

➤ Overseas Allied Health Placements

**Physiotherapy / Occupational Therapy / Speech Pathology /
Social Work / Community Health / Nutrition**

Gain new skills and a new perspective: travel with purpose

Volunteering on one of our Allied Health projects in a developing country gives you the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people overseas, providing innovative treatment within clinical settings, child care centres and rehabilitation centres. Volunteers and interns - whether students, graduates or professionals - gain a unique insight into their chosen profession through working alongside local medical staff, treating a wide range of advanced conditions, with limited resources in a different cultural setting.

These projects suit individuals who are willing to take initiative and build a rapport with local staff in order to gain a wide variety of practical experiences. As allied health treatments continue to be a luxury in many countries where we work, volunteers will quickly be able to see how they can lend a hand and make a genuine impact. Students can opt to join these projects as an intern and are provided with a qualified supervisor to guide them in their work.

Our projects cater to volunteers with a range of skills and experiences, including students and professionals in these fields, as well as those studying related degrees such as Health Sciences, or people who are looking to study allied health in the future.



“Being in a new setting and working independently will help you discover your creativity, initiative and skills, and opens your eyes to how therapy benefits those with severe disabilities. I learnt how physiotherapy can benefit those severely affected by disabilities, how to overcome communication barriers, the importance of observation and how to act creatively under pressure! I am more confident in my abilities to assess and treat children.

Jennifer Pain,
Cambodia Physiotherapy

Benefits of an Overseas Placement

- ✓ Clinical & community placements
- ✓ Learn new techniques in working with both new and familiar conditions
- ✓ Put theory into practice
- ✓ Use your skills to help others
- ✓ Work alongside local professionals
- ✓ Mutual learning- share skills and knowledge
- ✓ Gain an insight into developing world health

Why Projects Abroad?

Every year, Projects Abroad sends thousands of volunteers to projects across the developing world. Founded in 1992, we now operate in 30 developing countries and support over 1000 projects, from humanitarian-based projects such as care, teaching, conservation and human rights to internships in law, journalism and medicine.

Supported in-country by dedicated staff, we offer safe and sustainable projects that allow volunteers to make a positive impact and form a genuine connection to the community or environment in which they work.



Case Study

Philippines Rehabilitation in the Community Physiotherapy, OT and Speech Pathology

Partnering with a local charity, this project provides home therapy and support for people living with disabilities who are unable to who are unable to access healthcare. The initiative takes OT volunteers to the homes of some of 1000 or so people registered with disabilities living in 25 villages in the San Remigio region of Cebu Island. This is a fantastic community based project which provides a service to those in great need. As a relatively new programme, the local authorities are excited to see how it will develop with the support of volunteers. The ages of patients are varied, as are the conditions you will work with. One of the great benefits of this project is that volunteers get to work with patients in their homes which gives great scope to come up with relevant solutions to their environment. It also means volunteers will need to think creatively and learn to work with very different resources in a rural environment.



Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy settings vary enormously from hospitals to home visits and from community outreach programmes to disability rehabilitation centres. It is even possible to work with elite sportspeople.

Many of the settings support children with disabilities including cerebral palsy, spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and polio who do not have access to the level of care they could expect in a more developed country. In places such as Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka Projects Abroad works with settings that are desperately short of resources and staff; it is often very easy for practicing and student physiotherapists alike to see where they can quickly be useful.

Working in such settings within a very different cultural context is a great learning opportunity, challenging skills and creativity. For those who work in hospitals in countries such as Ghana or Mongolia sharing knowledge with local professionals and learning how they practice with very different conditions builds a resourcefulness and perspective which can be hard to gain at home.

Adapting to new practices and conditions, stretching existing skills and learning new ones at placements where your skills are needed, all in an exciting new country, is a unique experience.

Occupational Therapy

OT is something of a luxury unique to western health systems that hospitals and other organisations in the developing world can't afford. Rehabilitation is vitally important for any productive community, but is often overlooked in developing countries due to the lack of money available for investment in anything other than critical healthcare. Projects Abroad places occupational therapy volunteers in a variety of placements from specialist clinics and small hospitals to community based rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities.

As an OT volunteer, you will have a valuable role to play supporting operations that are often very poorly resourced and lack trained staff with the critical knowledge and skills to help their patients ease back into daily life. These international medical internships are designed to provide a challenge to those who already have some experience working in the field of Occupational Therapy, or a worthwhile volunteer experience for students wishing to enhance their skills in a practical hands-on setting.

Whether you are working with children with Down's Syndrome, Muscular Dystrophy or cerebral palsy in Cambodia or helping in a home for people with people recovering from surgery or spinal injuries in Bolivia, you will take home a great deal of international healthcare experience and plenty of memories working with colleagues in a remarkably different culture to your own.

Speech Pathology

On a Speech Pathology project you will be placed in a care centre, medical clinic or rehabilitation centre working with children and young adults, many of whom have physical and intellectual conditions ranging from hearing impairment to cerebral palsy. Communication disorders can be quite severe, and may include language impairments, apraxia of speech, dysarthria, and articulation impairments.

As Speech Pathology is still a relatively new field in the developing countries where we work, only some of the placements are able to provide a qualified speech therapist supervisor. On all of our placements however you will have the full support of local staff including doctors, carers and physiotherapists who can offer you information about patient conditions and treatments to date. You will need to take initiative to work from treatment plans and provide therapy.

This is a fantastic opportunity to put your studies into action and gain hands-on experience in a unique cultural environment with limited resources. Creativity, passion and interpersonal skills are important traits that you can bring to these placements. By providing speech pathology to these children and young adults you can be sure that you are making a positive difference in their lives.



"During my time in Cambodia I helped out with the public health and community outreach initiatives in the Russey Keo and Koh Dach Island districts. One thing I noticed was the absence of affordable healthcare; I found patients with hypertension and diabetes on medications that had not been altered for the last 10 years since diagnosis. My time in Cambodia has helped me re-affirm my ambition and goal to work with medicine to improve the health outcomes for everyone I can in my community, locally and internationally.

Michael Wu, Cambodia Public Health



Social Work

There are a number of placements which provide those with social work skills opportunities to make a difference and gain practical experience in a unique cultural setting. Volunteers will be working alongside local staff to provide clients with specialised care, relevant to their needs, and to create action plans for them going forward.

Volunteers can spend time developing intellectual, emotional and physical capabilities of children and young adults with special needs on a Care project.

Other Care projects include assisting with a counselling programme for women and children who are victims of domestic violence in a healthcare centre in Mongolia, working with children and mothers suffering from malnutrition in Nepal, and promoting emotional support to children in a local Victim Support shelter in Samoa.

Social work volunteers might also like to consider our Human Rights projects, which involve working directly with vulnerable members of the community including incarcerated youth and victims of domestic violence.

Public Health

Volunteers on the Public Health projects take part in community outreach activities alongside local healthcare professionals, visiting schools, care centres, health clinics and homes to provide free health testing, vaccinations and basic healthcare advice and treatment. There may also be opportunities to visit rural healthcare centres and observe medical procedures. Volunteers will be collecting health related data in order to plan and implement campaigns in the community and schools, focused on increasing awareness about health issues common to the area- such as HIV/ Aids, diabetes and smoking.

Medical staff provide on-the-job training, so volunteers from all backgrounds are welcome to participate on this project, including those studying Health Sciences and Community Health.

Volunteer activities include:

- Screen for diabetes, malaria, worms, cataracts and other common conditions
- Provide basic medical treatment and vaccinations.
- Observe medical procedures in health care centres
- Prepare and deliver health awareness campaigns.

Nutrition

Nutrition volunteers are based in marginalised communities, working alongside nutritionists and other healthcare professionals to combat non-communicable diseases such as malnutrition and diabetes through a variety of activities. Volunteers will spend time in villages, health care centres, schools and child care centres conducting general health checks, distributing food parcels and supplements and running healthy cooking demonstrations. You are encouraged to take initiative in order to work within a community garden to promote healthy eating and hold community workshops about a range of conditions including the need to eat well and exercise often.

Volunteer activities include:

- Conducting general health checks.
- Distributing food parcels and supplements
- Holding community workshops about the importance of fresh fruit/vegetables, assisting with meal planning, teaching mothers about appropriate child nutrition
- Running healthy cooking demonstrations and group exercise classes
- Visiting schools to teach children about healthy eating and exercise
- Creating and implementing healthy living campaigns: designing pamphlets, community action plans



"Speech pathology is still a very new concept in Vietnam, and so practices and understanding of communication development was very different compared with Australia... I did some work in educating the local staff about various therapy techniques, theories, and ways of understanding disability and speech pathology; it was good to be able to exchange knowledge and experiences

Rachel North, Vietnam Speech Pathology



Case Study

Vietnam Thuy An Rehabilitation Centre Physiotherapy, OT and Speech Pathology

The Thuy An centre was established in 1976 to support those with disabilities from the north of Vietnam providing care, nursing, orthopaedic surgery, education and vocational training for children and adults with disabilities. Patients exhibit a number of conditions caused by Agent Orange dioxin which remains in the environment since the Vietnam war.

The centre currently cares for around 200 children aged from 0-18 years old, conditions include cerebral palsy, delayed development, autism and hearing impairments. It is a busy and varied placement which provides a great service to those in need.

Along with general caring roles, volunteers can also get involved in physiotherapy, OT and speech pathology. The project is based around 60km from Hanoi and volunteers live at the centre. There are many professionals working at the centre which make it a fantastic opportunity for learning about and contributing to the services of a busy multi-disciplinary centre.



> Allied Health Project Destinations



Allied Health Placements

Volunteers on Allied Health projects work in a diverse range of settings which include hospitals, specialist clinics, community rehabilitation centres, children's homes, sports teams, human rights organisations, medical outreach clinics, mobile health education, treatment services and home visits.

All settings value the efforts and perspectives of student and professional volunteers alike and offer a practical and educational experience.

Requirements

Allied Health projects are open to volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. Anyone with a strong work ethic and a keen interest in assisting disadvantaged individuals in the developing world are able to apply for our Nutrition, Physiotherapy, Social Work and Public Health projects. Professionals and students with at least one years' experience in studying Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology are welcome on these respective projects.

PROJECT FACTS

DURATION: Between 2 – 26 weeks

START DATES: Flexible

ACCOMMODATION: Host families and shared volunteer apartments

COST: 4 weeks from AU\$2780/NZ\$3130

INCLUDED: Pre-departure support, professional supervision, accommodation, meals, insurance, 24/7 in-country support

EXCLUDED: Flights, visa, vaccinations, background check



"Physio work consisted of stretching, sitting and standing practice, head control, and even walking and stairs for the more advanced. The children were all beautiful! They adored the attention and their smiles never failed to brighten up even the toughest day.

Emma Parsons,
Nepal Physiotherapy



The Role of the Volunteer

Your role will vary depending on the placement as well as your skills and experience. We encourage you to use your initiative and be proactive in order to involve yourself in all aspects of caring for patients.

Each setting is different, in terms of supervision, guidance, the conditions of the patients and the resources available. Your role may be really hands on, or more observational.

You will need to adapt to different work practices, culture, conditions and learn to work alongside the local staff.

There is much to learn by contributing your time in a developing country, and by taking initiative you will find yourself in a productive role which is rewarding, constructive and educational.



 Projects Abroad Australia & New Zealand

 projectsabroadglobal

> www.projects-abroad.com.au
info@projects-abroad.com.au
AU: 1300 132 831

> www.projects-abroad.co.nz
info@projects-abroad.co.nz
NZ: 09 889 0587