

# **Volunteering with Amida Trust 2007-2008**

**Amida Trust, The Buddhist House, 12 Coventry Rd, Narborough LE19 2GR UK  
British Charity number 1060589: Projects in India, Zambia, Hawaii, UK and Europe**

# VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS with Amida Trust

In September 2004 Amida Trust launched its new Buddhist overseas volunteering scheme. Following the first pilot year, we recruited a small team of volunteers in September 2005. This group joined our training programme that month and then went to India between November and April. For the past two years we have continued to develop our work in Delhi. We now have a small centre in the south of the city where we have established a programme of classes in English. As English is the medium in which most business and professional dialogue takes place in India, these classes help people to gain skills and confidence to improve their capacity to work. We also see the classes as an important medium for facilitating conversation with disadvantaged groups, encouraging co-operative, non-violent attitudes in education, and building relations between groups who do not otherwise talk with one another.

In Delhi we work with a number of groups of people, both in our centre and in various "outreach" settings. These groups include members of the local Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities as well as Ambedkarite Buddhists, who are from the dalit community, Chakmas (tribal people who are indigenous Buddhists) and other local groups. Out reach work included work with large groups in various Buddhist viharas and in 2007-8 we hope to offer volunteer support to some vocational classes being run by former students of the scheme in poor areas of Delhi.

Our other main overseas volunteering placements are in Zambia. There we have links with the Tithandizane primary healthcare project in Zambia. We first sent members of the Amida community to Zambia in 1998 to help at Tithandizane, and have maintained our relationship with the project subsequently, sending a number of people there to assist. In 2006/7 we sent volunteers to the project for the first time. The project in Zambia offers placements to anyone with experience in health related areas, but also appreciates general support, and particularly anyone offering practical skills. The situation of this project is very rural, and the project does not have many facilities which Westerners are used to. There is no mains water or electricity for example. At the same time people at the project are very supportive and friendly and the experience of volunteering in Zambia is one that will stay with you always.

Closer to home we have a number of volunteering opportunities at our centres in rural France and the UK. These include both outdoor work and work in our multi-faith pastoral care project in Leicester. This project can offer counselling placements. Information on European volunteering is found later in this pack.

Amida Trust offers thorough training to volunteers, based on years of experience in engaged Buddhism. Our next intake of volunteers will be in September 2007. Volunteers under this scheme receive six weeks training prior to taking up a five month placement in Delhi. Volunteers with TEFL qualifications or experience of volunteering overseas are particularly welcome. If you would like to be involved or can offer skills and experience please get in contact with us on +44 (0)116 286 7476. or email us on [courses@amidatrust.com](mailto:courses@amidatrust.com). To apply to volunteer in 2007/8 please fill in the application form which you will find in this pack.



In association with the  
World Buddhist University

## **Aims of the Amida Volunteer Scheme**

~ to foster friendship, internationalism, and a spirit of working together for the benefit of all sentient beings.

~ to promote mutual learning and support

~ to support projects in disadvantaged countries that serve the needs of their most disadvantaged citizens;

~ to support individuals who, through voluntary work, wish to put Buddhist principles of universal compassion into practical effect;

~ to make humanitarian action an integral part of Buddhist practice;

~ to encourage Buddhist organisations to become involved in the large scale social problems that beset the world;

~ to help individuals to grow in confidence, to learn new skills and to grow in faith

~ to foster good relations and co-operative contact between people; different schools of Buddhism; and different religious and social groups.

*"The teaching has been going well. I played cricket the other day with the boys, most of them don't have shoes which means their feet must be like shoe leather since they run around on rocks and through rubbish like it's nothing. I was fairly awful but scored extra kudos by virtue of being a female cricket player. The girls don't seem much interested in sports but they are interested in dance - looks like I will be teaching them some moves this weekend. Scary. - Tam*

## **What's it like being an Amida Volunteer?**

**Here are some of the stories from India from the Volunteers' blog site**

"We have a meeting every Saturday to discuss our lessons, and we decided to have it on the balcony in the sun (it's a hard life) and one of the volunteers shouted 'monkey!'. I thought he meant there was one there. He said no he was just calling them. AND THIS HE DID. 15 minutes into the meeting we all turned around to see a monkey had joined us on our rooftop, and they certainly are not cute being in close quarters with one. You can see their teeth! It ran past us onto the higher part of the balcony so we ran into Joy's sleeping area and frantically locked the door behind us so we could continue our meeting. Another few minutes passed, and we heard a loud bang at the door, and all we saw was the monkey's face peering in at the window. It was quite scary at the time!

We have started 2 new outreach programmes since Christmas. One at a place called Harsh Vihar, where we teach children from the ages of 2 to 16 years old. We divide them up into groups, Sarah and I teach the very little ones things such as nursery rhymes, basic numbers and the alphabet etc. Last week we did the song about '10 little monkeys jumping on the bed' and we got 10 of the children out at the front. As part of the song they have to pretend to sit on the floor and hold their heads because they had bumped their heads in the song. Unfortunately, we didn't think this one through, because when a child is punished in India, they are made to crouch on the floor and sit with their hands on their heads or their ears. After the 2nd child was in this position, and looking really upset and confused, we realised and had to find an interpreter quick to tell them it was only pretend! ah well you live and learn! Next week I think Old MacDonald will be safer.

Our second outreach is actually working with street children. They live by the side of a busy road and their parents make the plaster and stone statues for shrines. So the children are covered in chalk dust and wear rags. They are amazing children, and are a lot more willing to learn than any of the children we have taught so far. they are aged between 1 and about 12, although their parents join in in the background, which is excellent. Even the little baby was doing all the actions to 1,2,3,4,5 (the one about the fish). it was really worthwhile doing. I think next year the project wants to do more of this stuff, which I think is a good move." - Jenny

**Read more about the volunteers' experiences on their blog site at**

**<http://www.amidavolunteer.blogspot.com>**

# JOINING THE SCHEME

The Amida Trust Voluntary Service Scheme has grown out of a range of initiatives that the Trust has taken in the past to assist disadvantaged groups and to support Buddhists engaging in social or humanitarian action in various parts of the world.

The way that the Scheme currently operates is as follows. Before going overseas you will take part in training. A preparatory course run at The Buddhist House in UK or in our centre in France. Volunteers who wish to participate in the scheme attend this training programme. It includes:

- Introduction to living and working in communities and specific teaching or groupwork skills depending on placement
- Introduction to the society and culture of the country to which you will be going
- Introduction to Pureland Buddhism
- Principles of engaged Buddhism and its history in Amida Trust
- Team building and co-operative working

Volunteers will be selected to participate in Amida Trust schemes overseas or may be offered placements in UK.

Volunteers taking part in the full scheme usually spend three to six months on placement. This is followed by a short debriefing period after return to the UK. Thereafter, volunteers are free to leave the scheme or to sign up for another round, or to consider other possibilities of progression within Amida Trust. Certification may be given recording work done and we are usually happy to write references.

Volunteers are adults, willing to work in a team and engage in the process of communal living and co-operative learning. The experience is one that can benefit people of all ages, and the scheme has so far attracted both people in their twenties taking a post university "gap year" and older people taking a career break or early retirement. For younger people we are keen to ensure good support systems and staged learning so that the experience can be a positive one, leading to new avenues of personal development and big gains in confidence and experience. For this reason some placements may not be suitable.

In all our volunteer programmes and other overseas involvement, principles of mutual learning and inter-cultural co-operation and friendship are paramount. Volunteers learn and gain much as well as giving.

Amida Trust is a Pureland Buddhist group with a strong history of social engagement. Volunteers on the Amida programme need not be Pureland Buddhists, but they should have a commitment to Buddhist principles and a willingness to participate in Amida's Buddhist practice. Volunteer placements may be in centres or projects that belong to any Buddhist denomination and volunteers are expected to participate in some of the practice that is normal to that centre where they are placed while they are there. This is a condition of participation in the scheme.

Amida Trust is a registered charity. Our programmes are run as economically as possible and rely on donations and income from our training activities to support the work. Volunteers are therefore asked to contribute to the costs of travel and accommodation. This year we are asking volunteers who go to India or Africa to contribute £800 each towards the costs. Volunteers in France and UK will be asked to contribute towards their keep.

# WHO ARE WE?

**Amida Trust is a UK registered charity number 1060589, based at**

The Buddhist House  
12 Coventry Road  
Narborough LE19 2GR  
Leicestershire U.K.  
Tel: 0116.286.7476

Amida Trust was founded in 1996. It has a membership of around 250 people, and supports the Amida Order, which is a small Pureland Buddhist Order. Amida Trust has been engaged in socially orientated work in a number of countries including India, Zambia and the Balkans. It has recently had volunteer involvement in India, Zambia, Vietnam, Hawaii and Europe. This work varies according to local needs, as our emphasis is always on building friendship and responding to invitations. In India our work centres on education, in Zambia on health, in Hawaii on ecology and local pastoral care, in Vietnam on work with children.

Amida Trust has no paid staff. It's work is done by full time members of the Amida Order and others who have committed themselves to the Amida community. These people are supported by the Trust in their work. Overseas work is funded through educational and other activities of the Trust and by donation. The ethos of voluntary religious commitment is something we value. It creates an atmosphere of personal dedication and willing participation. Those joining in the Amida Volunteer Scheme are invited to share in this spirit of enthusiasm and generosity with us.

In addition to our involvement in work overseas and in the UK, Amida Trust is engaged in offering training programmes in Buddhist psychology and Buddhist Chaplaincy. The Buddhist House is a centre for many educational activities and the volunteers on this scheme benefit from participation in these whilst in training. We currently have centres in UK and France which offer volunteer placements on short or long term arrangements.

Socially engaged work operates on a reflective learning cycle in which we reflect upon our work and draw learning from the experience. We are concerned both with developing excellence in delivery and with viewing our work in the wider social context.

Our central aims are to:

RESIST OPPRESSION  
ASSIST THE AFFLICTED  
& DEMONSTRATE AN ALTERNATIVE

Amida Trust is engaged in community building both within the Buddhist community and in the inter-faith networks, the experience of working with overseas groups has been invaluable in this respect. Amida Trust has been developing volunteer work throughout its existence and has grown in experience and capacity as a result. Volunteers receive:

- An introduction to socially engaged religious practice
- An experience working in the midst of other faiths
- Hands on experience with social & educational engaged practice
- Team building experience
- Leadership skills
- Greater cultural awareness
- Skills in working with groups
- An opportunity to live in another country and be immersed in another culture
- Teaching skills
- Opportunities to meet and work with other youth from a range of cultures and faiths

To find out more about Amida Trust visit our web site at [www.amidatrust.com](http://www.amidatrust.com)

# The Need for Education in India

Article from BBC News Web Site, May 8th 2006

## Education barrier for India's poor

By Jill McGivering

BBC News, Delhi

**It was a glamorous evening in one of Delhi's most exclusive venues.**

As the music played, the rich and fashionable gossiped and waiters moved through the crowd with silver trays of drinks and canapés. Before dinner was served, the main lights dimmed and the master of ceremonies announced the star of the show, businessman Lovy Khosla. Standing in a cascade of glitter, he launched his latest venture, Elvy - described as India's first lifestyle catalogue. After the presentation, I asked Mr Khosla what kind of people he hoped would buy the bone china, platinum-stemmed wine glasses and other luxury catalogue items.

"Aspiring Indians", he said, "the new emerging middle-class".

He admitted the divide at the moment between rich and poor was huge - but eventually, he said, everyone in India would prosper.

## 'Brain industry'

At times, optimism like Mr Khosla's does seem justified. More and more people nowadays have the means to buy the international goods now available in India's cities. The IT shops I visited in Delhi, for example, were buzzing with all the latest technology. The IT sector itself is still small but clearly booming, a key part of India's new wealth. But there's a clear mismatch between the hinterland of rural unemployed and the IT sector's demand for educated workers.

Kiran Karnik, the President of India's National Association of Software and Service Companies, told me one of their biggest problems is finding enough suitable recruits, people with the right education and skills.

"You have a lot of people with minimal or sometimes no education," he said.

"And the industry we work in requires at least a certain minimum level of knowledge. It's not a brawn industry, it's a brain industry. That means we're looking for people who are by and large graduates."

But why, in a country of more than a billion people, are graduates relatively hard to find? Why do about some 93% of Indians never progress beyond secondary school?

## Poor education

I travelled by train into rural Uttar Pradesh, one of India's biggest and poorest states to see the education available for children in villages there. I was taken to a small village by Sandeep Pandey, one of the founders of the educational charity Asha (Hope). There I came across about 50 children, of all ages from about three to 15 years, sitting under the trees chanting their lessons. They have to learn together like this because there is only one teacher. There was also a government school nearby but some parents in the village complained that they did not send their children there because the standard was so low. When I asked the children what they would like to do as adults, they crowded round, faces beaming.

"Teacher!" cried one. "Doctor," said another. They were full of enthusiasm. But privately Sandeep was pessimistic about their chances.

"The children saying they want to be doctors or teachers or engineers, they'd never be able to make it," he said. "In the end they'd end up being unemployed or underemployed."

Most of the children, he said, dropped out before they finished primary school. Their parents knew they would eventually work on the land so more than a basic education seemed a waste of resources. "The only hope," he said, "is that by learning to read or write, they will check corruption. We don't have any hope beyond that."

### **'Living hell'**

Those who do leave the countryside without higher education, in the hope of finding greater opportunities in the cities, often end up living in slums. I visited Banwal Nagar, a sprawling slum on the outskirts of Delhi, a labyrinth of narrow lanes with no running water, stinking open drains and massive overcrowding. There I met Babloo, a shy 18-year-old who came here from a village in Uttar Pradesh a year ago. He told me he came with his brother who is earning just enough as a tailor to feed them both. Babloo said they were always hungry in the village, there was no work there. Now Babloo is helping out - unpaid - in a mechanic's shop, trying to learn the trade. Sitting with us, listening to Babloo's hesitant story, was an old-timer in Banwal Nagar, Anrud Mandel, who came here 25 years ago. I asked him if he thought Babloo and his brother had done the right thing in coming to Delhi.

His answer was emphatic: "No. Like all of us, he had to leave his village because there wasn't work there. But we'd all be better off in our villages if we could earn enough there to feed and clothe our children and ourselves."

He gestured to the conditions all around us, the air thick with flies. "This place is a living hell."

There is no doubt India's impressive economic growth is providing new opportunities. But the challenge is finding ways to put them within the reach of the children in India's poorest villages.

Story from BBC NEWS:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/4916946.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/4916946.stm)

Published: 2006/05/08 00:32:01 GMT

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# What Does Training Involve?

Volunteers spend about six weeks living in The Buddhist House in the UK or at the Amida centre in France prior to a placement. There they participate in an intensive period of training. This is facilitated by project staff and members of the Amida Order as well as invited speakers. We often arrange visits to groups in Leicester, which has a good reputation for its' multi-cultural community building approaches, so that volunteers gain insight into Indian religion and culture. There is plenty of time for discussion and questions, and you will also take part in practical exercises to practice skills and try out teaching methods. The training itself provides a good grounding in community based education.

Volunteers do not necessarily need any prior experience or training, though we do look for people who can demonstrate an aptitude for the work. In some cases a teaching or TEFL qualification , or experience in crafts or community development would be a great advantage. Experience travelling in Africa or Asia is also an advantage in some placements.

In the training, depending on which placement you are taking, you may:

- Learn how to live in community
- Participate in gatherings and facilitated meetings
- Learn about Buddhist practice and the history of Buddhism
- Learn about the history of Amida Trust and Amida's overseas work
- Understand issues connected with travel and health while overseas
- Develop skills to work with people of other cultures, both in Britain and overseas
- Learn about other faiths through visits to places of worship in Leicester
- Learn about the history of the Chakma and Ambedkarite peoples or of local tribal groups in Africa
- Develop skills and methodology of teaching English as a foreign language
- Develop skills in community development and education
- Develop skills in group work

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

For overseas work, you must be in good health physically and mentally. Do ask us if you are unsure. Overseas travel requires health advice. You will need to visit a travel clinic or your own doctor to get the latest information on immunisation and prophylactics for malaria. The web is also a good source of information. You are responsible for making sure you get appropriate health advice but we usually arrange a visit from the practice nurse in our local Health Centre in Narborough who can give advice. Some immunisation needs to be done over a period of time, so delay in seeking advice may delay your departure. All volunteers will be required to have travel insurance cover for health and possessions. We may be able to arrange group cover in some cases. Please note that immunisation and anti-malarials will cost you quite a bit. Do budget for this, but ask around because prices vary. We can advise you on what is reasonable.

Remember that tropical countries carry particular risks of certain diseases and that Western standards of health and safety regulations do not exist, so you may be exposed to higher risks from such things as road traffic, pollutants, faulty electric services, and other poorly maintained equipment. Although we will do our best to ensure your safety, we cannot be held liable for accidents or illness, so you need to be vigilant and take advice when it is offered.

The most common problems to date are tummy bugs (take advice on hygiene and on drinking water) and respiratory problems, partly caused by the pollution levels in Delhi. In the event of medical problems, Delhi is a big city and we have found good clinics where doctors or dentists can be consulted. In rural areas medical services may be more difficult to access. In Zambia malaria is chloroquine resistant so other forms of prophylaxis are needed. Consult your doctor on this. Local health services are basic, the nearest doctors being at the hospital in Chipata which is 25km distant from the project on poor roads.

We advise volunteers going to tropical countries to take:

- Your preferred medication for minor ailments
- Any regular medication you require
- A mosquito net & insect repellent
- Malaria prophylaxis
- A sterile syringe kit
- First aid kit
- A sheet sleeping bag
- A water bottle
- Water purifying tablets
- A small back pack and a money belt

Some of these can be bought from our local pharmacy at cost price, but you may like to ask relatives and friends for gifts of other items.

## SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELFARE

Living overseas can be stressful, especially if this is your first experience of Asia. We try to create a supportive environment in the project. Volunteer groups hold regular "gatherings" to share responses to the work situation and to reflect on the personal lessons the work brings both individually and collectively. The work may be personally challenging and you may always talk with a member of staff if you feel stretched beyond your personal limits. It is important to debrief on the work you are doing with a senior member of the team or with the group. The work we are doing can itself be seen as important spiritual practice and as such it may reveal areas for personal spiritual development. This is something you can discuss with the project leader. Volunteers are encouraged to stay in contact with Order members back at The Buddhist House in UK by email. This can provide an additional source of support.

# FINANCE

The volunteer scheme costs around £1600 per volunteer. This covers airfares, insurance, rental of buildings, internal transport within India, accommodation in hostels or low-cost hotels when travelling, food and services within India. This does not include the cost of staffing or the training and accommodation in UK which volunteers also receive. Amida Trust is a registered charity. We run our activities as cheaply as we are able, and rely on income earned from courses and donations. We are therefore asking volunteers to fund-raise towards the costs of their travel and accommodation. This year we are asking each volunteer to try to raise £800.

Raising money for your placement can be fun. It is also a way of letting your family and friends know what you are planning to do. Most people will not mind helping towards a good cause. If you are hoping to join the scheme in 2007, now is a good time to start on the fund raising.

Although we hope all volunteers will raise some money towards their travel and keep, we may be able to offer some financial support to people with experience who can take a responsible role in the project. If you have experience in leading volunteers please ask us for more information.

## FUNDRAISING SUGGESTIONS

- Get saving,
- Walk instead of taking public transport or using the car
- Re-cycle aluminium, printer cartridges, bottles or anything you can get cash for
- Ask your family and friends to sponsor you in doing something challenging eg walk a stretch of coastline or city to city, bicycle across the country, climb as many mountains as you can in a day
- Organise a benefit party and ask your friend's band to play
- Make and sell craft items, jam, clothes
- Borrow a digital camera and photograph your friends and then sell them personalised T-shirts, mugs etc
- Grow herbs from seed and sell them in pots
- Paint stones
- Design web sites for other people
- Take a stall at a car boot sale or run a garage sale
- Give talks or slide shows and ask for donations
- Take a collecting tin or bucket round your local supermarket or pub (get permission first!)
- Go busking (again, get permission)
- Dry flowers and make and sell arrangements
- Get a class or group to sponsor you in return for regular newsletters (and write them!)
- Organise a car treasure hunt... or a pot luck supper
- Sell your unwanted CDs/books/ antiques
- Ask your dad, gran, partner, children



## Volunteering in Leicester

In autumn 2006 Amida Trust opened a pilot project in Leicester city centre. In line with identified needs for non-sectarian pastoral care, the Maitri multi-faith pastoral care project now operates a drop in, staffed by volunteers of different faiths, working to the Amida model, which offers a friendship based approach to community involvement. It also operates a number of groups exploring people's spiritual experience in a non-denominational context. We hope to see the project grow in the coming year, and plan to offer counselling services, supervised by Amida staff, and plan creative and community based work. Amida Trust has experience in offering Buddhist chaplaincy in a number of settings in the city including work in hospitals and universities. Volunteer training will draw on this experience and, depending on aptitude, they might find opportunities arising for a number of areas of work.

In addition to community based work, volunteers will also take part in the life of the Buddhist House community and may do work in the extensive gardens or in practical maintenance projects around the houses, as well as sometimes sharing in domestic work, supporting those visiting for courses and retreats. Most Leicester volunteers will do some combination of community based work and work at the Narborough site.

Volunteers in Leicester live at The Buddhist House in Narborough in shared rooms. They have access to teachings and classes in the house and use of the extensive library and computer rooms. Short term volunteers can be taken on individually negotiated contracts, but longer term volunteers will be expected to join in the lifestyle of the house. As a centre offering a variety of engaged training, volunteer placements in Leicester can be combined with study programmes, offering unique learning opportunities with certification.

# Volunteering in France

Our centre in France is now open all the year round. There are opportunities to volunteer long or short term. Volunteers take part in community life and help with the gardens and building work. In summer short term volunteers can visit on a limited contract, doing four hours work, six days per week and joining in community activities at other times at a reduced rate of 80 euros per week. In winter volunteers normally join in full community life and contribute to the cost of their stay by negotiation.

Amida France is in Berry, an old region in the centre of France. It is an area of great beauty with a landscape of forests, farms and rivers which has changed little since medieval times. We have thirty acres of mixed woodland and fields, much of which is wild and a sanctuary for many rare species of birds, animals and plants. Our gardens are organic and well established.

Life is simple and rustic and we grow most of our own vegetables. We have spent much of this winter renovating and insulating buildings so that the site is better equipped for winter occupation. Next year we hope to increase our number of individual retreat huts in the woods. Volunteers with building skills especially welcome.

November 2006: Hello from Amida France. The days flow on seamlessly here as we work the land planting fruit bushes, clearing old growth and filling trenches with manure to feed next years beans. The weather is still unseasonably warm with rainy nights and days are changeable. The sun shone on our last lazy day so we picnicked by the Loire in Nevers, our nearest big city. In the house, the new floor is nearly complete in the ecurie - what a difference it makes! While the kitchen is filling up with jars of preserves. But we still have about 70 pumpkins to process! Thank goodness we have Phil and Pam helping us. It now looks very hopeful that the ecurie will be useable for our Christmas retreat - more accommodation and a nice meeting room. Our friend and sangha member, Derek has donated a lovely gas fire to help warm it, and our next job is to put up insulation to keep the warmth in.

# Volunteering as Training

The experience of volunteering is one which can stay with you for life. New experiences and new places bring learning on many levels and we hope you will develop skills and confidence without even realising you are doing so. At Amida we are happy to write references for you and to guide you in discovering your future directions after your time with us as a volunteer. Whilst you are with us you may participate in some educational activities which go on in Amida communities. You may receive specifically designed volunteer training but you may also attend other events and seminars.

At the same time as hosting volunteers, at Amida we offer formal training programmes in Buddhist Psychology and Psychotherapy and in Ministry and Chaplaincy. These programmes can be taken alongside a volunteer position. Full details of these training courses can be found on our web sites or through enquiry at The Buddhist House. See our training site at [www.buddhistpsychology.info](http://www.buddhistpsychology.info). In addition to such programmes, we have a flexible system of certification and can negotiate personal training packages to fit individual interests.

Courses carry fees but for volunteers these can be flexible. Formal fee structures are shown on the web site but you can contact us to discuss individual packages which combine volunteering with study.

## Ordination and religious commitment

The Amida order is a Pureland Buddhist Order. We offer opportunities for full time religious commitment in both ministry and Amitarya tracks. Although this pack focuses on volunteering, which carries no expectations of religious commitment, some volunteers may be interested to explore the possibility of deepening their involvement with the Amida Order. Working alongside Order members can be an opportunity to explore the religious life. If you wish to discuss the possibility of religious training with us, please feel free to

# VOLUNTEER CONTRACT

Whereas Amida Trust has established a scheme under which individuals may, in a voluntary capacity, be placed in Amida Trust sponsored projects, run by Amida Trust or by associated organisations and where

NAME: ....., hereinafter referred to as the Volunteer,

has applied to be a volunteer under this scheme, the following is agreed between the Amida Trust and the above named.

**This contract was used**

**by volunteers in India**

**in 2006-7**

**SAMPLE CONTRACT**

## A. TRAVEL AND LENGTH OF STAY

If the Volunteer will be allocated to a placement in an Amida Trust sponsored scheme travel arrangements will be made by Amida Trust

- The Volunteer is expected to stay with the project to which they have been assigned for the duration of their agreed placement. Normally this will be the period for which their air travel ticket has been purchased.
- The volunteer contract starts from the date of signature of the contract in place before the Volunteer leaves UK
- In case of bereavement or similar personal crisis, compassionate leave may be granted, or the volunteer may be released from the contract on compassionate grounds.
- If volunteers leave for inappropriate reasons, they will be asked to refund their air fare
- If an Amida project is terminated for any reason, volunteers shall have a choice whether to stay in the country of placement or return to UK. If they remain in the country where they are posted they may not continue the project in Amida's name without a new contract. If the volunteer chooses to return to UK, Amida Trust will be responsible for travel arrangements. If the volunteer chooses to stay, they may use the return ticket already purchased or make their own arrangements.
- If the project leader leaves the project, Amida Trust will replace them or enter into negotiations with volunteers about the best way forward.

## B. HEALTH CARE

The Volunteer will complete the Personal Details Form and lodge this with with the Amida Trust in UK. The form will be held in confidence in case of emergency.

- To the best of their ability, the trustees of Amida Trust will, through their agents, attempt to ensure that the wishes stated on the form are complied with.
  - The Volunteer is responsible for obtaining medical advice, vaccinations, and appropriate prophylactic treatment in advance of travel, for following that advice prior to, during, and subsequent to the period of overseas residence, and for storing and appropriately self-administering any medicines prescribed.
  - Volunteers are responsible for making sure that they are covered by adequate health insurance for the duration of stay
  - Volunteers agree not to take drugs that are illegal in the country they are in or that would be illegal in the UK
- Volunteers will not take unnecessary risks and will not take part in, or will desist from, any activity when told to do so by the team leader on health and safety grounds.

## C. TIME OFF

- The Volunteer will be entitled to take 6 free days per month and 2 hours per day free time. Free time should be taken by negotiation with other members of the team

## D. DUTIES

- The Volunteer will be expected to be flexible in performing duties. Although they may have particular skills or expertise, these will not always prove to be what is required at the time. Projects need to be responsive to local conditions. The Volunteer may therefore have to adapt his or her expectations as the project progresses.
- The Volunteer will take part in planning and debriefing meetings at which decisions about the most appropriate approach to the project work can be discussed.
- The project leader will have ultimate responsibility for deciding the direction of work in the project and for allocating volunteers to tasks, but in doing this will consult with volunteers, taking into account their areas of expertise.
- Household tasks will be shared between all members of the project team.

## **E. ACCOMMODATION**

●As far as possible within local conditions, a reasonable standard of accommodation and sanitation will be provided. Volunteers will generally be expected to live at a level comparable with the local community they are serving providing this does not pose significant health risks.

## **F. FINANCE**

- The Project leader is responsible for overseeing the management of financial and other resources. Decisions relating to these will be made by the Project leader.
- Amida Trust will provide basic resources for the work being undertaken in the project. Expenditure will be agreed with project leader.
- Reasonable travel and other expenses will be paid to volunteers on Amida duties. All such expenditure should be agreed in advance with the project leader.

## **G. SAFETY**

- Where possible, the Volunteer will be advised if any undue risk is perceived and should not take risks
- Project leaders will take steps to assess risks
- The Volunteer will not be requested to go out alone at night or to enter areas designated as dangerous alone
- The Volunteer should be aware that in some countries services such as water or electricity may not be as safe as those found in UK. They must therefore take precautions in using such services.
- Copies of passport and other important documents will be left in UK
- Amida Trust will ensure that usual and reasonable security is in place whenever possible
- The Volunteer is responsible for the security of his or her own documents

## **H. ETHICAL GUIDELINES**

- 1.1 Violence: The Volunteer will not engage in or give support to any act of violence against persons or against other sentient creatures. Exceptions may be made in some cases of health hazard
- 1.2 The Volunteer will be mindful of the environmental implications of their actions and mode of operation
- 1.3 As far as reasonably possible within the constraints of local circumstances, the Volunteer will keep to a vegetarian diet. Any house that is under Amida control will maintain a vegetarian dietary regime
- 2.1 The Volunteer will be carefully scrupulous in handling money and other resources donated to the project, ensuring that these are properly used for their intended purpose and that waste is avoided.
- 2.2 The Volunteers will avoid becoming involved in ventures for personal profit.  
The Volunteer will refuse to become involved in any form of corrupt practice, even where this appears to be accepted local custom or the only way of achieving desired ends.
- 2.3 The Volunteers will not accept gifts or invitations from students or other users of the project without the permission of the project leader.
  - 3.1 The Volunteer will avoid becoming sexually involved in any way with people with whom they have dealings on behalf of Amida Trust.
  - 3.2 The Volunteer will dress and act in a manner that is sexually restrained and not offensive to local custom.
- 4.1 The Volunteer will avoid making, supporting or becoming associated with statements that are critical or designed to curry hostility toward others. He or she may, however, make or support statements of fact that can be verified from reliable sources, leaving others to draw whatever conclusions they think are appropriate.
- 4.2 The Volunteer will not become involved in political controversy nor give support to groups set up to seek political advantage.
- 4.3 The Volunteer will seek to build understanding between those who are divided and will cultivate harmony.
- 5.1 On days when the Volunteer is on Amida business he or she will not consume alcohol. On days off, the Volunteer will exercise discretion, giving priority to the requirements and regulations of the Trust's work. The Volunteer shall not act in ways that bring the Dharma into disrepute in the eyes of the population served by the project or other members of the public.

## **I. CHILD PROTECTION**

1. Volunteers will not work with children unchaperoned unless they have been given clearance to do so prior to leaving UK. Those going to placements that primarily serve children will be required to undergo clearance procedures.
2. If a volunteer suspects that children are being abused in any way, they are expected to raise the matter immediately with the project leader who will decide what action can be taken, depending on local circumstances.

**J. AUTHORITY**

- The team leader has the authority and responsibility for the project on the ground and is accountable to the Amida Trustees.
- Volunteers will respect the authority of the team leader.
- The team leader will consult with volunteers in his or her team whenever possible.

**K. SUPPORT**

- The Volunteer may seek support at any time by contacting offices or trustees of Amida Trust.
- Training will be offered to the Volunteer prior to commencement of the volunteer posting. Obtaining a posting is conditional upon the Volunteer completing this training satisfactorily.
- Volunteers will be required to attend a debriefing on return at the end of their posting, either in UK or elsewhere. Amida Trust will make any necessary travel arrangements required for this.
- Team meetings of two kinds will be held during the placement. These will each take place once a week whenever practical. There will be a Business Meeting for review and discussion of work; and a Gathering for personal sharing.
- The team leader will be available for individual interviews by arrangement.
- The Volunteer shall maintain proper standards of confidentiality. Matters arising within the project will not be discussed with outsiders without the agreement of the team. Information received is the property of the team, not of individuals.
- It is hoped that concerns will be raised as they occur so they can be discussed before they become too large.

**L. BUDDHIST PRACTICE**

- The project team will generally engage in formal Buddhist practice together. The Volunteer will participate in the practice of whatever community they are resident in.

We hereby agree this contact.

Signatures

The Volunteer.....

Please print your name.....

Date.....

On behalf of Amida Trust.....

Please print your name.....

Official capacity.....

Date.....

Use this form to let us know about your interest in volunteering with Amida Trust.

If you are interesting in joining our volunteer programme, you should try to visit us either at The Buddhist House, Narborough UK at any time during the year, or else during the summer at our centre in France to discuss possibilities.

The main volunteer programme starts in September, so please re-contact us in July to confirm your interest.

If you are interested in short term volunteering, there may be opportunities at other points during the year. Please complete this form and arrange to visit us to discuss the matter, or if this is not possible, contact us by email or phone.

## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Application form: please complete and return to The Buddhist House, 12 Coventry Rd, Narborough LE19 2GR, UK.

Name

Phone number

Email

Address

Date of birth

Nationality/first language

When do you want to start volunteering? Where do you think you might go?

### Present situation:

Please give details of your current situation. What work (paid or voluntary) do you do? If you are not working, what are you currently doing?

### Past experience:

Please tell us about any employment or voluntary work you have done over past seven years, and longer if it is relevant.

**Education and qualifications:**

List all your major qualifications. And any other relevant learning experiences including attendance at Amida events or courses

**Experiences of Buddhism or other religious paths**

**Experience of travel**

**Other relevant experience** (eg arts, political, inter-cultural activities)

**Is your health good?**

If not please state how it may affect your ability to complete the placement

**How will you finance your volunteering?**

**References:** please give details of two referees

<b>Name</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Address</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b>Email</b>
<b>Relationship to you</b>	<b>Relationship to you</b>

**Is there anything else we should know?**

**Personal statement**

On a separate sheet, please write 200-300 words about your interest in volunteering

**Professional complaints or convictions**

Do you have any professional complaints outstanding against you? Do you have any past convictions? If yes, please write giving details. This may be done as a separate letter in a sealed envelope marked "confidential". In some cases we may need to make police checks on volunteers, do we have your permission to do this if necessary? YES/NO

Signature:

Staff comment (to be filled in by staff):

Received date:

References sent for (date):                      received (1)                      (2)

Interview date                                      result