

people and places policy review 2008

Responsible Travel Policy

people and places was established to recruit and place volunteers in local projects run by local people for the benefit of their communities and their environment.

people and places is not run for the benefit of shareholders. All profits after operating expenses are covenanted for charitable purposes and used to serve the needs of the communities with whom we work.

people and places has no political or religious affiliations.

Our core values are mutual respect, service, partnership, transparency and sustainability

We believe that people who are willing and able to contribute their expertise, skills and time for the benefit of others, should be provided with quality volunteering opportunities and be well supported in their volunteering.

Individual projects are proposed by local management teams and personally assessed by *people and places* before we proceed to recruit and place volunteers. The Project Management Teams are local people who are part of their local community; they ensure that the volunteering experience is good for the community and/or their environment, as well as for the volunteers for whom they provide a high level of care. Where the projects may involve working with children or vulnerable adults, we screen volunteers through the Disclosure Service of the UK Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and equivalent enquiries for volunteers who are nationals of other countries.

people and places is overseen by an advisory committee that includes professionals and experts in the fields of education, health care, social work, wildlife and the environment.

Social Responsibility

- Our starting point for every one of the projects is the local community – the needs of the community and the local project are paramount. Only with a comprehensive understanding of the community and the project will *people and places* match volunteers to placements.
- We exercise due diligence on each project and management team with whom we work before we offer placements for volunteers. We also exercise due diligence in the matching of people and places – each volunteer is individually matched to each individual project. *people and places* is fully registered with the Disclosure Service of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). As a fully registered body with the CRB, we ensure that enhanced screening will take place for each volunteer working on projects where they may be working with children and vulnerable adults.
- The sustainability of your volunteer input is vital. Each project is programme-driven to ensure its sustainability and avoid dependency. On *people and places* projects volunteer placements do not reduce, inhibit or jeopardise local employment.
- *people and places* volunteers work alongside local employees, **not** instead of them.
- Each volunteer is comprehensively prepared for the new cultural experience. We ensure that appropriate reading matter is recommended, there is a full pre-placement briefing, and in-situ orientation briefing regarding basic language, local customs etc.
- *people and places* is committed to equal opportunities, and strives to locate appropriate experiences for less physically able volunteers. **Economic Responsibility**
- The fee for your volunteering holiday is paid directly to the Project Management Team in the country where you are volunteering. *people and places* is paid a fee by the project for which we provide our recruitment and placement service.

- We practice transparency in all our working practises. Each project is costed individually and is published with a full explanation of how your money is spent and distributed within the local community.
- Each volunteer makes a donation to the project to ensure that their volunteering does not require a local subsidy for labour, materials etc. – details of these donations and what the money will be spent on are provided separately for each volunteering experience.
- We ensure that as high a percentage as possible of all volunteer spend benefits the local community and remains within that community. We recommend locally owned accommodation, and ensure that wherever possible all board, food, transport, supplies etc. are sourced, bought and paid for locally.

Environmental Responsibility

- In our office we reduce, reuse and recycle paper. We use recycled paper and keep print to a minimum. We recycle our ink cartridges through the [Woodland Trust](#) .
- We encourage the independent project management teams with whom we work to adopt similar environmental policies. However, local voluntary initiatives may sometimes find it difficult to adopt these practises.
- We are developing a series of environmental and alternative technology projects.
- We encourage volunteers to offset the carbon emissions from their flights through [Friends of Conservation](#) or the [Woodland Trust](#)

Our Responsibility to the projects

- We provide selected and, where necessary, screened volunteers with the appropriate skills to assist projects.
- We work closely with local Project Management Teams to meet their needs for a sustainable flow of volunteers in maintaining and developing their projects.
- We provide briefing in the UK which complements the in-country briefing provided by the Project Management Teams, and we enable returned volunteers to network together and to be in contact with volunteers going out to the same projects.

Our Responsibility to volunteers

- We work to ensure that your volunteering experience is as meaningful and worthwhile as possible, both for you and for the project on which you work.
- Each volunteer has full 24-hour emergency contact details and support from their Project Management Team, backed up by UK support from **people and places**.
- We provide high quality volunteering experiences and take your feedback seriously. This helps us in enhancing the experience for future volunteers and in maximising the positive impact of your contribution.
- We provide opportunities for volunteers to network with each other and produce a quarterly electronic newsletter to assist this process.

We are aware that there is a 'radical' critique of volunteering as neo-colonialism. Sometimes this critique goes beyond name calling. We are happy to debate our practise - only through critical reflection and debate can we further develop and refine our approach.

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OVERVIEW

We have devised a unique volunteering model, demonstrating that truly responsible, sustainable and accountable volunteering is both viable and to the mutual advantage of communities and volunteers.

The success of our model depends on our relationship with our local partners, and requires that all stages of the process, from project inception to volunteer placements, involve listening to each other, absorbing information and acting upon it. We have first hand knowledge of the projects by our own visits, as well as through our partners, who are there in the destinations year in year out – they liaise regularly with the projects and communities, listening to their needs. Information is shared with us, so that we're fully in the picture and can share information with volunteers. The information which comes from volunteers is also listened to – their own skills and experience must be understood in order to maximise their input during their placements – so we share information from and about them with our local partners, who in turn discuss individual volunteer placements with the community projects.

This model and its success depends on full and open discussion at all stages – listen, absorb, interpret, act – in this way, volunteering is beneficial, both to the communities and the volunteers. During 2008 *people and places* started working with 2 new local partners and started to develop partnerships with 2 more – demonstrating that the model is transferrable.

In 2008 *people and places* placed 112 volunteers - less than 20% of the income generated has remained in the UK with *people and places*. See Table 1 below. Over the two years to the end of 2008 *people and places* volunteers have contributed at least £49,000 to the projects which we work with. This £49,000 is the mandatory project donations which all volunteers pay, ensuring that they are in no way a burden on the communities and projects where they work. In practise, donations to the projects are double this amount – the balance being raised by volunteers when they return.

people and places has been instrumental in starting the charity Travel Philanthropy(Travel Pledge) and all profits are covenanted to Travel Pledge and all UK volunteers donations are now channelled through Travel Pledge which will facilitate further transparency and accountability and also give us a far clearer picture of post placement donations.

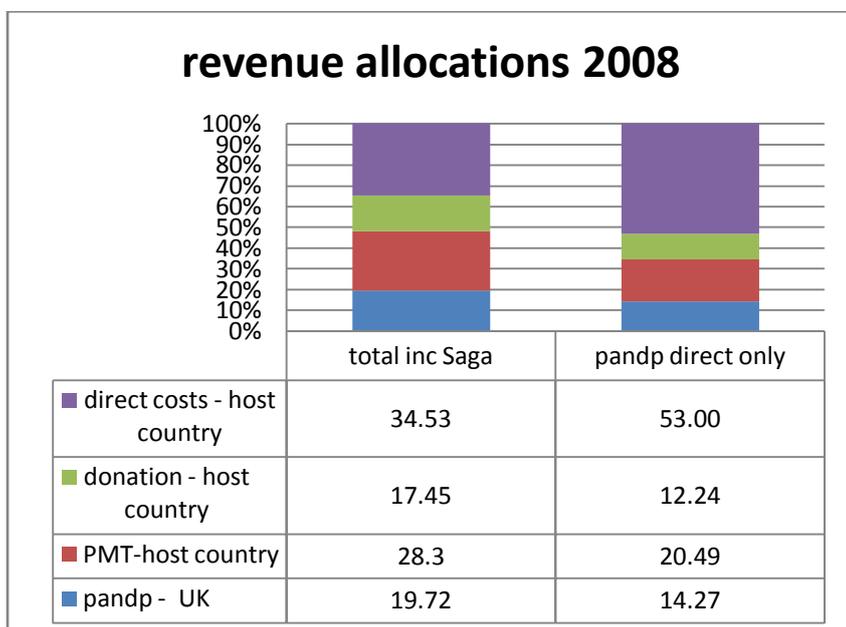


Table 1 Revenue allocations 2008 (NB the PMT fee, donation and pandp p fees are exactly the same whether a Saga or a people and places volunteer – the major difference is that Saga volunteers pay saga for accommodation and these monies are not managed by people and places or our local partners)

Social responsibility

1. We do not work directly with projects – we work with local partners in partnership. *Each local partner has undergone a due diligence process (including risk analyses) and they have all signed an agreement committing them and people and places to mutual core values*¹.
2. *We work closely with the projects through the local partners to identify their objectives and the skills needed to help them achieve their objectives. We send full details of the volunteer to the local partner who in turn shares them with the project and only with the local partner's and project's consent are volunteers matched and placed on the project. The projects have the final say over which volunteers to accept and decline*².

The involvement of the project and community leaders has become even more informed as capacity has built – for example there is clear evidence that the schools in Port Elizabeth with whom we have been working with for 3 years now have a real understanding of the skills transfer possible with volunteers.

For example - the school principals and local teachers observed the remedial reading techniques being practised and demonstrated by volunteers. With class sizes often reaching over 60 - and no teaching assistants – if a child falls behind there is little chance for them to pick up and often the slowest child sets the pace for the rest of the class. The principals and teachers requested that the volunteer programme formalise this remedial teaching work particularly in light of a Department of Education report in 2007 stating that literacy rates in South African Townships are some of the lowest in the world. The volunteers now work with small groups of children some of the time – concentrating on raising their skills and in the classroom demonstrating the techniques to the teachers. The teachers have reported back that reading levels in the children are raised significantly.

3. *We screen ALL volunteers without exception*³ and we use the highest level possible e.g. Enhanced CRB Screening in the UK. *We ensure that references are genuine*⁴ – we make direct contact with every reference and request that the reference is given for the specific project to which the volunteer is being matched. *We require medical checks for all volunteers from a qualified doctor*⁵ confirming that volunteers are fit and able to do the work required of them. *We require that all volunteers have appropriate insurance*⁶ – many are unaware that most travel insurance policies exclude work either paid or unpaid.
4. *Matching skills to need is part of a four-way conversation between all the stakeholders - the community, the local partner the volunteer and our placement director at people and places*⁷. We maintain a high level of knowledge about each of our ongoing projects.

¹ The risk analyses for the Nepalese projects written by Gill Gardiner, Chief Executive of Building Blocks Solutions, in February 2007, the partnership guidelines written by Sallie Grayson in 2006 and last update in January 2009, and a signed copy of the agreement between a local partner (Voluntours, South Africa) and PnP was witnessed by the auditor.

² Email trail followed, of 2 randomly selected volunteers, from sending their life story to PnP, the to and fro between the volunteer and PnP regarding project placement, and the information being sent to the local partners. Informed consents from the local partners were not seen and the auditor was informed that these are not often received. Instead the local partners will send the volunteer's placement outline, thus consent can be assumed.

³ Enhanced CRB Screenings of a random selection of 4 volunteers, chosen by the auditor, were viewed under the supervision of Kate Stefanko who has the relevant clearance required to handle these forms.

⁴ References, both paper and electronic versions were viewed for a selection of 4 volunteers chosen at random by the auditor.

⁵ Kate Stefanko demonstrated the medical check process using an example volunteer chosen by the auditor. The auditor witnessed a hard copy of the volunteer's medical certificate signed by their doctor.

⁶ Viewed VolunteerInsure (administered by Travel Insurance Facilities plc) - <http://www.secure-travelinsurance.co.uk/b2c/index.aspx?id=6-4E19952BE479C0A5AE9D1274CBC396EF>. Kate Stefanko demonstrated the process of requesting a valid insurance policy using an example volunteer chosen by the auditor.

⁷ See footnote 2.

5. Sustainability comprises an important part of our core values. The same 'triple bottom line' – social, economic, environmental – that is applied to responsibility, can be (and we believe should be) applied to sustainability. Sustainable development is active, well run, inclusive, safe and fair for everyone now and in the future. Our local partners share this fundamental and essential understanding.

We apply a few simple rules:

The needs of the community, as identified by that community, form the basis of a project. A project is 'fine-tuned' by the local community and project management team together.

- Volunteers need to share their skills & expertise. They work with and alongside local people, not instead of them.
- There needs to be ongoing volunteer input. Every volunteer achieves something, and ensuing inputs take that into account. Capacity building must be done in such a way that each volunteer builds on the last volunteer - we need to build capacity in order to build capacity.

people and places and our local partners do not work with new projects until there is a sustainable input on all current projects. For example placements in 2008 and demand for 2009 shows that Samata school in Nepal will have at least 3 volunteers each and every month of each term (pupils number some 2000 with 38 teaching staff). This is the optimum number for the school to have at any one time – so we commenced matching volunteers to a second school mid 2009.

Bokamoso Bike project:

<http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=179>

The local rural community is widespread, but is centred on the village of Mapoch. The village elders, in discussion with our local partners, recognised the need for affordable and accessible transport, and bicycles proved to be the solution.

The skills and experience of a sequence of volunteers developed the project, involving previously unemployed and underemployed young men as identified by the elders. The work began with a volunteer who is a keen cyclist and very capable bike mechanic; he worked with the young men teaching basic cycle maintenance and repair; then cycle trailers were developed for carrying goods; further models were developed; a UK cycle charity was identified which could supply second-hand bikes and spare parts; funding and shipment was sourced and provided by volunteers after their placements; a basic cycle track was built; bike safety courses were developed for the children.

Developments have included increased employment and earning capacity, increase in local trading capacity, affordable transport for many and associated self-sufficiency.

The next development to be identified by the elders is for local tourism development with bicycle tours – this will need marketing skills from volunteers, so we are now identifying these skills among volunteer applicants.

School library:

<http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=123>

Many South African township schools receive well-meant donations of old books – but they frequently remain inaccessible and unused because local educators lack the skills to identify and utilise these potential resources and certainly do not have the courage to throw away the ones that are of no use at all !. The school principal recognised the potential for help from volunteers and in discussion with our local partner, identified volunteers' skills in running a school library in the UK.

Placements were thus designed for a sequence of volunteers in this one school to develop a new school library, working with local educators as identified by the school principal, and with senior learners as identified by their teachers.

The work began with sorting and assessing the value of previously donated books; the physical environment needed to be developed too, and local carpenters built shelving; volunteer donations were used to purchase a few tables and chairs; senior pupils learned about organising the books and developing a lending system; 'gaps' in the library's books were identified and information shared with future volunteers; there is ongoing development of this one school library.

The model of developing a school library has now being rolled out to 2 schools in the area, working with other volunteers and members of the schools' communities – staff and senior pupils. The same model has been applied to one school in Nepal.

Another key to sustainability is that **no people and places volunteer replaces local employment**. All volunteers are briefed that they must not allow projects to take the often tempting course of allowing a local teacher to leave the classroom because a volunteer is present – this now occurs with less frequency as the project communities have grown to trust the volunteer programme and understand the benefit of working alongside volunteers.

The volunteer programme now has a sustainable flow of volunteers ensuring that numbers are planned some 6 months in advance to the majority of projects especially those that we have been matching volunteers for more than 12 months.

6. The briefing of volunteers is one key aspect of the success of the programme. There is now a large library of information for the projects – provided by the local partners, **people and places** and the projects - but also of key importance are the reports and recommendations of previous volunteers – teachers brief teachers, health professionals brief health professionals, and so on. It is central to our model that volunteers are actively in touch with each before and after their volunteering, ensuring sustainability and development.

All volunteers are put in touch with previous volunteers⁸ early in the matching process – and before any money has changed hands. Once volunteers have been matched to a project they are put in touch with their co-volunteers⁹.

*During their placement all volunteers meet at least once a week with the local partner and representatives from the project¹⁰. This meeting serves as a forum for volunteers and projects to iron out any issues and also plan for the use of their project donation. These weekly meetings are minuted to **people and places**. Further communication with local partners is facilitated through the provision of a local SIM card/local mobile phone¹¹ thus ensuring volunteers do not need to wait for weekly meetings to raise issues of concern.*

All returned volunteers receive news and updates about the project since their placements through newsletters(edited by previous volunteers)
[http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/NEWSLETTER_SUMMER_09\(2\).pdf](http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/NEWSLETTER_SUMMER_09(2).pdf)
and volunteer reports.

7. Post placement support

Many volunteers need reassurance when they return. Their experience has been profound – they want to talk about it with people who understand, they may want simply to know that the work is being continued, they may wish to continue supporting the project – financially or through remote information sharing. They may simply need to keep in touch – a context within which to share their experiences. **people and places debriefs volunteers in writing and by phone – and on occasion face to face and facilitates support through socials, newsletters and volunteer networking¹².**

The following are some examples of volunteer recognition of **people and places** support and communication after their placement:

“Thanks so much for sending the pictures. It really warms my heart to see that the bicycles are making a difference in Mapoch. I hope that it can grow with time to have even a greater impact on the community. Our family feels a strong connection with the friends that we made there. Your travel service is really wonderful for connecting people from all over the world!”

⁸ Email correspondences between the current and previous volunteers were witnessed for a random selection of volunteers chosen by the auditor. Kate Stefanko facilitates the exchange and asks to be copied in to all emails therefore proof of can be seen.

⁹ Emails sent by Kate Stefanko to a random selection of volunteers chosen by the auditor were witnessed, including introductions to the co-volunteers.

¹⁰ The auditor has observed these weekly meetings taking place with the local partners, socialtours.com in Nepal over a period of 6 months. The auditor has also seen evidence, through volunteer reports, mentioning weekly briefings in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and Bali, Indonesia.

¹¹ The auditor has observed the existence of these mobile phones with the local partners, socialtours.com in Nepal. The auditor has also seen evidence, through volunteer reports, mentioning local mobile phone, in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

¹² The auditor has observed PnP social networks held in Faversham, Kent and has received the email newsletter edited by Nigel Pegler, a previous volunteer.

“Thanks for sending those reports it is still so good to hear from other volunteers experiences, keeps me feeling up-to-date.”

“Thank you so much for your report and photos, and for those from more recent volunteers. I thoroughly enjoyed reading them. I think constantly about those children so it was wonderful to have news of them. Please do continue to send news from Naxal; it has made me so happy.”

“Thanks so much for taking the time to keep me updated – it is really appreciated... your updates make me feel that I am still part of the team”

“And in terms of thank you... we’ve never felt so appreciated and “over-thanked” in our lives!! We are just 3 individuals who wanted to be of help in some small way. We were certainly made to feel that our contribution was very large, which at times was overwhelming emotionally.”

8. *Volunteer profile and equal opportunities*¹³.

- 75% are women.
- Average age is 54 - Oldest 79, youngest 15 (accompanied by mother and father).
- Citizenship 70% UK, 16% USA and Canada, 10% Australian, and the remaining 4% is represented by other European countries.
- Volunteers representing at least 6 faiths have been placed.
- All volunteers have medical authorisation to do the work they are committed to. Asthma, deafness, heart condition and mobility issues have to date been accommodated and no volunteer has been seriously ill or injured on a project

Our web based administration system facilitates the employment of home workers such as single mothers (our one temporary member of staff to date was a single mother).

Economic Responsibility

9. *people and places* has been instrumental in starting travel philanthropy¹⁴ (*Travel Pledge*) (Registered Charity Number: 112270) and all profits are covenanted to *Travel Pledge*¹⁵ and all UK volunteers donations are now channelled through *Travel Pledge*¹⁶. <http://travelpledge.org/support/people-and-places/>

All volunteer donations – either those identified as part of the placement cost or additional donations made by volunteers are channelled through *Travel Pledge* – this serves as further transparency and extra due diligence and also donations gain gift aid.

10. *people and places* exercises demonstrable transparency in economic matters – all projects are individually costed. Each is broken down to show what funds are spent where – *people and places* do not invoice or accept monies other than their placement fee¹⁷ (and only invoice direct to the volunteer when the local partner and the volunteer have agreed this process – usually to avoid high international bank charges for local partners).

¹³ Much of this detail is considered confidential therefore not auditable. The auditor witnessed a cross-section of volunteers from different countries, evidence of the youngest and oldest volunteers, and the previous temporary workers status. This was all observed via PnP’s content management system.

¹⁴ The auditor witnessed a letter written by Sallie Grayson, co-founder and chair of trustees, to Harold Goodwin detailing bank account details for the charity *Travel Philanthropy* dated September 2007.

¹⁵ The shareholder’s agreement between Sallie Grayson, Kate Stefanko and Harold Goodwin was witnessed stating all profits are covenanted to the charity *Travel Philanthropy*.

¹⁶ The auditor witnesses a placement donation statement for an example volunteer where the project donation was funnelled through the charity *Travel Philanthropy*. The auditor witnessed the volunteer being emailed the bank details for *Travel Philanthropy* to verified this. <http://travelpledge.org/support/people-and-places/> also supports this statement.

¹⁷ The financial breakdowns of 3 randomly selected volunteers (1 PnP and 2 SAGA) by the auditor were reviewed. Separate invoices for PnP and the local partners were witnessed.

11. *Each volunteer is actively involved in the decision as to what their donation will be spent on*¹⁸ – except with the prior knowledge of the volunteer and as advertised on the website e.g. wildlife projects. Thus volunteers become auditors. Donations and the use thereof are reported to *people and places* at least 3 times a year. These monies are held in a separate bank account by the local partner.
12. No volunteers stay in internationally owned accommodation. *44% of people and places direct volunteers stayed in homestays or community guesthouses*¹⁹. The volunteer programme has enabled new homestays to open in South Africa and in Nepal. To our knowledge at least 4 ½ full-time employees are paid in country because of the volunteer programmes. However, we have no influence over the purchasing policy of our corporate partners' hotels – although they are locally owned.

Environmental Responsibility

13. *We have no printed brochures*²⁰ – only a printed A4 fold over leaflet to use at shows printed on recycled or sustainable source we have made this available on line <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/userfiles/P&PLeafletEMailA4.pdf> - *we use recycled ink cartridges*²¹ and we recycle those through the Woodland Trust and National Children's Homes.
14. All volunteer and project files are kept on our web based admin system.
 - a. We only print those items we must have in paper e.g. government info CRB etc
 - b. We bank on line and do our company returns on line
 - c. We only send out printed material to non-internet users less than 5% of total number of volunteers...probably 50 sheets of paper to each of those non-internet using volunteers. We do not send out paper invoices except to the 5% - example.
15. Office energy consumption is low. *people and places* is run from a small room in a private home – the web based admin system facilitates home workers when needed so there will be no need for larger space for the foreseeable future – there is no air-conditioning. We open the window! All light bulbs are low energy.
16. *We work to recruit volunteers for environmentally friendly programmes*²² – example sustainable tourism and gardening programmes in The Gambia <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=192> and South Africa <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=179> and Marine Conservation in Indonesia <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=155>

Campaigning

17. *people and places campaigns for responsible volunteering the placement director writes articles and the site contains detailed advice and independent advice sources for volunteers*²³.

¹⁸ The auditor has observed this process over a period of time with the local partners in Nepal, socialtours.com. This is also audited by the volunteers as stated in the text.

¹⁹ The auditor witnessed 4 separate volunteer reports that included reference to their accommodation being homestays.

²⁰ The auditor observed no brochures, nor methods of ordering brochures whilst visiting the premises that PnP operate from.

²¹ The auditor observed recycled ink cartridges and recycled paper from a sustainable source whilst visiting the premises that PnP operate from.

²² The auditor has spoken firsthand to volunteers who have volunteered on the environmental programmes listed.

²³ The auditor witnessed 2 articles written by Sallie Grayson. 'Smoke and Mirrors and Bullied Local Communities', March 2009 written for the Tourism Society - <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.com/FeedbackView.aspx?id=124> and 'Sustainable Travel', September 2007 written for TravelMole - <http://www.travelmole.com/stories/1121998.php>.

All personal information used to audit the company is returned after the publication of the report and is not held by myself.

The data marked as audited (in blue in the report) has been checked by me and based on the records provided by the company I confirm that I believe this data to accurately report what the company has achieved.

Legal responsibility and liability resides with the company making the declaration and if their claims have formed part of their contract with any consumer they may be liable for mis-selling.

Jenefer Bobbin
Responsible Tourism Reporting Auditor