Challenges that volunteer may encounter while volunteering in China by Tom Hopkins

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In good old times, the commonest notion of voluntary social work worldwide was the relief of the distressed/helping the handicapped through individual and group efforts. The early efforts of voluntary organisations were purely experimental in nature. Those days, they tried their level best to supplement governmental efforts. Thus the role of voluntary organisation was that of a pioneer and explorer.

Today, voluntary organisations in developing countries like China have undergone a radical change, both in terms of their assumption of roles and rendering services. A voluntary organization apart from providing services during emergency deals with the rehabilitative aspects of social work. It now relies much on the scientific techniques of human problems and many of the most active voluntary organisations boast of highly skilled, trained and paid professional workers.

Volunteering in China has lately gained pace. People worldwide are starting to push the cogs of their mind into gear with as much aplomb and confidence as they can muster and set off sails to unknown harbours, in order to help fellow human-beings square up to the challenges of life. Volunteering can come in many packages. The Chinese government is now in favor of cultural immersion as well as study abroad programs, where volunteering plays a very important role in a conscious attempt to restore peace between countries and strengthen relationships.

Volunteering in China with Minds Abroad will definitely create a deliciously warm feeling in your heart, as you help the underprivileged children step up to the challenges of life, but this is no cakewalk. The problems encountered by the non-profit sector in every developing country are multifaceted and are deeply rooted in its social and religious stigmas. If you choose to volunteer in China, while learning Mandarin, you will come face to face with the challenges that the Chinese development sector encounters now. Although volunteering is a veritable catalyst of positive social changes, most people do not take a keen interest in charitable activities, as they are either hard-pressed for time or are simply not aware of the problems that are negatively impacting their society.

In the good old days, the volunteering sector used to get the bulk of their resources from the community in form of donations and subscriptions. With the economic changes, the entire charity scenario has undergone a dramatic change. In a bid to cater to a massive number of welfare programmes, demand for funds for welfare activities has drastically increased. Rendering services to the needy is a costly affair today than it used to be. As a result, the financial requirements of running ordinary services have scaled up due to higher cost of living.

Charity organisations are popping up every now and then in China. Several poverty-alleviation projects, undertaken by the Chinese Government, are already underway. The government in a bid to seal the gap between the rich and the poor is working in conjunction with several national and international non-profit organizations towards a common goal of restoration of equality and justice in the society. Although the countryâ€™s economy continues to grow at an exponential rate, the government is struggling to address the challenges that its industrial sector is posing to its environment. Moreover, many of its non-profit organizations and charities are hoax ones, lacking honesty, transparency, clear-cut objectives and a sound understanding of the social issues. They either wind up misutilizing the sanctioned grants or splashing them on their own vested interests. As a result, donor organizations, including corporate conglomerates and foreign institutions are not ready to cough up enough money to take their causes forward.

If you are a foreign student, planning to participate in one of our Chinese language programs and at

the same time, give back to the world, you will never regret the experience. However, you have to stick around with your goal, as China is still grappling with the changes, induced by globalization. But if you keep your chin up, you can implement sustainable and positive changes in the society of your host country.

Many voluntary organizations will tend to pile on you the responsibilities of fund raising. If fund-raising is not your cup of tea, this is something you will never enjoy doing and the entire experience may fall short of your expectations. You have to be extremely cautious about selecting an NGO or a VO and only extensive research and effective communication can help you figure a way out. But if you are studying abroad in China and decide to volunteer with our partner organizations, you will surely chase some of the memorable and life-changing experiences of your life. Students, participating in our study abroad programs, volunteer during the afternoons, teaching English to disadvantaged children. You will be placed in the best of Kunmingâ€™s NGOs with which we have partnered over the years and we will try to allot you to projects, befitting your expectations and interests. Students or volunteers are also not required to pay any fees for volunteering with our partner organizations and that is one of the many pluses of volunteering with us.

Although China is about to accede to the worldâ€™s next superpower status, poverty is still a pressing problem. Voluntary organizations that are genuinely interested in welfare activities hardly scrape by due to financial crunch. To economise expenses related to staffing, VOs at times even compromise on the quality of their recruits and take on board untrained, unqualified staff, who are happy with their meagre salaries. Poor terms and conditions of work, coupled with high attrition rates and nepotism, chase away qualified and deserving candidates. Absence of funds for proper orientation and training and proficiency in English are other stumbling blocks in the development sector of China. If you have an open mind and are eager to run that extra mile without complaining, then, you are cut out for volunteering in China. This is because before sensitising people on their rights, freedom and privileges, you have to work hard to catalyze positive changes in your own organization and this will only be possible with the help, guidance and support of a good study abroad organization.

China is unique, breathtakingly beautiful, the way it is, as it nurses all its diverse cultural elements with passion, keen attention and devotion of a mother. The alluring beauty of Chinese culture lies in its quintessential folk-lores, traditions, customs and languages and this pulls in thousands of visitors from across the world, inspiring their awe and reverence. China is home to hundreds of ethnic groups with various cultural dispositions and speaking different languages. Variety is also reflected in the countryâ€™s exotic flora and fauna, lustrous rivers, vast stretches of dreamy green meadows, forebodingly tall mountains, lip-smackingly tasty food and even, the way the natives dress. The Chinese climate defies straightforward generalisation. The country hosts versatile weather conditions, right from frigid winters and sun-kissed summers to temperate autumns that sweep across its geography and topography. If you plan on studying abroad in China, it will definitely be a good choice. While learning Chinese in China, you can get an insight into various cultural quirks of the country. But volunteering is no easy undertaking in China. As a volunteer, you will have to rise above its cultural peculiarities and if you muster the courage to face every adversity, which may come in form of language barriers and cultural differences, thereâ€™s nothing like volunteering in China.

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