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# Social Change and Development

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Pre-departure pack

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## Social Change and Development; Working to reach the unreached

### Volunteer Opportunities in Tirunelveli, India

Experience another culture like never before whilst making a real difference to people's lives. The non-governmental organisation Social Change and Development (SCAD) are offering an exciting and personally inspiring experience where you can gain perspectives and insights into Indian culture and yourself.

Some people want to make a difference but don't know where to start. Most of us dream about personal fulfillment and hope to touch the lives of others in the process. If you want to make a direct impact on the local community and environment, whilst enjoying the colourful heritage, cultures and traditions that India has to offer you can choose a program tailored to your skills and interests from the below information.

### India and Tamil Nadu

India is the seventh largest country in the world and the second most populous, with over 1.2 billion people. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the south-west, and the Bay of Bengal on the south-east, it shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north-east; and Burma and Bangladesh to the east.

Tamil Nadu is one of the 28 states of India. Its capital and largest city is Chennai. Tamil Nadu has a population of 72million people.



There are various social problems in Tamil Nadu including poverty, marginalization of certain communities, a lack of social value of women, malnutrition and a high drop out rate in secondary school. The Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative ranked Tamil Nadu to have a Multidimensional Poverty Index of 0.141, which was the same level as Ghana at the time. Corruption is a major problem in the state with Transparency International ranking it as the second more corrupt state in India.

Tamil Nadu is one of the driest regions of India and it is heavily dependent on the monsoons for recharging natural water sources. Tuticorin, the region in which SCAD works, receives 678mm of rainfall a year, which is 29% less than the average for the district. The communities who live in the surrounding area are already feeling the effects of drought, soil erosion and water depletion.

Monsoon rains matter for crop irrigation and water supply, and people and livestock suffer heavily when the monsoon fails or is delayed.

Social Change and Development (SCAD) is based in the Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts in Tamil Nadu. SCAD are dedicated to empowering the marginalised communities of the region. Since starting in 1985, they have helped 500 villages with a population of around 500,000 with a community empowerment approach.

SCAD have helped to establish more than 2,500 women's self-help groups with a membership of 50,000. Democratically run, these groups run microfinance schemes – so far saving nearly £7.8m to fund a combination of personal, educational or work-related schemes. The benefits are far reaching, affecting everything from the management of the land to the health and welfare of men, women and children in the community.

SCAD's over 70 interventions can be categorized into 7 areas; education, health, community organisation, farming and animal husbandry, environmental protection, reaching the unreached and local disaster relief.

## **The programs**

### **CARE FOR THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED:**

At SCAD we have run a centre for differently-abled children called Anbu Illam (in Tamil this means – house of love) for the last 25 years. We currently have 73 residential students living at Anbu Illam between 6-17 years old, with both mental and physical disabilities. We are currently building a new residential centre to teach and treat up to 200 differently-abled children in residential facilities and 100 children in drop in care. Additionally we have Community Based Rehabilitation services where SCAD staff visit children with disabilities in the community to offer care, advice and support.

If you have studied, or wish to study, any form of therapy to assist differently-abled people including physiotherapy, speech therapy, chiropractics, occupational therapy, rehabilitation, music therapy or pain therapy, then we would welcome you to come to learn and teach with us.

You will play games with the children, help with their studies, teach them songs, music and dance and work with them on handicrafts and artwork. In the community elementary school you will teach conversational English, other subjects, help with painting, cleaning, repairing or gardening.

### **TEACHING:**

Volunteers are needed to teach in our formal and informal schools. The most frequently requested subject is English, however you can also teach Maths, Science, Music, Geography, Art, Dance or your chosen subject. Volunteers are encouraged to create their own lesson plans and be creative with the project. Depending on the subject, volunteers can bring along teaching materials such as picture books, instruments, flash cards, art supplies, and songs.

Each institution has its own permanent staff member who assists volunteers with their teaching and in communicating with the children and colleagues.

Volunteers who teach in our SCAD World School or registered formal institutions require a TEFL or equivalent qualification and also a Criminal Records Bureau certificate in order to volunteer. We prefer that they offer three months of teaching to ensure our students some consistency of learning. Volunteers do NOT have to be native English speakers however their English speaking must be fluent.

For volunteers who want to work in the rural villages and informal schools we require a CRB certificate but not an English teaching qualification. We prefer that volunteers teach for at least one month, although exceptions can be made in special circumstances.

### **VETERINARY MEDICINE, BIOLOGY AND SOIL FERTILITY:**

In a veterinary placement you will be dealing with farming animals including poultry, goats, sheep and cattle. At SCAD we have a centre called Krish Vigyan Kendra (KVK) specifically for farming and veterinary activities. KVK prefers to concentrate on organic farming practices to sustain crop productivity and maintain healthy eco-systems. It is essential that these technologies are affordable for the farming communities. KVK has a soil, plant and water testing laboratory, bio-agents and bio-fertiliser production laboratory and bio-fungicides. A nursery and farming area is available for trials and experiments.

There are sometimes opportunities to go out into the field to visit farmers. You can be involved in administering vaccinations, laboratory work and treatments. You'll learn how to handle different animals and will see examples of diseases and conditions that have almost been eradicated in developed countries. Your input will be greatly encouraged and appreciated.

### **ENERGY AND CONSERVATION:**

This project may be particularly appealing to anyone with an interest in environmental protection or a desire to spend time working in a peaceful natural environment. Please note that while there is a wide range of activities available, volunteers will be engaged in only as many activities as the project management may ask of them.

Deforestation, land fragmentation and desertification are major environmental issues facing India, and Tamil Nadu especially because of the arid landscape. SCAD maintains an established community nursery program, which aims to distribute indigenous tree seedlings at low cost to local farmers, schools and communities. Conservation volunteers in India support the activities of this community nursery. The nursery role includes: digging, filling plastic bags, weeding, irrigating and related efforts. Volunteers working in a conservation project also support the vegetable gardens. This project is perfect for outdoor enthusiasts and eco-minded individuals.

For the last three years SCAD have been working on a Soil Fertility Project. The combination of fertilizer produced from our bio-digester, effective micro-organisms and high quality charcoal is being tested for its natural effect on soil biodiversity and therefore plant quality and quantity. This is a new science and an exciting area to work in. We are looking for soil specialists to come and work with our team in India.

### **CARE FOR ELDERS:**

As India enters the 21st century elderly people without families are being neglected. SCAD aims to spread its roots to support elderly people who are abandoned by their families or have no motivation left in life. SCAD works to bring back the happiness and sense of fun in their lives. Elderly care, or simply 'eldercare', is the fulfillment of the special needs and requirements that are unique to senior citizens. This term encompasses such services as assisted living, adult day care, hospice care, and in-home care.

You can help expand this legacy of love and compassion. This is only a part time position and could be combined with other activities.

## **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

Currently we do not have any tailored volunteer programs with the women's self help groups but as a volunteer you can visit the women's groups and you can assist with SCAD Women's Day – a celebration of women and support income generating activities. Here is some information about what we do:

At SCAD we are particularly concerned with Women's Empowerment and are very active in organising and training women to plan for their own development. There are currently around 3,000 women's groups in 500 villages involving over 50,000 women. The women's self help groups are involved in all aspects of village life and their activities relate to much of the UN Millennium Development Goals to reduce global poverty.

50,000 women have saved \$12m to fund their own future security. When a new group is formed the first priority is to save money together. These women's savings groups fund microfinance schemes for personal, educational or income generating usage. For many the groups offer the first taste of independence and a chance to free themselves from crippling money lenders or exploitative labour.

Community organisation is based upon the belief that people who face life in difficult circumstances are stronger when they are organised together and can shape their own destiny if given the opportunity to participate in a free, open and non-threatening environment. The women's self-help group movement has provided a tremendous boost in improving the efficiency of SCAD. This helps in the adoption of new technologies and to disseminate information at a micro level. The groups also help to facilitate our activities to perform better and to receive better responses. We are very proud of all our women.

## **BUSINESS:**

If you are a professional with experience in IT, marketing, business plans, mentoring or HR then we could use your expertise.

## **INTERNSHIPS IN THE UK:**

We have a UK team supporting SCAD based in London, and we always need extra help with fundraising, social networking and communications. If you are willing to do an internship in the UK please contact me at [katie@scad.org.in](mailto:katie@scad.org.in)

## **Applications**

### **Who can apply?**

- Undergraduate students
- Professionals wanting a career break
- Recent graduates
- High school students

The SCAD India volunteer programme is the perfect adventure expedition. It combines travel, adventure and volunteer work and hence this opportunity is full of rewarding experiences.

## What do the fees include?

| Fees Include                             | Fees Do not include   | Start Date  |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Airport pickup                           | International airfare | You can apply at anytime. We do not take people in India in January or May. |
| Accommodation                            | Insurance             |   |
| 3 Meals a day                            | Visa fee              |   |
| Program Orientation                      | Travel insurance      |   |
| Assistance in work area                  | Extra food / snacks   |   |
| Program materials                        | Phone calls           |   |
| 24 hrs admin support                     | Mobile phone          |   |
| Internet access                          | Excursions            |   |
| Airport drop at the end of the Placement |                       |   |

## How much does it cost?

- 1 month volunteer program £600
- 2 month volunteer program £1,020
- 3 month volunteer program £1,530

Deposit for all programs is £150

We encourage volunteers to raise as much money in fundraising prior to leaving for India. These are the minimum costs for your work however added donations are appreciated by all SCAD beneficiaries.

## What happens with my deposit? Is my deposit refundable if I am not accepted on a project?

The deposit is required as a commitment to participate in the programme. This deposit will only be taken when we can confirm your place on the programme. Should you cancel your commitment, your deposit will be lost.

For other questions on deposits and payments, please refer to the Terms and Conditions.

## How is my money spent?

All money paid for the volunteer placement goes directly to SCAD to cover the costs of your stay and includes a donation which goes towards the project you are working on; no money is taken for administration in the UK or in India.

## Your behaviour as a volunteer

SCAD is located in a rural area of Tamil Nadu India. Hence this location is very traditional. It is very uncommon for men and women and especially boys and girls to spend time together and parents more often than not arrange marriages. Additionally it is VERY rare to see young people engaging in drunken behaviour and having parties.

We ask you that whilst you are on your placement and representing SCAD you refrain from drinking alcohol in public and respect the cultural norms and values around male and female relationships

especially in public. Any possession of drugs will be considered a severe breach of your terms and conditions. If you are not willing to abide by these rules please do not apply.

## **Sightseeing**

There are some incredible things to see in Tamil Nadu and we encourage and support you to spend time sightseeing. Below is a list of some places nearby which we would encourage you to see:

Kanyakumari  
Pondicherry  
Coimbatre  
Madurai  
Chennai  
Kerala backwaters  
Trivandrum

Taking a 4 person car for a day costs INR1500 (£19). Taking a 11 person mini bus for a day costs INR2200 (£28).

SCAD representatives are very happy to arrange transport to the Tirunelveli train stations and bus stations. The make my trip website is very useful for arranging local Indian travel [www.makemytrip.com](http://www.makemytrip.com)

## **Frequently asked questions**

This is a great place to start if you have questions about SCAD Volunteer Programmers and our placement process.

### **What is the climate?**

Though divided into different climatic zones, India seems to be unified by primarily four seasons- Winter, Summer, Advancing Monsoon and Retreating Monsoon.

**Winter:** December to February is the wintertime in almost all of India. At this time of the year days are colder, 25-30 degrees.

**Summer:** March, April, May and June are the summer months in India. It is a time when rays of the sun fall vertically on Indian subcontinent and temperatures may reach 40 degrees.

**Advancing Monsoon:** This is the period when India gets most of its rain. Months of June, July, August and September form the core of Advancing Monsoon in almost all parts of country.

**Retreating Monsoon:** This season starts when the monsoon begins to retreat. In September, rainfall begins to decrease and by November the monsoon is completely finished, except in Tamil Nadu and some other southern states.

### **Is there any time of the year when I can't volunteer?**

Volunteers are able to participate in SCAD program all year round except from January. Teaching volunteers can't participate during annual holiday (April-May).

### **When will I know specific details on the placement?**

As soon as your application has been accepted you will start receiving communication from SCAD which carries specific details about your placement and accommodation.

### **Where will I be located?**

In and around Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

**How do I get to the projects?**

Orientation will be held in Tirunelveli. Volunteers will then be transferred to their program areas after training - this cost is included in the program fee.

**Can you tell me more about the accommodation?**

In most programs, volunteers will be accommodated in SCAD guest house. To avoid spending time travelling, some programs will have accommodation in their placement itself. Once your application is accepted you will get to know the details through your program managers.

The guest house rooms have beds with mattresses, showers and desk facilities. Rooms with AC are available.

**Do you make provisions for vegetarians?**

We do have provisions for vegetarian diet/any other special diets.

**How old do you have to be to volunteer?**

We suggest that volunteers do not come alone without an adult if they are younger than 18. There is no upper limit for volunteers; we only require that volunteers are in good health.

**What Immunizations/vaccinations will I need?**

The Indian Embassy does not require any specific vaccinations for travelers to obtain a visa to India. However, you may want to check with your local doctor for suggested vaccinations for your travel destination(s).

**How will I communicate to the local people?**

In your placement and accommodation there will be someone to help you communicate with the local people.

**Can I bring my own family to the program?**

Volunteers are welcome to bring their family members with them on the program. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis. Partners will need to fill in their own application form if they wish to take part in the program.

**Are there more expenses once I arrive?**

The in-country fee covers your accommodation and 3 meals per day, your transfer to your program, and transport to your worksite if necessary. You will need to have additional money for bottled water, extra food, for days off, airport departure tax, and any personal shopping you may do.

**How safe is it to volunteer in India?**

There is often ill health associated with travelling in India. You should expect to experience some ill health during the time you are here as you adjust to the heat and types of food you will be eating. If you eat carefully at recommended places and drink only filtered water you should be safe from most stomach problems. In general, you should not travel alone at night. India is usually a safe place for women travelers; however, there is a risk of becoming a target of sexual harassment. You will be given safety advice about situations to avoid and appropriate reactions in your orientation.

As in many countries, foreigners are perceived as wealthy in India. Although the people are generally warm and friendly towards foreigners, as well as appreciative of the work done by volunteers, not every individual is the same. We work extremely hard to ensure you are placed in safe environments while volunteering and security policies are in place to achieve this. However, as in any situation at home or abroad, there is no way to erase all potential threats.

**What is the content of the orientation?**

Volunteers are given a general introduction about language, cultural orientation and bus orientation (if you need to travel to the placement from your accommodation).

**What hours am I expected to take part in the program?**

Volunteers will be required to work around 5 to 6 hours per day, 5 days a week. Weekends are free time.

**Is there the opportunity to take classes such as language or more cultural activities while on the program?**

Yes. You can make use of your free time to learn additional activities. SCAD will have provisions for that too. Charges will differ depending on the activities.

**Will there be an opportunity to travel when I'm there?**

You will have weekends free. Volunteers often take this opportunity to go on trips to local places of interest. For every three months worked you are entitled to two weeks off. During this time (and generally during your placement) you are able to travel independently. Many volunteers travel extensively after the end of their placements, often forming small groups with other volunteers.

**What clothing is appropriate for the program?**

Considering the temperature, we recommend light coloured, cotton clothing that modestly covers your body (knee-length or longer). Along with comfortable sturdy footwear, a pair of sandals for light walking is also recommended. Don't forget sunglasses and a hat.

**Who organises my visa for the volunteer placement?**

You will organise your visa through your travel agent or independently. Information on visa application will be given when we confirm your placement. We will also advise you on your arrival and departure flights.

**Do I have to be from any specific country to volunteer in India?**

We do accept volunteers from all over world.

*Please keep in mind that the needs of the project come first and it is not the project's responsibility to entertain volunteers or satisfy their need for varied work.*



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