



VOLUNTEER POLICY

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VOLUNTEER POLICY

Welcome to our Bridging Lanka family of volunteers. Your personal and professional commitment is valued and we hope your tenure with us will enrich your experience and the experience of those within Bridging Lanka, its partner organisations and other affiliated groups.

1.1 Our vision

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

1.2 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 and social cohesion initiatives.

We are also building bridges in Sri Lanka between the centre, its administration and assets, and peripheral areas of the country. All our programs embed ethnic, religious and social interaction. The eight bridges Bridging Lanka will target are as follows:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Caste
- Religion
- Ability/disability
- Age
- Geography
- Education

1.3 Our objectives

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

1.4 Our principles

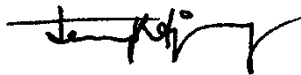
- Open hearted – a global and united diaspora, demonstrating their heart connection to Sri Lanka by working for the peace and prosperity of the country

- 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.

1.5 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.

It is mandatory that you read this policy prior to your departure to ensure you gain a full understanding of your role, responsibilities and commitment to the project(s) to which you will be assigned.



Signed: Executive Director, Bridging Lanka (Guarantee) Ltd Date: 01/01/2019

2 Bridging Lanka - Volunteer Policy

The Bridging Lanka Volunteer Policy must be read in conjunction with the Bridging Lanka's Code of Conduct. Both documents are signed and returned to Bridging Lanka (Australia) before a volunteer can commence any activities on behalf of Bridging Lanka.

Bridging Lanka:

Bridging Lanka (Australia) will primarily be responsible for raising the awareness of volunteers and advising them of volunteer opportunities. It will provide advice and information on logistics, travel and the requirements of partner organisations (where applicable), prior to departure.

Bridging Lanka acknowledges the important contribution volunteers can make to the work undertaken at our partner organisation's operational sites. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to manage the roles and expectations of both Bridging Lanka organisations, our partners as well as prospective volunteers to Bridging Lanka Projects.

2.1 Who does this policy apply to

This policy applies to all individuals and organisations working in partnership with Bridging Lanka at their Sri Lanka site. Bridging Lanka both in Australia and Sri Lanka seeks to ensure its volunteer program complies with the requirements of this policy.

2.2 Who this policy does not apply to

This policy does not apply to the following:

- Visitors to a Bridging Lanka site
- Any paid employees of Bridging Lanka both in Australia and Sri Lanka

2.3 Supervision of volunteers

Bridging Lanka in Sri Lanka will ensure that all volunteers and volunteer teams are adequately supervised and that volunteer placements are appropriate to the skill of the volunteers.

Bridging Lanka recognises that its Sri Lankan operation will have additional requirements for special purpose volunteers in addition to the requirements outlined in this policy. These requirements may necessitate the in-country operation to develop expanded volunteer operational guidelines or workplace procedures when required.

2.4 Bridging Lanka - Responsibilities

Bridging Lanka recognises that this Volunteer Policy will form the basis of our agreement with all volunteers and seeks to ensure the following is in place:

- an appropriate application process for the recruitment, selection and appointment of all volunteers to all Bridging Lanka Project sites;
- a system of records maintained which captures each volunteer's personal information, including dates of service, positions held, duties performed, evaluation of work and other information relevant to each Volunteer assignment;
- a copy of next-of-kin details and relevant health records;
- a copy of each volunteers' acknowledgement of their willingness to abide by Bridging Lanka's Child Protection Policy will be held on file; and

- a copy of each volunteers' Insurance policy details.

Bridging Lanka will ensure that all volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

Bridging Lanka Sri Lanka will appoint a responsible staff member to manage volunteers and volunteer teams.

The core underlying commitment under this Policy is to ensure all volunteers and volunteer teams receive adequate supervision while working at or visiting Bridging Lanka projects and project sites.

3 Definitions

A volunteer is defined as someone: "who offers their services to make a contribution to assist another community in a developing country, for humanitarian reasons, not for personal financial gain".

Bridging Lanka recognises four classifications of Volunteers.

Short term Volunteers – are defined as volunteers that have a specific role to undertake for a designated time period of generally at least 2 weeks and up to 3 months in duration.

Long term Volunteers – are defined as volunteers that have a specific role to undertake for a designated time period of more than 3 months duration.

Volunteer Teams – are defined as a group of volunteers that have been assigned to work on a specific project. The group will be led by a Team Leader. The team leader will be responsible for managing the team and acting as a conduit between the team and Bridging Lanka.

Underage Volunteers - Applicants who have not reached the age of 18 years.

All Underage Volunteers require the written consent of a parent or guardian. They must be accompanied by and under the supervision of an adult to enhance their experience and ensure their safety at all times. The volunteer services assigned to a minor will be performed in a non-hazardous environment.

4 Rights and responsibilities of volunteers

Volunteers are valuable resources to Bridging Lanka and will be appointed to meaningful work, treated as equal co-workers and receive effective supervision and recognition of any work undertaken.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and uphold the expectations, policies and procedures of Bridging Lanka. Bridging Lanka seeks to provide a conducive environment for all volunteers; however, Bridging Lanka does not take any legal or financial responsibility for its volunteers.

While volunteering in Sri Lanka, all participants are required to represent both their project and Bridging Lanka in a positive and professional manner and to behave and dress in a culturally appropriate manner at all times.

4.1 *Grievance procedure*

Bridging Lanka seeks to ensure all volunteers have a rewarding experience and we encourage you to provide feedback or raise any issues of concern that may arise during your assignment. It is imperative that you address any grievances immediately whilst you are in-country, so they can be dealt with in a timely and respectful manner.

The Bridging Lanka Grievance Procedure is documented as a separate procedure. If you have need to raise a grievance, please request a copy of this document from either the Executive Director or a member of the Bridging Lanka Board.

4.2 *Volunteer Agreement*

All volunteers will be required to sign a volunteer agreement before commencing duties at any Bridging Lanka Projects.

4.3 *Volunteer costs*

Volunteers are unpaid and provide their time and work at no cost to the project.

Volunteers are required to cover their own travel and living costs throughout their stay in Sri Lanka. This includes (but not limited to) the cost of return air travel to and from Sri Lanka, travel insurance, any necessary medical vaccines, the cost of domestic travel in Sri Lanka, medical costs, accommodation, food and living expenses.

4.4 *Equipment and materials*

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

5 Pre-Departure

5.1 *Preparation and orientation*

All volunteers and volunteer teams accepted into a Bridging Lanka Volunteer Program, are required to participate in an induction and orientation program. A training workshop will be held for volunteers online or in person and volunteers from other parts of Australia and international volunteers are encouraged to attend.

The fieldwork dates change from year to year but generally fall within the following months – October to December or May to August.

6 Privacy and Disclosure Statement

All volunteers to Bridging Lanka are required to agree to the terms of the *Privacy Disclosure and Consent terms and conditions in the Volunteer Agreement*. This facilitates the sharing of

program information with our stakeholders. You will be asked to agree to these conditions before you submit your Volunteer Agreement.

Bridging Lanka will ensure that all volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

7 Code of Conduct

All volunteers are expected to demonstrate the highest level of professional and personal standards while on assignment, in a manner consistent with the aims and standards of the program. In compliance with the Bridging Lanka Code of Conduct, as a condition of acceptance into the program, the volunteer must indicate that s/he has read, understood and accept all conditions of the code and other policies relevant to the program. Volunteers will be responsible for any damages caused by risky behaviour.

8 Service fee

Volunteers are required to pay to Bridging Lanka Australia a service fee prior to departure. This fee typically pays for staff time in arranging the volunteer fieldwork placement, internet access, filtered water at the Bridging Lanka office, some local transport associated with project delivery and some project costs including the engaging of interpreters. The current fee is noted in the online Volunteer Application Form.

9 Health

The Health and Safety of all staff and volunteers is important to Bridging Lanka and we do our best to provide a healthy and safe workplace. However, looking after your own health while in Sri Lanka is primarily your own responsibility.

10 Emergency Contacts

Volunteers are required to provide relevant contact details of two persons in their country of residence who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. A copy of this information will be kept at both the Australia and Sri Lanka office.

Bridging Lanka advises all volunteers to register as overseas travellers on the DFAT website prior to departure.

11 Australian Federal Police Check

Volunteers over the age of 18 must complete and clear an Australian Federal Police check (or the equivalent if you are coming from another country) and provide the results to Bridging Lanka Australia prior to departure. The cost of completing the Police check will be borne by the volunteer.

12 Working with Children

Bridging Lanka expects all volunteers to adhere to the Bridging Lanka Child Protection Policy. This policy further articulates the requirements under the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.

In addition to these policies, Bridging Lanka adheres to DFAT Child Protection Policy and the child protection policies of our partners groups.

All Australian volunteers working with children will need to undergo a “Working with Children” check or a “Blue Card” check (in QLD) The results of this check must be sent to Bridging Lanka Australia prior to departure.

The cost of completing the working with children check will be borne by the volunteer.

Volunteers from outside of Australia must comply with the laws and requirements of their home country.

13 Laws of the country

Whilst on assignment, Bridging Lanka volunteers are subject to the laws of Sri Lanka. Offences and penalties will differ from that of your country of residence and you need to be aware of local laws, especially those relating to possession of drugs, pornographic material and other offences. Volunteers are urged to familiarize themselves with the laws of the country prior to departure. Be aware, Sri Lanka has the death penalty for some offences.

It is your responsibility to deal with any civil or criminal proceedings arising from any breach of local laws and manage any penalties or charges should this arise.

14 Work expectations

14.1 Work time and travel

Volunteers must keep the Executive Director of Bridging Lanka or a senior member of staff at the Bridging Lanka office, informed of their arrival and departure dates.

All volunteers are required to commence work on their project on the agreed upon start date.

The working week for volunteers commences on Monday morning ends on Friday after lunch – then you have ‘your hair down’ time! Regular and punctual attendance on a consistent basis is important for team cohesion, complying with meeting or project obligations and presenting the project team in a positive, professional light.

Personal travel during the project is encouraged and should be programmed for weekends, prior to the project commencement or at the end of the project. For safety reasons all volunteers are requested to advise either the Executive Director of Bridging Lanka or the

office manager when they are travelling out of Mannar Town or District including the dates and destination of travel. This can be done by mobile phone or in person

14.2 Working in teams

If participating in a team, volunteers are required to contribute toward a warm and positive team spirit, support the project 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.

14.3 Daily debrief

There will be opportunities to debrief over a cool drink or a meal during the week. This is your time to raise issues, discuss progress, highlight gaps and generally give Bridging Lanka feedback on how you and your work is progressing.

If you find you have a grievance of any sort, and you do not wish to discuss it during the debrief, you can ask the Executive Director to schedule a time in which the two of you can discuss the matter in private. Please raise any issue you might like to discuss as soon as possible before misunderstandings arise and the matter escalates.

If your grievance is not resolved during this conversation and you wish to escalate the matter, then Bridging Lanka has a Grievance Procedure that can be invoked.

14.4 Purchasing items on behalf of Bridging Lanka

The overall responsibility and management of all project's rests with the Executive Director of Bridging Lanka. Volunteers should always check with the Executive Director or the assigned Project Manager before buying any materials for a project.

Materials that are commonly used in projects outside of or in other parts of Sri Lanka can be totally unsuitable for local conditions. These purchases eat into the tight budgets, and if used could, undermine the integrity of the project.

14.5 Media releases

Any media release or interviews should be approved by the Executive Director of Bridging Lanka in advance. Volunteers are required to consult with the Executive on any public relations matters. Any key messages about projects and the work of Bridging Lanka should be approved by the Executive Director prior to any discussions with members of the media, members of either local or national government bodies or local community members.

Where a project has received a grant from DFAT or other government agency it is important to acknowledge the funding source in positive terms.

14.6 Political or religious commentary

Volunteers are asked to avoid references to or comment on local and national Sri Lankan politics or religion while participating in projects in Mannar. Volunteers should not become involved in local politics, attend public demonstrations or make any written or public comment on political and religious matters without prior approval from the Executive Director because it may reflect on the reputation of the organisation. The consequences of engaging in either of these activities could have dire consequences.

14.7 Field Work

Either before you leave your home country or on arrival in Mannar, the Executive Director or the Board will explain the parameters of your assignment. You will be guided through your assignment and provided with assistance, direction and have access to interpreters. At the conclusion of your assignment you are required to provide Bridging Lanka with a report documenting your field work and conclusions.

This document will become the property of Bridging Lanka and will be used in negotiations with government, private enterprise and community agencies where relevant.

15 Personal safety

Volunteers are responsible for their personal safety and the safety of their belongings. They should exercise caution whilst travelling to and from Mannar or commuting within the Mannar district.

While the Mannar Township and District are safe places to visit and work, volunteers are advised not to travel through these areas alone at night. They should stay in the company of at least one other volunteer or a known local person. Volunteers are strongly advised to stay away from any prohibited areas or military installations.

Should any incident occur breaching volunteer safety or security, they should report the incident to Executive Director of Bridging Lanka or the Bridging Lanka office manager. Not reporting the incident could have ramifications impacting the volunteer at a later time. It could also impact insurance claims.

If you would feel more comfortable discussing safety concerns with a female member of staff or Board member, Bridging Lanka will arrange this for you. Full confidentiality is assured.

15.1 Risky Behaviour

When confronted with different cultural norms and values, some volunteers may consider that rules governing occupational health and safety norms in their home country do not necessarily apply in Mannar and may be tempted to partake in risky activities they would not consider appropriate at home. Risky behaviour by volunteers is definitely not encouraged and respectful and culturally appropriate behaviour is expected. Volunteers should note that they are personally responsible for any damage caused to property and persons if they engage in risky activity.

15.2 Alcohol and drugs

There are strict penalties for the consumption, supply, trafficking or cultivation of drugs. Capital punishment or imprisonment are the legal ramifications for such offences. Bridging Lanka will not take responsibility for any volunteer charged with alcohol or drug related offences.

Whilst Bridging Lanka cannot control the consumption of drugs and alcohol amongst its volunteers, it requests that volunteers do not invite Bridging Lanka staff to drink alcohol or partake in drugs with them at guest houses or other private gatherings.

16 Personal relationships

Volunteers are strongly advised not to pursue intimate liaisons with members of staff or citizens of Mannar. This applies to both male and female volunteers. Intimate liaisons can compromise the safety of either the volunteer, the third party or both, and could have repercussions on the work carried out by Bridging Lanka.

If a relationship should develop, please discuss the matter with the Executive Director of Bridging Lanka. If you would feel more comfortable discussing the matter with a female, Bridging Lanka will be able to organise this. Full confidentiality is assured.

17 Gratuities – Staff Members

Bridging Lanka does not encourage volunteers to tip individual members of staff. It has established a Staff Benevolent Fund and encourages volunteers who wish to make a voluntary financial contribution to support BL staff members to contribute to this fund.

18 Social media, photography

Please refer to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade's policy on children's pictures and Bridging Lanka's Child Protection Policy.

Contacts for Bridging Lanka in Australia

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In Australia, Bridging Lanka Ltd is a charity registered with the Australian Charities & Not-for Profits Commission. ABN: 92 146 209 297; ACN: 146 209 207

In Sri Lanka Bridging Lanka (Guarantee) Limited is registered as a Volunteer Social Service Organisation with the National Secretariat of Non-governmental Organisations and as a guarantee limited company with the Registrar of Companies.

Web: www.bridginglanka.org

Email: director@bridginglanka.org

FB: Bridging Lanka

19 Addendum 1 – Policies, Procedures and forms referred to in this document

- Bridging Lanka Child Protection Policy
- DFAT Child Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policies (of our partner groups)
- Bridging Lanka Code of Conduct
- Bridging Lanka Grievance Procedure
- Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.

Forms

- Bridging Lanka Volunteer Application Form

