

## #InformedGenerosity. What does that mean?

Wanting to give is a great thing but how we give makes a big difference.

**#InformedGenerosity** promotes giving with information and understanding — not just your heart. A simple internet search and review of an organization's website should provide the information you need to make informed decisions. Here are some guidelines to help you help better...

### **REGISTERED: Is the charity registered?**

Check that the charity is registered with the Canadian Revenue Agency and/or the United States Revenue Agency 501(c) (3). The Government of Canada offers a [searchable database](#).

### **TRANSPARENCY & EFFICIENCY: Can you review the organization's financial statements?**

Charities with more than \$250K in donations are required to make their audited financial statements available. Even unregistered nonprofits should be transparent with their financial reporting. How much does the charity spend on overhead? Review their dollars-to-the-cause percentage. In general, it is reasonable to see overhead spending between five and 30 per cent.

### **MISSION + WORK: How does the organization define its goals and programs?**

If a charity struggles to define its mission and initiatives, it will probably have a tough time achieving measurable results. Does its work align with your goals?

### **ACCOUNTABILITY: Does the organization share results of its impact?**

It's one thing to spend \$X dollars, it's another to measure if those dollars are achieving results. Look for information such as how many people it served last year and if that trend changed year-over-year.

### **LOCAL, SUSTAINABILITY & SELF-SUFFICIENCY: Does the organization work with local staff, authorities and businesses?**

Organizations that aim to contribute to sustainable change should involve and respect the people it's trying to help.

- Are locals anchoring the projects on the ground, or are foreigners or "white saviours" cast in the leading role?
- Will funds be spent on local staff and materials or does it parachute in products and services (and people) to "fix" a problem.
- Beyond providing immediate assistance, does the organization also address root causes that support sustainability (poverty, inequalities in healthcare and education)?



## CHECKLISTS

### Ask the organization...

- Charitable registration number
- Financial statements including its administration costs
- Mission statement and programs including how it works locally
- Impact reporting

### Ask yourself...

- What is my motivation for making this donation? Is it mostly about making me feel good or empowering people with sustainable, respectful aid?
- What is my commitment to the cause? Will I revisit the website to gauge its impact? Would I consider making a monthly donation to sustain the organization's efforts?
- Do I know enough about the situation to know if the donation is appropriate for the local climate, culture, and religion?

**\*Bigger doesn't equal better...** Even "reputable" international NGOs should share their impact reports, especially with disaster relief efforts that are challenging to coordinate and account for. Donors often trust these organizations to be effective but they can become heavy on administrative costs and lose their ability to involve locals.



# TOOLKIT | Volunteer Literacy

Traveling and volunteering overseas can be a rewarding and positive experience for all involved, but doing it responsibly requires some careful homework and research.

<p>Questions to ask yourself before you volunteer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do I have the skills and experience needed to do this job?</li><li>• Would I be allowed to do this job in my local community?</li><li>• Could a local volunteer or paid staff member do this job rather than me?</li><li>• Do I understand the local culture and language, and am I willing to learn before I go away?</li><li>• What do I want to get out of it? Is this about me or the people I want to help?</li><li>• How am I perceived by the local population? Is what I'm doing culturally appropriate?</li><li>• What happens when I leave? Am I empowering local communities or creating dependence on international volunteers?</li></ul>
<p>Questions to ask a volunteering organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Would you place inexperienced/unskilled volunteers like me in orphanages? (If the answer is yes – keep looking!)</li><li>• Do you work with local partners to plan and implement your projects?</li><li>• Do you have programs that help families stay together such as education, health, social outreach?</li><li>• Will you provide training before I go?</li><li>• Will I have to fundraise? If so, are you a registered charity with financial statements?</li><li>• Do you carry out safeguarding checks for volunteers who work with children?</li><li>• Can I see your child protection policy, and can you tell me how it's put into practice?</li><li>• Can I talk to people who have volunteered with you in the past?</li></ul>

\*These questions have been informed by the Lumos Foundation's [#HelpingNotHelping](#) resources that were developed in collaboration with the [International Citizen Service](#) (ICS).