prolonged contact time; if possible, such water should be allowed to stand several hours before use. To ensure that *Cryptosporidium* is killed, water must stand for 15 hours before drinking.

Chlorine, in various forms, can also be used for chemical disinfection. However, its germicidal activity varies greatly with the pH, temperature, and organic content of the water to be purified; therefore, it can produce less consistent levels of disinfection in many types of water. Chemically treated water is intended for short-term use only. If iodine-disinfected water is the only water available, it should be used for only a few weeks.

## Water Filters

Portable filters currently on the market will provide various degrees of protection against microbes. Reverse-osmosis filters provide protection against viruses, bacteria, and protozoa, but they are expensive, are larger than most filters used by backpackers, and the small pores on this type of filter are rapidly plugged by muddy or cloudy water. In addition, the membranes in some filters can be damaged by chlorine in water.

Microstrainer filters with pore sizes in the 0.1- to 0.3- $\mu\text{m}$  range can remove bacteria and protozoa from drinking water, but they do not remove viruses. To kill viruses, travelers using microstrainer filters should be advised to disinfect the water with iodine or chlorine after filtration, as described previously. Filters with iodine-impregnated resins are most effective against bacteria, and the iodine will kill some viruses; however, the contact time with the iodine in the filter is too short to kill the protozoa *Cryptosporidium* and, in cold water, *Giardia*.

Filters that are designed to remove *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* carry one of the four messages below—verbatim—on the package label.

- Reverse osmosis
- Absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller
- Tested and certified by NSF Standard 53 or NSF Standard 58 for cyst removal
- Tested and certified by NSF Standard 53 or NSF Standard 58 for cyst reduction

Filters may not be designed to remove crypto if they are labeled only with these words:

- Nominal pore size of <1 micron
- One micron filter
- Effective against Giardia
- Effective against parasites
- Carbon filter
- Water purifier
- EPA approved (Caution: EPA does not approve or test filters.)
- EPA registered (Caution: EPA does not register filters for crypto removal)
- Activated carbon
- Removes chlorine
- Ultraviolet light
- Pentiodide resins
- Water softener
- Filters collect organisms from water. Anyone changing cartridges should wear gloves and wash hands afterwards. Filters may not remove crypto as well as boiling does because even good brands of filters may sometimes have manufacturing flaws that allow small numbers of organisms to pass through the filter. In addition, poor filter maintenance or failure to replace filter cartridges as recommended by the manufacturer can cause a filter to fail.

A travelers' guide to buying water filters for preventing cryptosporidiosis and giardiasis can be found at URL:

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cryptosporidiosis/factsht\\_crypto\\_prevent\\_water.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cryptosporidiosis/factsht_crypto_prevent_water.htm) .

These two organisms are either highly (cryptosporidium) or moderately (Giardia) resistant to chlorine; so conventional halogen disinfection may be ineffective. Boiling water or filtration can be used as an alternative to disinfection. Many filters that remove parasites may not be able to kill or remove smaller organisms.

Proper selection, operation, care, and maintenance of water filters are essential to producing safe water. The manufacturers' instructions should be followed. NSF International, an independent testing company, tests and certifies water filters for their ability to remove protozoa, but not for their ability to remove bacteria or viruses. Few published scientific reports have evaluated the efficacy of specific brands or models of filters against bacteria and viruses in water. Until such information becomes available, CDC cannot identify which specific brands or models of filters are most likely to remove bacteria and viruses. To find out if a particular filter is certified to remove cryptosporidia, contact NSF International by calling 1-877-867-3435; by fax to 313-769-0109; or by writing to 789 North Dixboro Road, P.O. Box 130140, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48113-0140; or online at <http://www.NSF.org/certified/DWTU/> . Under “Reduction claims for drinking water treatment units—health effects,” check the box in front of the words “Cyst Reduction.”

As a last resort, if no source of safe drinking water is available or can be obtained, tap water that is uncomfortably hot to touch might be safer than cold tap water; however, proper disinfection, filtering, or boiling is still advised.

(Source: CDC, — Dennis Juranek, Steve Luby, James Maguire, Eric Mintz)

### **Resources:**

[Health Information for Travelers](#) – Guidance for travelers from CDC on what diseases they need to be prepared for while visiting foreign countries.

## **INSURANCE**

Verify your insurance coverage. What will you do if, despite your best precautions, you become sick or injured abroad? Not all U.S. insurance companies will cover you while you are traveling overseas. Many limit the amount of coverage or will not cover you while you are engaged in adventure travel (whitewater rafting, skydiving, etc.). Emergency evacuation or long-term hospital stays can cost thousands of dollars. Check with your insurance company to verify coverage and purchase additional insurance coverage, if necessary. There are several insurance companies that specialize in overseas travel insurance and many permit you to buy coverage for as short as a month.

### **Visit your doctor**

You may be required to have vaccinations in order to obtain a visa to certain countries. While you are visiting your doctor, it is a good idea to have a complete physical, particularly if you are planning to do a lot of outdoor activities or have had health problems in the past. You should request refills of any prescription medicine you are taking—enough to last your entire trip. Make sure your medications are well labeled and in their original containers, to avoid any problems with customs officials. If you are taking any medication containing narcotics, you should also bring a doctor's note (translated, if necessary) attesting to your need to take the medication. If you have any particular medical problems (allergies, diabetes, etc.), you may want to get a medical identification bracelet that communicates your medical situation.

### **Visit your dentist**

The last thing you want to have to deal with is a toothache or impacted wisdom teeth abroad. Have any dental work you may need done before you go.

### **Inform yourself of local medical facilities**

In addition to knowing what vaccines are required and how to keep healthy abroad, it is also important to know what to do and where to go if you should get sick abroad. The local U.S. Consular Office can usually recommend local English-speaking doctors, so

take those numbers with you. You may also want to take with you a list of travel clinics, English-speaking doctors and know the emergency medical numbers, if they exist, in your destination country. Several international travel health organizations exist, and you can locate clinics on their web site before you go. Both the International Society of Travel Medicine and the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene provide a list of English-speaking doctors and travel clinics worldwide on their web sites. Highway to Health (<http://www.highwaytohealth.com>) also lists emergency numbers, local hospitals and pharmacies on its web site.

### **Bring a medical kit**

A basic medical kit containing bandages, aspirin, antiseptic cleaner, insect repellent, anti-diarrhea medicine, malaria tablets (if necessary) may be useful when traveling off the beaten path.

### **SAFETY ISSUES**

Know the political situation in your destination country. If you are a US citizen, your first stop on the Internet should be to the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs (<http://travel.state.gov>), the government division responsible for assisting Americans abroad. The U.S. State Department (and its equivalents in other countries) releases "Consular Information Sheets" on every country in the world. These sheets describe the tourist visa requirements, quality of medical facilities, political situation, embassy locations and other information valuable for travelers. The State Department also issues "Travel Warnings" for political problems, national disasters or other activity that may affect Americans in particular areas.

### **Know the public transportation quality of your destination**

The number one cause of American deaths and serious injuries abroad is transportation accidents. The Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), founded by the parents of a student killed in a car accident in Turkey in 1995, provides free reports on road conditions worldwide and recommendations on safe car rental and public transportation travel on their web site (<http://www.asirt.org>). These reports are gathered from a variety of sources: the United Nations, International Road Federation, newspapers and locals. They contain general tips on travel safety, as well as specific information on road conditions, traffic regulations, and English translations of road signs, bus and taxi company accident records and a list of recent major accidents in the country.

### **Know who to call and where to go in case of emergency**

Should there be an accident or health emergency abroad, the U.S. State Department has several emergency numbers to call. Again, if you are going to be in one location for an extended period of time, you should register with the local consular office so the government can locate and assist you in case of emergency.

Use common travel sense. The same rules apply for overseas travel as they do for domestic:

- Try to blend in. Dress conservatively and as much like the locals as appropriate. Travel in small groups and speak the local language as much as possible.
- Let people know where you are going to be. Leave your travel itinerary with friends or family, and check in with the local American embassy if you are going to be in one location for a week or longer.
- Take care of your belongings. Leave anything valuable at home! Do not carry or display large amounts of cash, and carry your money, passport and tickets in a neck or waist pouch under your clothes. The vast majority of travelers encounter few, if any, problems abroad. But don't let yourself be the exception. The little time you spend researching your destination now could not only save you time and trouble abroad—it could save your life.

## **Resources**

[B-Prepared.com](#) – This organization offers a comprehensive selection of Emergency Supplies, Survival Kits, 1st Aid Kits, Search and Rescue Packs, Emergency Food & Water, and more. These products can be stored away until they're needed. Hopefully NEVER!!

## **SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR HUMANITARIAN WORKERS**

The following is based on information obtained from CDC

There are numerous health risks posed by natural disasters. Humanitarian workers traveling to the affected countries need to be aware of these risks. Like all travelers, humanitarian workers should visit a travel medicine clinic prior to departure to ensure that they receive all recommended vaccinations and anti-malarial medications, etc. Health information and advice for travelers to affected regions have been posted on CDC's Travelers Health website

([http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/tsunami/guidance\\_travelers\\_tsunami.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/tsunami/guidance_travelers_tsunami.htm) ).

Because of their potential exposures, humanitarian workers are at greater risk than are tourists for developing illness and injuries. In addition, they should be aware of potential hazards such as displaced land mines in areas of prior conflict and security measures that may be imposed such as, curfews to prevent looting. Those who provide assistance should also pay attention to their mental health needs before, during, and after their time in the field. Moreover, because humanitarian workers' services are desperately needed, it is essential those workers remain healthy during their trip. This notice provides advice specific to the needs of humanitarian workers.

Humanitarian workers should plan for travel as if there will be no services, including no electricity, safe water, or food distribution systems, in the country they are visiting. They

should try to pack to be as self-sufficient as possible and bring only those items necessary for their trip. Moreover, because of space limitations on conveyances to relief sites, only one bag or item per person may be allowed.

Humanitarian workers should learn as much as possible about the areas that they will be entering. State Department warnings should be reviewed and security restrictions adhered to. Providing humanitarian assistance is often a physically and mentally challenging task and only those in good physical condition should embark on these efforts.

In addition to packing a basic travel health kit, humanitarian workers should bring the following items:

### **Food and water**

- Bottled water or water filters/purification system/water purification tablets
- Non-perishable food items

### **Toiletries**

- Toilet paper in a zip lock bag
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Sunblock (spf 15 or higher)
- Insect repellent containing DEET
- Menstrual supplies
- Extra pair of prescription glasses, copy of prescription
- Eyeglasses repair kit
- Contact lenses, lens cleaner, and eye glasses protective case
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Skin moisturizer
- Soap, shampoo
- Lip balm
- Razor, extra blades\*
- Scissors\*
- Nail clippers/tweezers\*
- Q-tips, cotton swabs
- Sewing kit
- Laundry detergent
- Small clothes line/pins

### **Clothing**

- Comfortable, light weight clothing
- Long pants
- Long sleeved shirts
- Hat
- Boots

- Shower shoes
- Rain gear
- Bandana/handkerchief
- Towel (highly absorbent, travel towels if possible)
- Gloves
- Leather gloves if physical labor will be performed; rubber gloves if handling blood or body fluids

### **Activities of daily living**

- Sunglasses
- Safety goggles
- Electricity converters
- Waterproof watch
- Flashlight
- Spare batteries
- Knife, such as a Swiss Army Knife or Leatherman\*

### **Security**

- Money belt
- Cash
- Cell phone (with charger)
- Candles, matches, lighter in a ziplock bag
- Ziplock bags
- Extra passport style photos
- Photocopy of all important documents (bring copies and leave copies with employer and next of kin):

Next of kin contact, first page of passport, driver's license, travelers checks, immunization schedule, birth certificate, credit cards, diplomas/medical licenses, emergency telephone numbers, blood type, social security number, travel tickets.

- An item of comfort (i.e., family photo, spiritual or religious material)

### **Shelter/site**

- Mosquito bed net treated with permethrin

### **Information on country**

- Maps
- General information (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>)

\*packed in checked baggage, may be confiscated if in carry-on on commercial airliner

The following safety precautions should be taken prior to beginning work in the affected country:

- Never travel alone (utilize the “buddy” system)
- Have a means of communication such as a cell phone, satellite phone, or walkie-talkie, that is suitable for your environment
- Have a map and compass; plan your journey in advance
- Ensure personnel at base know where you are going
- Bring a flashlight and extra batteries
- Have emergency food and water (several liters per day per person)
- Have a first aid kit
- Have an emergency plan in the event of a mishap

On return from one of the affected areas, humanitarian workers who are unwell or who have become injured for any reason should receive a medical evaluation. This should include psychological support and counseling as necessary. Returning humanitarian workers should seek health care in the event of fever, rash, respiratory illness or any other unusual symptoms.

CDC is monitoring the situation closely. We recommend that humanitarian workers traveling to these regions check the Travelers Health webpage (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>) and the U.S. Department of State web site. Additional information regarding health risks after natural disasters can be found at CDC’s webpage (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov>). Additional information about the humanitarian relief work in response to the tsunami can be found at <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>.