

# IRFF Participant Guidelines

(You must review and agree to these guidelines before volunteering for IRFF.)

(We recommend [printing this page](#) for your reference.)

## **The basic nature of IRFF**

The International Relief Friendship Foundation, Inc. (IRFF) is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt relief and humanitarian development organization dedicated to the purpose of relieving poverty, suffering and disease and providing a long-term sustainable development to those who are in need. The foundation provides financial and other humanitarian aid to the poor, aged, disabled or otherwise unfortunate persons of the world, and to charitable associations or institution which further world peace.

Our basic code of ethics is similar to the concept of the sustainable development provided by the UN:

“...the sustainable development is in fact an agenda for all of us. It is about **the way we live our lives, the way we respect the lives of others**- - far and near, present and future - - and **our attitude to the world around us**. Sustainable development **requires a holistic approach.**”

“Decade of Education of Sustainable Development, UN 2005-2014”

## IRFF's Code of ethics:

1. **Take responsibility for one's own life;** recognize and respect own spirituality and conscious and live a responsible life accordingly.
2. **Respect every human being's** fundamental responsibility, dignity, and rights.
3. **Respect all creation and our environment;** especially never misuse money which represents all creation.
4. **Become a good example** of creating a true and responsible family that can serve its own community, and beyond.

We work with people from all different backgrounds; such as nationality, race, religion, and culture. So, automatically, we encourage all participants to embrace all those differences as well as respect our Code of ethics.

## **Basic and important attitude**

For many years, we have partnered with other NGOs, such as the Religious Youth Service and other local organizations which may have a religious nature. Therefore, it is also common for our project to hold interfaith prayer services some time, such that we all join together in the connection to the Divine as an expression of our commitment to religious harmony and understanding; and we may attain some religious service of local groups for demonstrating our respect to the local people and their traditions.

We are volunteer workers and students of true love; practicing the spirit of living for the sake of others, rather than as mere tourists. Therefore, behavior acceptable for tourists may not be acceptable for us. An important aspect of the learning intended by the IRFF is the development of sensitivity to and respect for all human beings and their needs in sustainable lifestyles.

---

## **ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES COMMITMENT**

In order for the project to fulfill its commitment to the local communities, and for you to gain the most from the program, you are expected to participate in the regular work schedule (barring health problems), as well as the scheduled cultural events. You should also be prepared to help in the cleaning of the living space. People who do not actively participate in all aspects of the program will be asked to withdraw from the project. We are coming together not only to work but to participate in an interracial, international, and inter-religious community under the spirit of relief and humanitarian development, and all these activities help build and enrich us as a community.

The project by its nature involves travel -- to and from work sites and other locations.

Transportation will be provided. However, it is essential that you get to the vehicles before the time scheduled for their departure, since they will leave at that time even if some volunteers have not arrived. We will be working with local people, so we must maintain a professional standard in our work schedule, even though we are only "volunteers."

## **SCHEDULE**

Upon arrival, the entire group will remain together for Orientation. After the Orientation period, we may divide into site groups for service work depending on the size and kind of project we will be involved in. Then during the closing, we will again come together as an entire group for a reflection/retreat before our departures.

After the Orientation, our entire group will divide into groups. For multi-site projects, the site groups usually function autonomously with their own structure and accommodations.

Participants at each site will work in one community with a specific work project designed for the benefit of that particular community. IRFF does not impose project ideas on the selected communities, but responds to their requests.

---

## **GROUP LEADER(S)**

We will select group leader(s). He or she will try to help you have a fulfilling experience as best they can. The group leader(s) is (are) also responsible for job coordination. Please get to know your group leader well and freely communicate problems to him or her. Remember the group leader(s) is (are) also a participant(s) who needs your support and friendship.

Regularly, we will try to have opportunities to meet together as a group. These meetings will provide the chance to share experiences and inspirations, discuss lectures and related topics, and deal with any problems or practical concerns.

---

## **FRIENDSHIPS**

The participants of IRFF are drawn from a diversity of backgrounds. As roommates, group participants and site co-workers, we will have a unique opportunity to learn how to relate to individuals whose perspectives are very different from our own.

One of our purposes is to promote friendships among group members and site participants as well as local people we will encounter and associate with. Although it may often be easier to associate with those of similar cultures, associating with participants from other countries, religions, and races can be a broadening and rewarding experience. We encourage you to take full advantage of this opportunity to share with this world community.

## **JOURNAL, CREATIVE WRITING, ART WORK**

The project may go very quickly, and it will all tend to blur unless one keeps some kind of record. A journal will help you to remember and to reflect on your experiences of the summer later on. You may want to keep a record of poems, descriptions, or sketches. Not only will you encounter other cultures and religions, and other members of the group as individuals, but you will also be able to see yourself from a different perspective. A journal will help you to reflect on these encounters and grow through them.

## **INFORMATION BOARD**

In case our group will become very large, we will try to have an information board in a central location during the Orientation and Closing periods. Also at each work site, we will also try to have a public information board. Information about the daily itinerary, optional programs, group meetings, work schedules, maps etc., will be posted on this board. Participants should become accustomed to checking the Information Board for current information.

---

## **INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES**

This section is to familiarize you with local customs and other sensitivities in order to make your experience a much deeper and richer one.

Please understand that one of the major purposes of the IRFF is to further the ideal of "World Peace through humanitarian relief and human development in the spirit of true friendship". We hope that you, as a participant, will realize that you are being looked upon by the people that you meet as a representative of your country, your religion, your race, and your culture. We hope that your behavior will help to further our common desire for understanding and peace. Serious verbal denigration of any participant's race, religion, nationality, or culture will not be allowed. For the sake of the integrity of the group as a whole, it is expected that the attitudes and actions of participants will support the guideline and the moral code of IRFF. In the case of any violation of these stated goals and objectives, the participant will be given a verbal warning. If there is no correction, he/she may be dismissed.

## **Exclusive Relationships: MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS**

One of the central purposes of IRFF is for each participant to experience the wondrous diversity of our human family and experience the joy of practicing the teaching of living for the sake of others. Maintaining an exclusive relationship with one person during an IRFF project is antithetical to the spirit of the program and is thus unacceptable.

One of the most sensitive areas of cultural differences concerns relationships between men and women. For example, in Muslim cultures, the mere physical touch between a man and a woman in public takes place only if they are married. A woman wearing revealing clothing is considered to have very loose morals, and a woman entering a man's bedroom, or vice versa, is considered the same.

IRFF aims to create a wholesome spirit, encouraging positive interaction between participants. Exclusive personal relationships between men/women are not conducive to creating a healthy public atmosphere. Participants are required to refrain from sexual relations during the entirety of the program in order to devote all energies to the tasks at hand. Promiscuous behavior will result in dismissal.

If you disagree with this sexual/moral standard or believe that you cannot abide by this policy for the term of a project, it is better that you not attend.

## **CLOTHING**

It should be noted again here that clothing is an important aspect of the message that you are sending to others. In different cultures, the same clothing may be sending an entirely different message. Those who are not used to seeing revealing clothing (IRFF participants as well as members of the community) may feel uncomfortable and alienated. Again, we recommend modesty as the best policy for men and women.

## **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

No alcoholic beverages will be served at any time during the program. All participants, while they are representing IRFF, are asked to abstain from alcohol throughout the whole project. (The only exception is if a local host serves you an alcoholic drink in his or her home, and it could prove impolite to refuse. Then use your own discretion and sensitivity). Drinking is not permissible during free time.

## **SMOKING**

Smoking is discouraged, and prohibited at meals, meetings, in vehicles and sleeping areas. It is objectionable to others, as well as injurious to their health. If you must smoke, please be sensitive to those around you.

## **ILLEGAL DRUGS AND ACTIVITIES**

Those who violate local laws or run afoul of local authorities for carrying illegal substances or committing crimes may be subject to penalties or even imprisonment. Anyone in this situation will have to take full responsibility for his/her action. Anyone found carrying or using illegal drugs jeopardizes the stature of the whole IRFF group and will be subject to dismissal.

## **PERSONAL SECURITY**

Possessions left in public may be considered to be of no further value to the owner. Don't tempt people by being careless with your things. We will have security at our living quarters, but still absolute security cannot be guaranteed, and the final responsibility is yours. If you must leave your things for a while, ask a friend to watch them. Looking out for each other will help create a more secure environment. When leaving public transportation, be sure to take your belongings with you. Handbags and shoulder bags with valuables should be carried in front, not on the side or in back, in order to prevent theft. You may want to consider further safety precautions for securing your pocket valuables.

## **NOISE, LOUD MUSIC**

Living in close quarters requires additional sensitivity. Please allow for the needs and desires of others to rest, reflect and meditate, by keeping a quiet atmosphere in group settings, especially in public areas. Do not play loud music in a sleeping area.

---

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

The IRFF will do everything possible to ensure your health and comfort throughout the project. If you have any problems, please consult the staff members immediately. We will do our best to provide care according to one's need; however, you should be aware that the standard of care in each nation differs. Food and water quality as well as sanitary conditions may not be what you are accustomed to. In the case of serious problems, they will have access to local doctors/hospitals.

Food and water quality as well as sanitary conditions may not be what you are accustomed to. Your individual responsibility is also essential in maintaining your health. The project can be a

rigorous undertaking. We may encounter a warm climate. Be sure to eat wisely and to get enough rest. If you do not, your body's immunity to disease will be lowered and you are more likely to become ill.

Every effort has been made to ensure the highest health standards. However, part of the responsibility for health maintenance is yours. Be sure to eat wisely and to get enough rest. We strongly recommend that all participants obtain traveler's insurance. [Worldtravelcenter.com](http://Worldtravelcenter.com) and [TravelGuard](http://TravelGuard) are two vendors providing such insurance.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

All inoculations against disease and personal medications are the responsibility of the individual. Check with local health officials for the recommendations to follow. There are specific immunizations required to enter some countries for those participants coming from areas of the world where yellow fever is a problem. Proof of inoculation may be required to obtain visas.

## **DIET**

We will do our best to provide a diet suitable for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Local food will be available. Unfortunately it is impossible to cater to every person's specific vegetarian/kosher food needs, if you have a taste for a food or spice specific to your culture, we recommend that you bring some of it with you.

Our meals will be cooked by local people, in a moderated local style. We will endeavor to have fruit at least once a day. Please be prepared for a few days systemic adjustment to this diet. Drink plenty of pure water to prevent dehydration.

## **WEATHER**

In some regions the weather may be very hot. If you are not accustomed to this climate, please be cautious of strong direct sunlight. We strongly recommend that those of cooler climates use tanning lotion or sunscreen until your skin has developed a tan. It is very important to bring a hat that will protect your head, neck and face from the sun. In cooler climates, please bring warm clothes.

## **FINANCES**

### **IRFF RESPONSIBILITY**

The IRFF will provide for your in-country accommodations, three meals per day, health care and transportation during the program schedule. You are responsible for all of your lodging and meals before and after the program.

Meals are provided on a group basis, usually at the living site. If you eat at a different time or place than the rest of the group, your meal will not be paid for.

Please note that the IRFF cannot take responsibility for your personal money and valuables.

There will be security at the living sites, but we cannot guarantee safety. We suggest that you do not bring the following, especially valuable items, such as: expensive tape recorders, cameras, radios, watches, etc.

The IRFF accountant will not be able to exchange currency or act as a bank. The IRFF will not be responsible if your money is lost or stolen. If your money is lost or stolen, you will have to forego purchase of personal items. The IRFF will not lend you money under any circumstances. There are certain expenses which the IRFF will not cover. These include telephone calls (which can be very expensive), postage, snacks or soft drinks, taxi or bus fares during your free time, gifts, souvenirs, etc. You will want to bring along a certain amount of personal money for this. We recommend that you do not bring large amounts of cash, but use traveler's checks. Be sure to

have enough of relatively small denominations. This will make things easier if you don't want to carry a large amount of the local currency.

### **CURRENCY EXCHANGE**

In general it is advisable to exchange only as much money into the local currency as you are sure that you will spend. There are banks and exchanges for this purpose. It may be the case, however, that you cannot exchange your currency. You must research this prior to arrival. If your nation's currency is not widely used throughout the world, it may be best to exchange it for U.S. dollars or the local currency before arriving. For further details please consult tourist guides such as "Fodor's Modern Guides" which give information about currency and customs regulations.

---

### **IMMIGRATION**

Upon arrival you will go through an immigration station to determine whether your visa is in order. It is common for individuals to be asked about the purpose of their visit, the length of their stay, their accommodations, and finances. For "purpose of entry" put "tourist." References in the host country (address and telephone number) should be obtained before you leave home.

Video cameras and electronic equipment may need to be registered upon entry. Keep a record of the serial numbers on all your valuable equipment. Also, be reminded that your passport is a valuable possession. It is advisable to keep a copy of all your important documents in a safe place.

---

### **IN SUMMARY**

Thank you for the worldwide vision and selfless desire that you have demonstrated by offering to volunteer in serving others.

It is our hope that the guidelines in this handbook will be helpful to prepare for a special, and even, life-changing experience. The spirit of each individual adds a unique dimension and a quality of beauty to the group as a whole. In this way, we are all responsible to create the healthy sustainable life style for all, which is IRFF's goal. As we reach out with a sacrificial heart and fully give of ourselves at the work-sites in needy communities and to friends from unfamiliar cultures, our horizons expand and our hearts begin to grow. To gain the most from the experience, it is important to arrive with a fresh outlook and a spirit of adventure. Surely, there will be minor difficulties, but because of our united goal to serve, and the desire to cooperate as a world community, we can overcome them. Through our victories on a personal level, we can gain hope for peace on a worldwide level. It is this hope that we can each carry back to our own nations and share with others in our daily lives.

**We look forward to meeting you!**