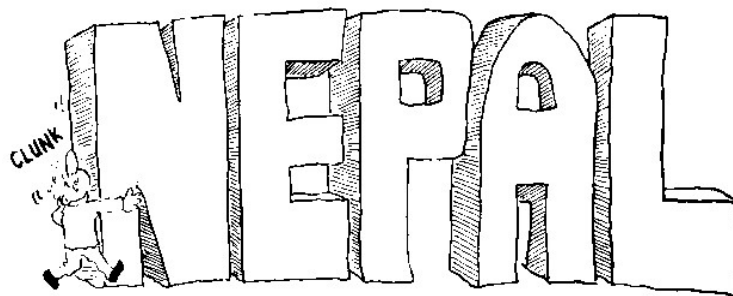




Survival Handbook For Volunteers



Volunteer Society Nepal

Welcome to Nepal!

Dear Volunteer,

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to Nepal. Thank you for choosing Volunteer Society Nepal. We hope to make your volunteering experience here as rewarding and valuable as possible.

As you arrive you may feel overwhelmed by the new environment, culture and people. Take courage! You may feel restricted by the lack of Nepali language abilities to begin with, but be encouraged. Many people find that they begin to make some of their most enduring friendships with Nepali people during these early days.

For some of you it will be easy, like one big adventure. But for others, it can take a little longer to overcome the stresses and fears associated with leaving home and living in a strange new land. Whatever your personality, it is quite common to go through periods of frustration and despair. Don't worry, this is quite normal.

Try and see this time as an opportunity to grow and learn in an environment where you don't have the pressure of having to rush off to work or do the shopping and cooking.

You all have different feelings, reactions and needs and we shall do our best to help you as much as we can. If you have any problems, or if

To help you get settled, we have pulled together a simple guide to answer some questions you may have and help you settle in. Over the next few days to a week you will be taken through your cultural and language inductions and also on sightseeing excursions around the city. This document should give you an idea of what to expect and also some background information on the organization.

I hope that these coming few days and weeks will be a time of important personal growth and that it will build firm foundations for your being in Nepal.

Have fun :-)

Volunteer Society Nepal

Introduction to VSN

During the decade long civil war from 1995, Nepal's fragile economy was shattered. Already poor families now had even bleaker opportunities for a decent livelihood. Children and women became even more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, family separation, recruitment for conflict-related purposes and illegal detention. This merely compounded the issues associated with Nepal's long history of caste discrimination and social marginalization, which causes immense disparities within society.

At the height of the conflict in 2004 we gathered a team of Nepalese development workers, including social activists, international and national volunteers because we believed we could combat the prevalent shortages of Education, Health and Women's Rights in Nepal more efficiently than the existing international organizations.

Our Objectives:

- MAXIMISE VOLUNTEER IMPACT: Enable international volunteers to make a significant contribution to the ongoing development of Nepal.
- IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS: Develop the strength and capacity of Nepali children to work towards their own development and that of the nation as a whole.
- EMPOWER WOMEN: Work with women to develop their economic and social independence through education and skills training.
- PROVIDE SKILLS TRAINING IN POOREST COMMUNITIES : Help train, educate and support the poorest communities to allow them to manage their own development projects.

A few of our achievements so far:

- We have placed over 100 volunteers every year since 2004.
- We have founded the CBIA School in Kathmandu which now has 600 pupils. This now funds itself and still supports 100 disadvantaged children on full scholarships.

- We have established a health clinic for the ever growing landless community in Kathmandu caused by the increasing urban drift from the villages.
- We have established a health clinic in Gothatar VDC aiming to provide medical services for low income families.
- We have set up a women's development group in Bakhtapur where women are given skills training and we are developing a women's group in Kathmandu where we will give legal, language and skills training.
- We provide medical checks, fresh fruit and vegetables and clothing support for over 100 orphans.
- We have been providing scholarship, fruit, vegetables, milk and meat for the Sushila orphanage.
- We have been contributing monetary support for the Sunrise Orphanage Home.
- We have been financing the disabled School located in Pepsicola.



Who's who?

All the VSN staff are here to make sure you have a good time here in Nepal. Do not hesitate to raise questions or concerns at any time.

Tej Shrestha: Founder of Volunteer Society Nepal and The Everest Foundation (see below). Tej is responsible for overseeing all activities associated with the organization. Consequently he is rather busy and so don't be offended if he does not get back to a query immediately. That said, he is more than happy to answer questions or receive feedback at all times.



Gelu Sherpa: Volunteer and Tour Manager. He is always eager to ensure that volunteers are happy. Gelu used to be a trekking and tour guide for more than a decade. He is very good at organising any trips like trekking and tour, if you want to do



trekking and tour while here in Nepal so do not hesitate to pick his brains!



Bishal Shrestha: Bishal is Office Manager. He has been working with the VSN for the last five years. Bishal is responsible for arranging pick-up and drop-off the volunteers. He is also responsible for keeping all the financial records of the VSN. Bishal assists Dinesh and Gelu to run the volunteer programme effectively.

Phone Numbers:

VSN Office	(01) 5156318
Tej Shrestha	9851090474
Bishal Shrestha	9841179335
Gelu Sherpa	9841583776
Anjela Joshi	9841597349

Settling in:

You are now in the suburb of Kathmandu called Pepsicola, Townplanning VSN (branch) office is located on the first floor in the first room right from the main entrance. You will be here for the duration of your cultural and language inductions, then you will move to a family close to your placement.

Your language classes will start shortly and will be based in the guest house. You will receive a language pack at the start of the course which you can keep. It contains language learning information and some cultural guidance on settling in to ensure you don't feel out of place.

During this induction period you will have plenty of time to yourself, to fill as you please. If you want more things to fill your time then speak to Dinesh. There are always small projects that need willing hands to help with. You will probably also find that people head to bed early here (8-9pm is usual).

When you arrive you may want to pick up a few bits and pieces and you can find your way around using the map on the last page of this handbook.

Where to buy things and how much it costs:

There are small shops on the way towards the Kathmandu—Bhaktapur highway, where you can buy most things you will need. For more specific things such as trekking gear, you may have to head into Thamel in Kathmandu. You can catch the bus from Lokanthali on the main road.

Water:

Filtered water is provided in the guest house and also at your home stay, but often we find volunteers may want to buy larger quantities or some for when they are out and about. General costs are:

- 12-25 NPR for 1 liter bottle
- 60 NPR for 19 liter barrel (a deposit for first time you collect a

Restaurants and Bar:

There are many tea shops and 'street chat' vendors that sell snacks. Be wary of these unless you have a strong stomach. However, there are some restaurants in the area where you can find some Asian and Western dishes. You can buy beer for around 250 NPR and also plates of Momos (80NPR).

You can also order food from the restaurant. They will deliver the food to the guest house. Please check the menu available at the reception in the guest house and ask the guy at the reception to order for you. They may charge you some extra for the delivery service.

Internet:

The guest house has WIFI facility. If there is a power cut at the time, then the connection may not be possible. There are a few internet cafés on the neighborhood.

NOTE: The internet here is not quick. It is best not to try and upload photos, large files or music etc. as this brings the connection to a halt. It is also worth remembering that from time to time volunteers helping with grant writing, web design etc. use the computers in the main office in Pepsicola. The VSN office in Pepsicola has computers for the volunteers to use with 24 hours internet facility.

Phone and mobile phones:

Ringling a local Kathmandu number costs 5 -10 NPR per minute. There are shops where you can make local and international calls. Look for I.S.D and S.T.D. signs.

You can buy a Sim card for your mobile phone from VSN office (See Bishal). You are required to return the Sim card before you leave the country.

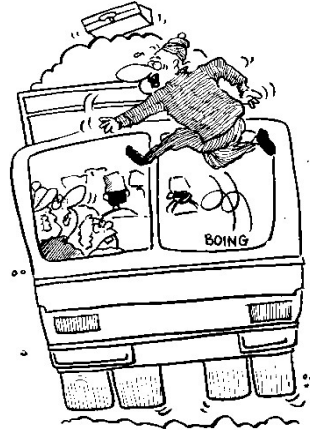
Meal Times:

In general you will eat daal bhat between 9.00 and 10.00 in the morning, and then have another meal of daal bhat between 6.30 and 8.00pm. If you get hungry in the middle of the day then head for one of the local restaurants to get some cheap momos or similar.

Transport around the valley:

Buses:

You can catch the bus into central Kathmandu from Lokanthaki (marked on the map) along the road to Bhaktapur. The usual price is around 15 NPR per journey but this can vary a little depending on the bus conductor. Have a look at what other people are paying if in doubt.



Kathmandu (incl. Thamel): You need to ask for the bus to Ratna Park. This will drop you on the opposite side of the park from Thamel, but it is a simple 20 minute walk from there. You can see the route on your Kathmandu map.

Bakhtapur: The bus to Bakhtapur goes from the same place, but in the other direction, and takes about 40' before dropping you just outside the centre.

Taxis:

Prices vary depending on who you get, but on average the cost of a taxi is around 500-600 from Pepsicola to Thamel. You can catch them from the same place as the buses into Kathmandu. The guest house can also call the taxi for you.

Finalising your placement:

During this induction time you will also discuss with the VSN team your plans for volunteering and finalise the details of your placement. We always try to be as flexible as possible when it comes to what volunteers want to do and where. We find the best way to ensure we make the best match is for the volunteer to come to the discussion with the clearest possible idea of what they want to get out of their time here. You don't need to know exactly what, but a clear idea helps. The Volunteer Society Nepal website (www.volunteersocietynepal.org) has lots of details about our placement locations so feel free to browse on there before making your decision.

Ask yourself these questions before meeting with the staff and you will stand the best chance of being happy in your placement:

- **How developed an area do you want to be in?** Some of our placements are very rural and you will be far from traditional comforts, others are a short walk from Western tourist areas where you can get a pizza and ring home on fast internet.
- **Do you want to be near other volunteers?** Many of our volunteers work in Pepsi-Cola and so if you want some company this is a good place to choose. Always feel free to ask what other volunteers are doing if you want some company.
- **Do you prefer warm or cold weather?** If you are heading into the mountains in Winter you can expect sub-zero temperatures at night. Also, if you head to Chitwan in mid-summer then you can expect hot and humid conditions.

Changing your placement:

We want you to enjoy volunteering! We hope to find a position you like right from the beginning. However, if you do not like your placement or you want to work in multiple placements or change your schedules, you must receive permission from the VSN authorities. Such changes can be made possible only if other opportunities are available.

Feedback

Your fees:

We are a fully Nepali organization so your money doesn't go on salaries and office space in Europe or North America. We keep our overheads lower, still provide excellent in country support, and get more of your money going directly to where it helps Nepal's poorest people.

We understand how important it is for you to trust that your money is being well spent. This is why we have given you a full breakdown of

Description	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks	4 Weeks	6 Weeks	8 Weeks
Orientation Cost: Cost for Nepali language and cultural Training including hands out, stationeries, guided sight-seeing, entrance fees to cultural heritages	50	75	75	75	75	75
Transportation: Picking up from the airport, transfer to placement and drop off to the airport.	25	50	55	60	60	60
Food and Accommodation in Host family	55	110	150	210	330	420
Marketing costs: Primarily internet, marketing, website updates, SEO, Google advertisement and various marketing purposes	60	75	75	75	75	100
Support to the project: This amount goes to VSN's on-going projects e.g. schools, scholarship/sponsorship, clothing(food, educational expenses, clothing) running women center and a day care center for disabled children	75	75	100	100	100	100
Administration & overhead costs: Staff Salaries, legal fees, renewals, rent, repairs, supplies, taxes, telephone bills, travel expenditures, and utilities.	55	100	180	180	190	205
Total	320.00	485.00	635.00	700.00	830.00	960.00

The way we allocate your fee to a project is by combining all volunteers' fees and putting them towards larger projects. We believe that combining the money together means we can make large differences rather than dripping small amounts into projects which get lost in the day to day running of them. For example, with \$5,000 we are able to set up a whole new health clinic in an

Note:

Volunteers are expected to pay additional USD 15/week for the placement outside the Kathmandu Valley.

VSN is proud to share with you that we have already been able to establish several projects like CBIA School, Orphanages, Women center, Scholarship Program, Regular supports to various orphanages and planning to extend new projects by utilizing the fees that we receive from our volunteers. We need large amount of regular funding to run these projects effectively. Through our projects, we have been able to provide supports to hundreds of underprivileged children and women in Nepal.

We are afraid that these fees are non-negotiable. We are unique amongst volunteer societies in giving this much insight into the workings of our organization. We do not accept requests from people to lower their fees by managing their own orientation, transportation etc. If you do not wish to take advantage of any of the program elements then this money is fed back direct to the project you will work on.

Fees to be paid

VSN requests the volunteers to pay fees on the same day of your arrival to **Bishal Shrestha** at the VSN office in Kathmandu and can be paid in American Dollars, Pounds Sterling or Euro in cash or Nepali Rupees.

What happens if you leave the placement early, can you get your money back?

Once the volunteer makes their decision and pays for the program fee, VSN volunteer program does not refund any program fees. However, if the volunteer has unavoidable circumstances (such as illness, death in the family, etc) they may request to leave the program, and VSN will consider returning the host family cost.

You may also hear people talking about the **Everest Foundation**. In 2006, two Dutch volunteers, Marcel and Ankie van Wersch, approached us about setting up an organization that would specifically work in and around Pepsi-Cola. This organization is called The Everest Foundation and is managed by the VSN staff. With the continued help and support of the ex-volunteers from Holland we have been able to focus the funds raised through VSN more effectively. The



A-Z of Cultural Adaptation

A	Affection between men and women (even husband and wife) is never shown in public.
B	Bargaining is to be expected. Don't bargain if you're not really interested. If your price is accepted, don't try and back out and don't try and get even
C	Children are often the centre of attention. Cows are sacred.
D	Dress conservatively - Avoid tight, revealing, short and see-through.
E	Eat with the right hand. It is good manners to ask for 'seconds'.
F	Feet should never be pointed at anyone. Never step over anyone or move things with your feet
G	Gifts are seldom opened in front of the person who has given it.
H	Heads are sacred and should be treated with respect. Never take a 'topi' off a man's head, even in fun.
I	Invitations often arrive at the last moment. If you're busy even a short appearance is enough.
J	'Jutho' refers to food that is ritually polluted and therefore inedible. Any food that has come into contact with the mouth (directly or indirectly) becomes
K	Keep outward signs of your wealth to a minimum.
L	Left hands are used for cleaning oneself after going to the toilet. Don't use the left hand to pass anything - whether food or money.
M	Maalas (or necklaces) of shoes draped around someone's neck is the ultimate insult.
N	Namaste is both greeting and farewell, combined with a prayer-like gesture.
O	Offices are busy places - you may need to wait. Accept a cup of tea and polite conversation before any business.
P	Payment after social occasions is done by the person issuing the invitation. Nepalis don't divide the bill or go 'Dutch'. It is expected that the other people will reciprocate another day.

Q	Quickly getting angry is not good. It causes people to 'lose face'.
R	Rice is a religious object. Relationship is very important
S	Shoes are considered filthy. Don't ask others to handle them. Take them off before entering a house. Status is an important part of life.
T	Temples are always walked around in a clock-wise direction. Time is very flexible. A person may show up an hour late for an appointment. In the hills, this may be a day or more late. As a foreigner, though, you are expected to be punctual.
U	Understand the culture in which you live and adapt accordingly.
V	Vehicles - rules on the road are limited but generally 'might has right' !
W	Women are considered socially to be 'lower' than men. They are served after, and often walk behind men.
X	Xenophobia is rarely found among Nepalese. The foreigners (usually the white) are treated with respect in many places .
Y	You are a guest in Nepal.
Z	Zero tolerance is NOT an option - customs in Nepal are different NOT wrong!

General Safety:

The majority of people in Nepal are friendly, co-operative and welcoming. However, the political climate is changing rapidly and as you are probably aware the situation in Nepal is currently unstable.

There are two kinds of threats in Nepal - those that you will find in almost any country, such as theft and mugging, and those that are specific to Nepal's political situation and conflict, such as rioting and terrorism. In a new setting you need to be particularly careful and gradually build up your experience and understanding so that you can develop your 'common sense' to your new environment. Most people have a safe time in Nepal. The advice here is intended to make sure that you do too.

- Dress conservatively, giving consideration to local customs and dress codes. Do not display cash, keys or other valuables. Be appropriately groomed. Don't look like a tourist!
- Always know where you are going (and if you don't act as if you do!). Radiate confidence, yet be discreet and unassuming.
- Keep your wits about you! Be aware of your surroundings and alert to possible problems.
- Avoid crowds. If they are blocking your way then do not attempt to pass. Find another way to your destination or change your plans.
- Maintain a calm, mature approach to all situations. Try to be unprovocative when confronted with hostility or potentially hostile situations.
- Avoid being out at night. If you have to be then don't travel alone.
- Be careful on the roads. The rules are different here. Assume nothing.

Some cultural Do's and Don'ts:

With its diverse ethnic groups and traditional beliefs, Nepal has numerous cultural practices that may appear unusual to a person on his/her first visit to the country. Therefore, it is important for any overseas volunteer to take into consideration the different cultural aspects of the country to enjoy their stay in Nepal. Here are some tips which may be helpful to you.

Greetings

- "Namaste" is widely used for greeting people.
- Shaking hands is more western than Nepali and, whilst you may shake hands with a man if he offers his hand first, you should not shake hands with a woman.
- Holding hands/hugging between opposite sexes in public can be offensive (Relationships between men and women are usually restrained in public)

Dress

- Women should always dress modestly. Avoid shorts, skirts, low-cut dresses (and, in some areas, sleeveless dresses), open, tight-fitting clothes and see-through materials.
- Shorts are not acceptable for women, but men wear shorts at home.

Shoes/Feet

- Shoes and feet are considered to be unclean.
- Take your shoes off before entering the temple, religious buildings, kitchen, bedroom.
- Do not point at things/people with your feet.
- It is a sin to touch a book with your feet.
- Do not step over people, food, books etc.
- Do not put your shoes upside down.

Eating and Drinking

- Do not eat from someone else's plate.
- Do not serve/offer any food or drink if someone has already touched it with the lips.
- Always use right hand for eating.
- Wash hands and mouth after eating.
- Burping is acceptable.
- Nepalese prefer spicy food.

Others

- Do not associate people or their behaviour with the animal. e.g. "You eat like a monkey."
- Learn to address a person according to the Nepali tradition of respect, status and age. e.g. daai, bhaai etc
- Privacy does not exist in Nepal in the same way as you understand in the West. if you really want to be alone, try to explain that you want to rest or

General Guidelines, Terms and Conditions for Volunteers

Your adjustment to Nepali culture will at times be challenging. When you arrive, take a few days to observe and determine areas where you feel you might be most helpful in your work placement. Discuss possible tasks with the authorized persons and they will help you to devise a plan of action.

These guidelines are set in place to assist all of us in most effectively serving in your area of work. While we sometimes struggle with our communication and cultural differences, the points presented here are designed to bring a clear understanding of the goals and rules of operation.

The following are RULES that volunteers must be willing to observe to receive permission to work under VSN:

Training and Orientation: An induction/orientation, short sightseeing, basic Nepali language and cultural orientation shall be arranged by VSN at the initial and relevant time before volunteering.

Placement: VSN is committed to arrange your placement in responsible and practical manner but in case of any unsolvable or medical problem, you are requested to contact VSN immediately. VSN tries to provide help and assist in the underlying matter.

Food: You will be provided the same food as prepared for the rest of the family two times a day during your home stay. Host families are careful of about basic food hygiene; however it is safe and wise to avoid raw food and green salads. The fees cover only food and accommodation for the period of your placement but you can buy additional food you like at your own expense.

Accommodation: In most cases you have to share room, bathroom and toilet facilities. Please be aware that the standard of hygiene in Nepal is much lower than western countries.

Payment and Program Start Date:

The arrival/pick up day is the program start date. If you sign up for 4 weeks and picked on the 1st of the month, then 1st of the month is Program Start Date and Program End Date would be 28th of the month.

Volunteers must pay the fees upon arrival at VSN. Fees are charged on weekly basis only. Should you wish to extend your volunteering period, please inform VSN on time and pay accordingly.

Cancellations and Refunds: Once the fees are paid shall not be re-

Expenses: The program fees only cover the services mentioned in the respective programs. You have to bear additional expenses such as bottled water, snacks, phone calls or other luxury items.

Extension of Family Stay: After the completion of the program if any volunteer wishes to extend his/her family stay he/she shall have to request VSN to do so and the latter will make arrangement.

Code of Conduct:

Volunteers shall seek to understand and respect Nepali tradition, religion, culture and customs of local people while in Nepal as you will also get more respect by doing this.

Dress modestly and behave in a culturally sensitive manner.

Illegal or violent behavior shall result in immediate termination from the program.

Volunteers shall not get involved in any kind of proselytizing, evangelizing and political affairs apart from illegal activities.

Volunteers are strictly prohibited to bring any book magazines, CDs, DVDs that are inappropriate for anyone in Nepal. The use of alcohol or tobacco and narcotic drugs is sternly prohibited.

Always keep the address card, photocopy of passport with you. Don't pass your telephone number, email address to any stranger and don't rely on the strangers.

Do not walk alone after it gets dark. You should be at your host family at the stipulated by the family. Keep VSN informed of your plans about trips and weekends. Follow the rule provided by host family.

VSN is also a registered travel company. Volunteers advised to do bungi jumping, paragliding, ticketing, trekking etc. (if they wish) through VSN.

Volunteers shall not engage in sexual behaviors or any kind of physical contact between male and female during the stay in host family.

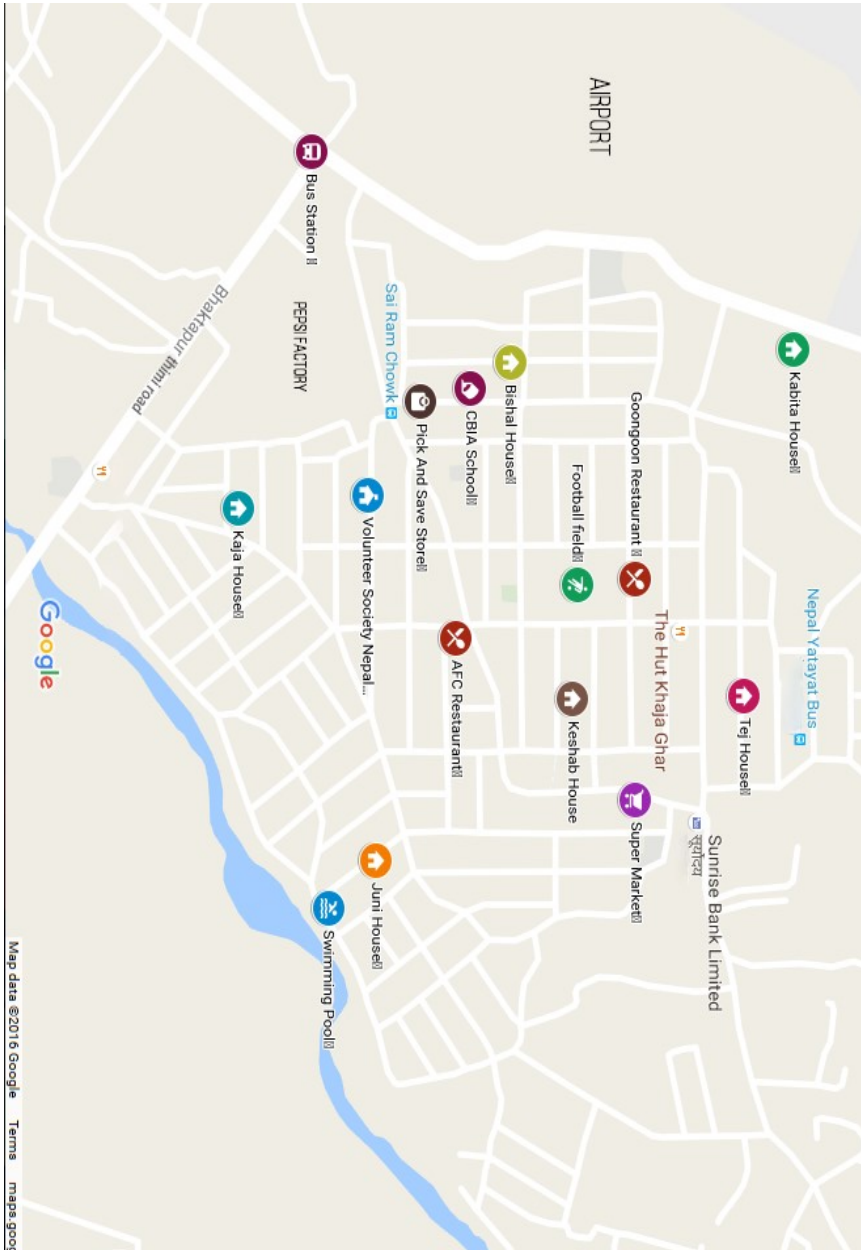
Termination: Violation of any of the terms mentioned above shall result into termination of this contract. Apart from this, volunteers shall have to leave the program on that very day without notice if volunteer is believed to behave in threatening or unacceptable manner or program staff or the VSN staff or associate organizations deem so.

In case the agreement is terminated due to any of the terms mentioned above volunteers shall not be entitled to any refund from VSN.

Remember: Volunteers are a part of our family and we are happy that you have come from so far away to help Nepal! Enjoy your time and have fun!!!

Just to help you get by..

linos	<i>Please take</i>
basnos	<i>Please sit down</i>
dinos	<i>Please give</i>
aaunos	<i>Please come</i>
khaanos	<i>Please eat</i>
garnos	<i>Please do ____</i>
chahindaina	<i>I don't need it</i>
Hello, how are you?	<i>Namaste, tapaaillai kasto chha?</i>
Please give me..	<i>malaai _____ dinos.</i>
Thank you	<i>dhanyabaad (polite - "hus" means okay)</i>
Menu please	<i>Menu dinos</i>
What is this?	<i>yo ke ho?</i>
My name is..	<i>mero naam _____ ho</i>
I come from ..	<i>mero desh _____ ho</i>
I am a	<i>ma hu.</i>
Where is ...?	<i>_____ kaha chha?</i>
Very good	<i>dherai raamro</i>
It's tasty	<i>miTho chha</i>
1 kilo, 1/2 kilo	<i>ek kilo, aadhaa kilo (eg. ek kilo onions dinos)</i>
Is that enough?	<i>pugchha?</i>
Enough	<i>pugyo/bhayo</i>
Okay	<i>la/has/hunchha</i>
I am learning Nepali	<i>ma Nepali sikdai chhu.</i>



VSN also arranges various kinds of tours, trekking, white water rafting, wild life safari, mountain flights and other adventure trips and activities in Nepal based on the interest of the volunteers.

Part of our earnings from such activities will be set aside for developmental purpose by investing on their basic needs such as education, clothing and health care for the needy people in Nepal.

