



General Information and Requirements for Volunteers

Our vision

Bridging ethnic, religious and geographic divides through people-inspired action for a unified, peaceful and prosperous Sri Lankan community.

Our mission

Bridging Lanka links expatriate and 'in country' Sri Lankans by harnessing the expertise and resources of one for the benefit of the other - through livelihood support, business development, community advocacy, urban planning, environmental protection and social cohesion initiatives.

In Sri Lanka, we also build bridges between the centre, its administration and assets, and peripheral areas of the country. All our programs embed ethnic, religious and social reconciliation.

Our objectives

1. To respond to social, economic and environmental issues in the lagging regions of Sri Lanka;
2. To act as a credible knowledge, business and investment link between Sri Lankans and non-Lankan supporters abroad and post-war development opportunities in Sri Lanka;
3. To work towards improved relations through constructive engagement between expatriate Sri Lankans and the Government and polity of Sri Lanka;
4. To explore a Sri Lankan approach to diversity management that affirms the notion of a religious and ethnically-cohesive nation;
5. To pursue the relief of poverty, suffering, sickness, disability, helplessness and distress by accessing resources through various ethical means.

Our principles

- **Open hearted** – a global and united diaspora, demonstrating their heart connection to Sri Lanka by working for the peace and prosperity of the country
- **Reconciled** – an acknowledgement of the collective pain, dispossession and trauma caused by past conflicts and a commitment to journeying together
- **Cohesive** – the right of every Sri Lankan citizen, regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion, to enjoy equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the social, cultural and economic life of the nation.

Our approach

Mindset change - from aid dependency to self-reliance; from a victim standpoint to being authors of one's own destiny;

'No enemies' - as Tamil, Muslim, Burgher and Sinhala people we play a positive role in post-conflict Sri Lanka recognising that all parties, including the diaspora and government, are part of the solution;

Place-based - coordinated, area-based, multi-stakeholder approach to uplifting districts through harnessing skills, experiences and resources of the private, public and voluntary sectors;

Relationally interlinked - recognising that the trajectories of people in Sri Lanka and expatriate communities are inextricably linked, that what we do here directly impacts what happens there;

Informed compassion - that proper analysis leads to a deeper understanding and truth, discouraging black and white understandings of complex issues;

Grounded action - that 'hands on' participation through local projects, knowledge transfers, exposure visits and reconciliation initiatives will nurture our desired future.

Operation Mannar - Projects Areas 2018

Sector	Areas of volunteer endeavour
Women & Community	Women's issues, community development, community engagement, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, suicide prevention, primary health care, aged and disability services, youth work, family services, doctors, nurses, peace and conflict, international development
Business Development	Livelihood for vulnerable groups, social entrepreneurship, business planning, IT, website design, office and business administration, graphics & design, workplace health & safety, agriculturalists, communications, marketing, workplace training & assessment
Urban Improvement	Town planning, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, engineers, building & construction, solid waste management, disaster mitigation, kulam (pond) rehabilitation, drainage and water conservation
Sustainable Tourism	Sustainable tourism, tourist guide training, food & beverage, hospitality, archaeology, heritage development, oral history, publications, data collection
Education for All	Teaching and learning, English as a foreign language, English conversational circle facilitation, curriculum development, online learning, vocational education, personal development
Care for Environment	Environmental care, organic horticulture, forest-based livelihoods, reforestation, environmental advocacy for flora and fauna protection, animal welfare, veterinary/equine care, flora and fauna public policy
Social Cohesion	Reconciliation and 'bridge building' activities based on ethnic, religious, caste, age, gender, dis/ability, geographic and educational divides, Muslim-Sinhalese Buddhist conflict resolution, Tamil-Sinhala-Muslim conflict resolution, leadership program for religious leaders

Placements will be discussed with individual volunteers or groups and a 'good fit' negotiated. While Bridging Lanka will endeavour to provide as much forward-planning and certainty around what the volunteer will do (areas of responsibility and specific tasks), volunteers will also need to bring a degree of flexibility and 'chilled' attitude due to the dynamic context of Mannar. Project outputs will be negotiated and support and supervision offered.

Basis of a volunteer placement

Bridging Lanka calls for Expressions of Interest from suitably qualified and/or interested practitioners from a wide array of professions and experiences to participate in an unpaid volunteer placement to undertake the project work outlined above.

Volunteers who have made an expression of interest and been accepted into the volunteer program are required to either participate in a training program run by Bridging Lanka or hold discussions by some other suitable means prior to departure. The fieldwork dates change from year to year but generally fall within the following months – October to December or April to July. The duration of the fieldtrip should not be less than ten days and can extend up to six months, or further. Volunteers are unpaid and provide their time and work at no cost to this Mannar District Development project.

Teams

If participating in a team, volunteers are required to contribute toward a warm and positive team spirit, support the program and care for other team members throughout their placement. Given the relatively short timelines of a placement it is important that all volunteers work cohesively to achieve anticipated project outcomes.

Costs

Volunteers are required to cover their own travel and living costs throughout the project. This includes the cost of return air travel to Sri Lanka, travel insurance, any necessary medical vaccines, the cost of domestic travel within Sri Lanka, and accommodation food and living expenses. Additionally, a levy of AU\$300 for waged and AU\$200 for students/part-time/unwaged covers the following: staff time to set up the placement including negotiations with stakeholders, meetings and gaining approvals, staff support during the placement, use of office Wi-Fi and facilities, tea, coffee and water, etc.

Equipment and materials

Volunteers are required to provide their own equipment such as laptops, cameras, mobile phones and materials needed to carry out their volunteer work while in Sri Lanka.

Group travel

Volunteers are required to travel as part of the Bridging Lanka group as far as possible (including travel to and from Mannar from Colombo) and keep the Director of Operations, Mohan Gunasekara, and Executive Director, Jeremy Liyanage, informed about their arrival and departure dates. All volunteers are required to commence the program on the stipulated starting date.

Accommodation and meals

Accommodation in Mannar will be arranged in advance by Bridging Lanka and will generally be in one of the local guest houses where meals will also be provided. Cost per night is expected to be in the order of AU \$25 including breakfast and dinner. Midday meals can be bought from local restaurants or shops. Please note that alcohol is not available in the guest houses, restaurants or shops in Mannar and it is illegal to consume alcohol in public in Mannar District. Discreet consumption of alcohol in guest houses is permitted. Volunteers with special dietary needs should discuss this with Jeremy Liyanage prior to departure.

Health and safety

All volunteers are urged to consult their doctor or the Travel Doctor - www.traveldoctor.com.au concerning travel vaccinations and personal health precautions prior to travelling. In particular, volunteers visiting Sri Lanka should take precautions against mosquito and insect bite and infections. Malaria has been eradicated in Sri Lanka but dengue is prevalent. Bushman mosquito repellents are recommended. Also make avail of

mosquito nets that are provided. It is best to drink bottled water where bottle caps are intact and to be careful with hygiene and food.

It is recommended that volunteers carry their own basic first aid and personal medications with them. A wide array of medicines can also be bought locally. One kit can be shared among a team. There is also a first aid kit at the Bridging Lanka office in Mannar.

All volunteers are required to register as a traveller on their own government website; for Aussies, with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website prior to departure - www.smartraveller.gov.au .

While Mannar Township and District are safe places to visit and work, volunteers, especially female, are advised not to travel through the town or district alone and should stay in the company of at least one other volunteer or known local person during their stay in Mannar or during travel to and from Mannar. Volunteers are advised to stay away from any prohibited areas or military installations.

Volunteer program responsibilities

While in Sri Lanka, responsibility for the overall management of projects rests with Mohan Gunasekara, Director of Operations, and Jeremy Liyanage, Executive Director. Participants are required to consult with Mohan concerning any public relations matters or key messages about the project and the work of Bridging Lanka prior to discussing this with members of the media, local community or government.

While participating in this project in Sri Lanka all volunteers are required to represent the 'Operation Mannar' Project and Bridging Lanka in a positive and professional manner and to behave and dress in a culturally appropriate manner at all times. Women especially should dress more conservatively – sleeved blouses and dresses at knee level or below. Females, please refrain from having your photos taken with young men if not known or feeling uncomfortable. These could end up on social media. Volunteers are asked to avoid references or commentary about politics and religion while participating in projects in Mannar. Volunteers are also advised not to pursue intimate liaisons with local people as this could lead to dire consequences. If one should develop, please discuss this matter with Jeremy Liyanage. Full confidentiality is assured.

Free travel time and expectations of work time

Personal travel during the project is encouraged and should be programmed for weekends, and prior to the placement's commencement or at the end of the placement. For safety reasons all volunteers are requested to advise Director of Operations, Mohan Gunasekara when they are travelling out of Mannar Town or District for personal travel during the project (this can be done by mobile phone or in person) including dates and destination of travel.

There are several opportunities for local travel and information about these destinations will be made available to volunteers. These excursions can be made by local bus, train or van and driver. It is recommended that volunteers travel with at least one other person when going out of town.

The working week for volunteers commences on Monday morning until Friday lunch time – then it's your 'hair down' time! Arrive back by Sunday night. Regular and punctual attendance on a consistent basis is important for project implementation and team cohesion, complying with meeting or project obligations and presenting the project team in a positive, professional light.

Preparation

All volunteers accepted into the 'Operation Mannar' Program are required to participate in some form of preparatory program. This largely depends on geography. Training workshops are held in Melbourne and

volunteers from other parts of Australia are encouraged to attend. If this is not feasible, due to distance or cost or living in another country, alternative arrangements are made.

The purpose of the preparatory session/s are to provide sufficient information about working and living in Sri Lanka, contextual information about the projects, an opportunity for team members to get to know each other and commence working together as a team, information about capacity building principles and working with Sri Lankan counterparts, and other preparatory information as background to undertaking a successful placement in Sri Lanka.

Insurance

All volunteers are required to have their own travel insurance prior to departure to cover medical, luggage and travel claims. Two recommended providers are World Nomads - <http://www.worldnomads.com> or CoverMore Travel Insurance - <http://www.covermore.com.au/>

Visas

Australians travelling to Sri Lanka require an entry visa. Volunteers and students require a Business Visa. An easy to obtain, one month online application, ETA or Electronic Travel Authorization, can be accessed through - <http://www.eta.gov.lk> at a cost of US\$40 using a credit card. Do not use other sites as they could be fraudulent or seek higher costs for the visa. If you require an extension, a two month visa can be obtained from the Department of Immigration & Emigration, "Suhurupaya", Sri Subhuthipura Road, Battaramulla, Colombo. A visa can be extended up to a total of six months. For extending your visa, arrive early, by 8:15 am, have your passport size photos taken (Rs 150 for 4), get an application form and a number, complete an application form and submit it. Your number will be called, followed by a short routine interview. After the processing of your application, you will be required to pay the stipulated amount, approximately US\$30 in Sri Lankan currency. **It is a long wait and a confusing process so if staying longer than one month in Sri Lanka, we strongly advise that you contact your nearest Sri Lankan mission in your country of residence and arrange your visa through that office.**

Airfares

Affordable air travel is usually available through airlines including Thai, Malaysian or Singapore Airlines. If in Australia, Travel Talk International offers competitive rates - <http://www.traveltalk.com.au/> Tel: 03 9642 4244. Speak to Adrian.

Changing money at the airport

Upon exiting immigration at Bandaranaike International Airport, right in front of you are various bank outlets where you can change foreign currency into Sri Lankan Rupees. The sign for rupee is Rs. Australian dollars and several other foreign currencies are readily exchanged. Have your passport and cash ready.

Other services at the airport

For connectivity, there are mobile phone, data and internet dongles available at the airport. We recommend Dialog as it has the broadest coverage in Sri Lanka.

- **Mobile phones** - It is essential to carry a working mobile phone and charger during the project in Sri Lanka as they will be an important form of communication and connection with the group. Phones, sim cards and internet modems can be purchased in Sri Lanka on arrival. If coming direct to Mannar, leave this until you arrive. One of the Bridging Lanka staff will assist with advice of where to purchase these items, including a local power adapter.
- **Internet dongle** - It may wish to have your own internet dongle for your laptop while in Mannar. The Bridging Lanka office has Wi-Fi so you're covered there. We ask volunteers to use it strictly for work purposes and not to download music, videos and films. Once the monthly quota is exhausted, work output is severely affected. Documents required: application form, passport, customer photograph. Again, wait until you get to Mannar for this.

Taxi from airport

When you come out of immigration, directly to the right there is a taxi counter. Tell the staff person where you are going eg Galle Face Hotel or Colombo 4 and they will calculate a set rate. Either AC or non-AC taxis can be requested, the latter being a cheaper option. After payment is made, someone will take you to your designated taxi. Tell the driver the complete address and off you go. Pay the driver.

Contacts for Bridging Lanka in Sri Lanka

Mohan Gunasekara	Director Operations (Mannar)	+94 711 730 818
Jeremy Liyanage	Executive Director, Bridging Lanka (Australia)	+61 403 694 132 +94 771 023 981
Rojan	Assistant Manager, Bridging Lanka (Mannar, Sri Lanka)	+94 766 213 109
Mowleesan	Finance & Administration Officer (Mannar, Sri Lanka)	+94 771 122 176
Visakha Tillekeratne	Director, Bridging Lanka (Colombo, Sri Lanka)	+94 773 178 606

The Bridging Lanka office in Mannar is located at 48 New Moor Street, Mannar Town and is near the Sports Stadium at the corner of Hospital and Talaimannar Roads and Moor Street Mosque.

Volunteers are expected to contribute Rs 100 each week for the use of bottled filter water. There is free Wi-Fi in the office but we ask volunteers to use it strictly for work purposes and not to download music, videos and films. Once the monthly quota is exhausted, work output is severely affected.

Naming conventions

Whereas in Australia it is customary to read a name from left to right (given name then surname), in Sri Lanka, it is more common that the reverse occurs e.g. *Ponnuthurai* (father's name) is followed by *Prabakaran* (given name). Often the father's name is abbreviated to simply an initial e.g. *P. Prabakaran*. It is acceptable to call him *Prabakaran* or *Praba* for short.

Contacts for Bridging Lanka in Australia and Sri Lanka

Bridging Lanka Ltd 28 Mellor Street KEDRON QLD 4031 AUSTRALIA	Bridging Lanka (Guarantee) Limited 73/12 Temple Road Off Kirulapone Avenue KIRULAPONE SRI LANKA
--	---

Email: director@bridginglanka.org

Jeremy's mobile in Australia: +61 403 694 132

Jeremy's mobile in Sri Lanka: +94 771 023 981



Bridging Lanka Ltd is a registered charity in Australia with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission, and a Voluntary Social Service Organisation in Sri Lanka under the National NGO Secretariat.

ABN: 92 146 209 297, ACN: 146 209 207 (Australia); NGO Ref No: L 156116

Web: www.bridginglanka.org

FB: [Bridging Lanka](#); [Kunchuku Greening](#); [Periyakamam Kulam](#); [Funky Donkey](#)