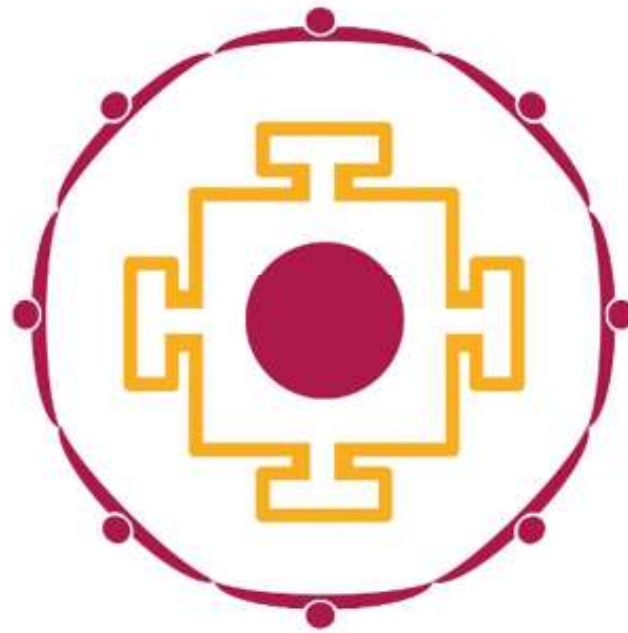


Helambu Project



Volunteer Field Manual

Before Self, Put Others

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ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER FIELD MANUAL

The Volunteer Field Manual covers everything you need to know before, during, and after your visit. We have included in it everything volunteers have asked in the past and more. Reading this Manual (completely) is a requirement for all volunteers and should cover all of your questions. If you have any questions after reading this, please feel free to write to volunteers@helambuproject.org and we will get back to you ASAP. We strongly recommend that you print this out and bring it with you when you leave for the village or come to Nepal as it has relevant information regarding a variety of situations you may deal with.

ABOUT HELAMBU PROJECT

Helambu Project is an open source, community platform for dedicated, intentional people to locally address problems that challenge the global community. Helambu Project was started by a group of individuals who joined people as they confronted challenges within their own communities and countries and learn from them about their rich histories, traditions, and cultures. Anybody can be a part of Helambu Project and there are a hundred different ways people have contributed to the project according to their interests and backgrounds.

Our Philosophy

Our philosophy is not to develop others but develop ourselves as we seek to uphold the local proverb “before self, put others.” As much as we strive to address and resolve problems, we dedicate to listening and understanding before acting. We believe that we have been invited to work in these communities not to challenge but to listen to people’s beliefs and problems and learn alongside them. We place the utmost importance on cultural sensitivity, women’s empowerment, cultural heritage, community involvement and sustainable solutions, and we are dedicated to ensuring that all our volunteers and contributors do as well.

What we do

We work directly to support community involvement in schools and the schools themselves. Communities are often alienated from schools and lack a direct participatory role in how schools function. By supporting communities’ involvement in schools, communities are able to address schools’ problems directly and generate lasting and sustainable solutions. We also believe that schools can be a catalyst for larger communal and social changes in the region, and are currently developing a wide range of educational programs that address a wide range of social and communal issues and that can also be taught at schools. The current status of Nepal’s education system, especially in rural areas, means that teachers are often unmotivated and

untrained and schools are understaffed and underfunded. Therefore, we also work directly with teachers and schools by providing them with necessary supplies and teacher trainings whenever possible.

To a lesser degree, we also work with the health care sector. In order to improve healthcare, we have run multiple health camps throughout the region in the past and have conducted basic first aid trainings for students as well as teachers and community members. In the past, we have also arranged for individuals with medical issues to receive free treatment for a variety of conditions, and have arranged for dental health camps and other medical services to be provided to communities in the region.

Why Education & Healthcare?

Helambu Project works in these two sectors for several reasons. Most importantly, they are two areas where it is possible to have tremendous impact and two areas where communities are also in need. Many families are forced to send their children to Kathmandu for better quality education, leading to cultural and communal degradation, or are forced to travel to elsewhere to seek medical assistance, which is often prohibitively expensive for many families. Schools are also an excellent place to address and discuss larger communal problems through educational initiatives. By providing students and communities with knowledge and information, we help to empower them to decide the best approaches to their solutions without enforcing or imposing outside perspectives.

Volunteer Philosophy & Responsibility

Helambu Project believes strongly in the local proverb “before self, put others.” Helambu Project is itself volunteer run and could not do the work it does without all of its worldwide contributors. At its best, service has the power to transform ourselves and those around us as we stand together as human beings to confront suffering in all of its forms.

Unfortunately, volunteering and working internationally brings with it many challenges and additional considerations before we act. Helambu Project is entirely committed to the philosophies and principles of responsible volunteering and requires all our volunteers to respect the local cultures and follow our code of conduct.

“If you have come to help me because you feel called to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, please stay and let’s work together.”

~ Lila Watson, aboriginal activist ~

Responsible volunteering requires us to deeply examine ourselves and our motivations so that we do not arrogantly assume a superior knowledge or an ability to “help, fix, or solve” the complex realities that people across the world face. It means taking a more realistic approach to our contributions and considering the full impact of our actions

before we even begin to serve. It means listening and not challenging local beliefs and culture. It requires you to affirm the value of people's differences, cultures, and traditions and participate in them regardless of your beliefs. It means realizing the tremendous influence you have as a symbol of "the west" – a symbol that has the power to affect and change the behaviour of many students that you have come to serve. Overall, responsible and ethical volunteering is a process that asks that you humbly consider yourself a part of issue rather than just the solution.

Volunteer Strategy

When choosing field sites for our volunteers we have to consider many things: is the school & community able to host volunteers, will volunteers be supported adequately by the school, will our volunteers have an impact working with this school, does the school need volunteers etc. Volunteers teachers are not ideal for any education system because they have limited commitments, qualifications and capacities. However, Nepal and its schools are far from ideal. Our ultimate objective is to reduce local schools' need for outside teachers to supplement curriculum. Therefore, our volunteer field sites are schools that aren't high capacity and often times have many problems. This can often be frustrating for us and our volunteers. Many other volunteering organization identify already highly functioning and even private schools to work with, but the fact of the matter is that these schools do not need volunteers and there is much greater need elsewhere. Volunteers have a tremendous impact on the schools we work with; however, the impact and changes do not happen overnight or with the arrival of one to two volunteers. The impact and changes happen over several years with the hard work and dedication of many volunteers. While often our volunteers feel that they have contributed little, one good and dedicated volunteer is a step in the long journey of improving education in Helambu and Nepal.

Volunteer Policies & Procedures

The following is a list of policies that all volunteers without exception must follow. They can also be found in the volunteer agreement which all volunteers must sign and submit before arriving in Nepal. These policies were developed after working with volunteers in Helambu over many years and while there reasons may not be immediately clear, we will be happy to explain any of them to you. Failure to follow these policies may result in the termination of your volunteer agreement at which time you will be asked to leave the school.

By volunteering with us you agree to:

- **Be a professional and compassionate role model for students and community members.** This means representing Helambu Project and your home country with integrity and treating your role as a volunteer as if it were your full time job.

- **Follow our guidelines on cultural sensitivity.** This means reading the section in this manual, following the guidelines that are referenced during your volunteer orientation, and having a general attitude of respect towards local beliefs, customs, and cultures regardless of whether you agree with them or not.
- **Under no circumstances should you proselytize, convert, attempt to convert or teach about your personal faith, religion, or spiritual beliefs.** If you are asked about Christianity or another religion by a student, you should ask similar questions about the student's religion. Under no circumstances should you provide the student with printed materials that reference your faith.
- **Not promise community members, school staff, students, host families, or anyone else funding, money, donations, projects, etc whether on your or Helambu Project's behalf.** This is because volunteers often promise things, fail to follow through, and then the local community believes that we took whatever was promised. It hurts our relations with local community members and threatens our ability to work in these community in the future. In the event that you want to give, donate, or fundraise for someone you must first contact us. **Helambu Project does not guarantee to implement any projects or spend any donated money as your request unless it was consulted with us in advance.**
- **Do not give "hand outs."** You may be asked for money by any members of the community or school staff. We tell school staff and homestay families that they are not allowed to do this; however, **if you find yourself in the situation you should politely decline and later inform us of what happened.** While you may desperately want to help someone, often times handing them money is not helpful. If someone has a problem, feel free to share it with us and we may be able to help them or direct them to a resource, but handing people money often only encourages people to view foreigners as ATM machines. Many times people may deceive you about their problems in order to get money, and handing out cash will create future problems for Helambu Project and our work.
- **Do not enter into any romantic relationships with local community members or staff while you are a volunteer with us.**
- **Be sensitive about the requests you make of your home stay family and school staff.** You should be the one to make accommodations to their life style and not the other way around. Your volunteer contribution should not disrupt other school staff's work.
- **Be safe and stay healthy.** Refrain from engaging in risky behaviour (some of the things are outlined in this manual) and take care of your health. Realize that emergency medical services are not immediately available and that you are

responsible for making your own medical decisions (see medical section for more advice). When making these decisions you should always err on the side of caution and be more conservative than you normally would be in your home country.

ABOUT HELAMBU

Helambu's History and Cultures

Helambu is located just Northwest of Kathmandu and has a unique and fascinating history. Traditionally Helambu is home to the Yolmo people, a Tibetan ethnic group that migrated south over the Himalayas down the mountains several hundred years ago. Yolmo speak a distinct language that is somewhat similar to Tibetan, and are not the only ethnic group in the region. Helambu is also home to Tamangs and Sherpas, who also practice Tibetan Buddhism. The region's history is very much intertwined with Tibetan, specifically *nyingma*, Buddhism. Helambu is believed to be a *beyul* or hidden valley, a place where Guru Rinpoche travelled, lived, and meditated as he carried the Buddha's teaching from India and into Tibet. As he travelled he tamed the region and made it habitable for people as well as established many of the protector deities in the region, such as the goddess mountain Ama Yangri who ride upon a dragon. Milarepa and other famous Buddhist saints are said to have come to the region to study and meditate, and the famous sacred lakes of Gosaikund play a powerful role in the region's Shamanistic traditions. Sadly much of this region's rich history is being rapidly forgotten and lost due to outmigration and the fact that much of the history is carried on orally. For these reasons, Helambu Project encourages our volunteers to spend time talking to locals about their traditions, histories, and beliefs and encourage especially students to take an interest in the heritages before they are permanently lost.

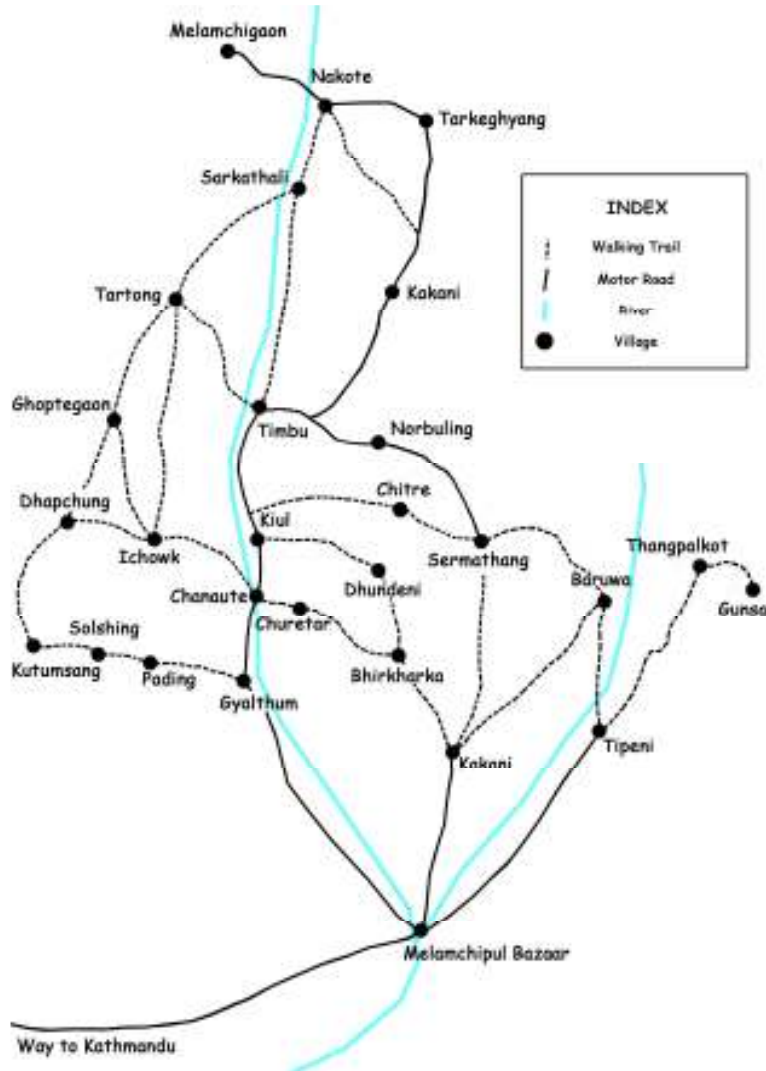
Helambu Today

Helambu today is a fascinating region where many changes are taking place. When comparing the changes to Helambu today to its history and traditions it is important to keep in mind that some of these recent changes have their roots far back in Nepal and the region's history and are overall very difficult to understand. For example, the past few years have witnessed the construction of roads through previously remote areas. Outmigration for work and other reasons has drastically affected many of the areas' communities and local culture. While many local residents are still temporary residents in the region, some villages have less than 10% of their original population. New monasteries have been constructed and despite rapid outmigration the region is home to prominent Buddhist teachers, meditators, and scholars. New schools have been constructed and several older and smaller schools have been consolidated. Interestingly, many of the schools in the area have more female students than male. The vast majority of these female students are the first women of their generation to be able to regularly attend classes. Many of the region's schools have also converted into community schools – where the community has an official and

recognized role in the school's operation. Despite this, many communities remain uninvolved in schools but with local organizations are developing an understanding of the communities' importance in sustaining and creating an effective schooling system.

Helambu Map

Please note, this map doesn't have all of the religious sites or villages on it, but it does have many of the villages that you can visit during your stay.



School Overview

Helambu Project works with government school in the region for several region. Firstly, private schools don't actually promote a better system of sustainable education nor do they help instil faith in the Nepali government and education system. Secondly, private schools often charge large fees to families for only slightly better education. Lastly, working with government schools pose many challenges because you are working with larger systems; however, the potential for impact is greater and more sustainable and the government will continue to support these schools after projects are completed.

Volunteers in the past have been frustrated with the lack of organization and quality of some of the schools we work in. Schools across Nepal, especially in rural areas, suffer from chronic absences by both students and teachers, lack of community involvement and monitoring, poor curriculum that emphasizes memorization over critical thinking, problem solving, understanding, and practical knowledge. The good thing is, it has been shown in many parts of Nepal that the systems that sustain these bad practices **can be changed over time** and the education system is an area where NGOs and INGOs have had a large impact in specific schools and regions of Nepal.

You may struggle to see your contribution and question the impact you are making. However, questioning your contribution and impact is actually good thing that everyone should do – especially international volunteers. You should also realize and remember that the work we do and **your contribution is actually a small piece in a much larger process that is taking place over years**. Westerner often want immediate results and quick solutions; even for problems whose causes and origins are incredibly complex and difficult to understand. Helambu Project is process oriented and we aren't trying to change schools overnight. Rather we are more interested in people, projects, and processes that contribute to much longer term sustainable solutions – even if it means only taking small steps at a time. We have seen the impact volunteers can make on a school. It doesn't happen with one or two dedicated volunteers but with many over several years span.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

While in Kathmandu...

We will arrange to pick you up from the airport and take you to a cheap hotel in the Tourist centre of town. You can stay in Kathmandu before you head to the village as long as you like. We can arrange Nepali lessons for you with an excellent teacher at your request and expense (500 Nrs / hour). Before you leave for Kathmandu our volunteer coordinator will also give you an orientation and will help you purchase any good you would like to donate.

To and From your Field Site

The day you depart for your homestay village you should inform your hotel to have a taxi ready for you an hour before your bus will depart. Our local volunteer coordinator will inform you what time your bus will leave -- often it is early in the morning around 6am. Unlike anything else in Nepal, **buses leave on time** and if you are late and miss the bus you will have to reimburse the cost of your ticket since they are non-refundable. Your bus will stop for lunch in Melamchi pool bazaar and then take you to your final destination. It isn't uncommon for buses to break down or have difficulty so patience is key and the time it takes to get to your field site varies seasonally. In monsoon, some of the roads are closed and you may have to walk a little further than usual. When you leave your field site you just have to inform someone at the school or your homestay family and they will tell you when and where the buses to Kathmandu leave. It's up to you which bus you take, but please let us know when you return to Kathmandu so we can conduct an exit interview with you.

Home stay

Your homestay family will most likely be a highlight of your stay. The families you will stay with are all wonderful, hospital, and loving people who will treat you like part of your family. Rooming situation depends on your field site and the volunteer coordinator will fill you in when you arrive. However, don't expect the same level of privacy that you enjoy in the west. Even if you have your own room to sleep in, it will be used for other purposes. **Keep your things neat and tidy** or they are likely to get lost or cleaned up -- which can be very awkward for the homestay families and you. Some of the families speak a limited amount of English, but even where this is not the case, it has not been a problem in the past. You should pay your homestay family on a weekly basis. The homestay costs vary depending on your field site (anywhere from 350 Nrs to 500 Nrs per day; the volunteer coordinator will tell you). This includes all of your food but realize that this does not entitle **you to order or request certain foods** unless you are asked -- even then you should provide the family options. Remember to bring enough money with you to pay your host family and extra for personal spending and in case of emergencies. Realize that even instant coffee is expensive and outside the budget for many of these families.

Food & Diet

The food is standard Nepali food of rice and lentils with lots of Tibetan food served alongside. It is not uncommon to have rice at least once a day. It is served with a variety of things depending on when you come since most of your Homestay families will grow all their own vegetables. Cooked greens and radishes is common fare; as is various dough and potato dishes. The food may be spicy depending on your tastes but your homestay family will adjust their cooking if it is too hot. Szechuan pepper, Asian chilli pepper, cumin, and garlic are used in generous amounts to spice vegetable dishes. Smoked yak, buffalo, or cow cheeses are sometimes prepared, as well as yogurts, etc. Traditional Butter tea, made from tea, butter, and salt, is great for cold winter days, but

typical “milk-sugar” tea is also served year round. Roasted barley is also served in the mornings. Tsampa is usually mixed with tea and eaten as porridge. Hot water is also always available and a safe option over tap water. Meat is only occasionally available, usually during special occasions. If you are vegetarian, simply inform your homestay family – it won’t be a problem and many families actually believe vegetarians are doing a good thing because they don’t kill sentient beings for meat.

You will most likely find yourself stuffed and too full – especially in the first couple of days. This is common and it is traditional to serve guests and repeatedly offer them food even when they have declined. If you watch them serve you, you may be able to control the amount they give you. Families will most likely serve you food first, you should go ahead and start eating without them and encourage them to eat with you. When you have had enough you can cover your plate with your hands to signify that you have had enough. Don’t waste any more food than you have to, but if you can’t finish what is on your plate then don’t worry. Make sure to compliment your home stay family’s cooking – it is good to let them know your favourite dishes.

Eating is done with one of your hands. Make sure you wash your hands before you eat. You can then mix your food together and carry it using your fingers into your mouth. After you have eaten from a plate it is rude or “polluted” to offer this food to other people or take food from other dishes. You shouldn’t use the hand you eat with for anything but eating after you have started. When everyone is done eating you can excuse yourself to go wash your hands.

Feel free to bring snacks with you to the village. It’s often a good idea especially if you plan on trekking or extended stays. This said be aware of eating outside mealtimes since your homestay family may take this to mean that you don’t like their food or aren’t getting enough.

Weather

Helambu's weather will depend on where you are in the region. If your field site or village is higher up, it will always be much colder and drier. You should prepare for the season which you will be volunteering in. The table below has more information about the weather during various times of the year.

Months	Temp (Day)	Temp (Night)	Comments
Dec. - Early March	5 ^{0c} - 15 ^{0c}	0 ^{0c} - 5 ^{0c}	Very cold, dry, bring warm gear
Early March –May	15 ^{0c} - 20 ^{0c}	10 ^{0c} - 15 ^{0c}	Warm, some rain, good visibility
Late May - Late Sept.	20 ^{0c} - 25 ^{0c}	15 ^{0c} - 20 ^{0c}	Warm / hot, monsoon, delayed travel
October - November	15 ^{0c} - 20 ^{0c}	10 ^{0c} - 15 ^{0c}	Warm, Dry, great visibility

Volunteering at the School

We require that our volunteers be independent and take initiative when it comes towards arranging their contribution at the school. Our field coordinator will take you to the school and introduce you to the principal; however, it is largely up to you to determine and decide what and how many classes you will teach. A lot of your volunteering may and can happen outside school hours, where you can help students who are struggling, arrange extracurricular activities, and in general spend time conversing and talking with the students. It is also always better to work with school staff and try and teach alongside them rather than replace them or take their classes. You may also be asked to substitute for missing teachers – in this case we ask that you try and discretely record their name, the date, and perhaps why they were absent. We give this information to our local partners to help determine which teachers should be eligible for additional trainings or which teachers are chronically absent from their jobs. You don't have to pry or push for this information but if it's available please collect it.

It is your responsibility to come prepared to volunteer! We suggest that before you even come to Nepal you think about what you would like to teach and come up with some lesson plans and creative activities. You will most likely change your plans after you meet with the principal and figure out the details of your contribution, but it is necessary to come with plenty of ideas! However, no need to fear as there are millions of online resources for you to look at. A good place to start is at <http://omprakash.org/resources-for-teachers>

Showering & Hygiene

Your homestay families will have different showering and toilet arrangements. The toilets are all Asian style squat toilets – most of them are in an outhouse near your home. You will be able to have bucket showers at a nearby river or tap. In winter, your homestay family may offer to heat water for you if they are able. Otherwise, planning your showers when there is a lot of sun is a good idea. Women can either bucket shower in the outhouse or can bring a petticoat to wear while they shower. Men are able to shower in the open, but should bring quick dry shorts or something similar to wear while you shower.

Downtime

You will have a ton of downtime in the village since after school you are free to explore and interact with the community. It's a great time to learn about the region and volunteer with the community in other ways. You can learn to cook with your homestay families or cook for them – they all still use traditional wood stoves. You can help farm in the field, you can arrange after school activities for students (village trash pick-up sessions, sports games, arts projects, etc), help students with their homework, you can arrange evening language classes for adults in the community or just spend time talking with them. Realize that while you may want to try your hand at many things and that people are more than happy to have you along, villagers have a ton of work to do every day so you should be aware of whether you are making people's work easier or taking more of their time.

Contact with the outside world

Contact with the outside world can't be guaranteed at any moment. You will always be able to get a hold of people in Kathmandu in case of an emergency; however, internet is non-existent and even electricity is a precious resource – some of the communities still don't have any. Please don't place any international calls with local phones because the charge goes to your homestay family and isn't included in your fee. If you need to call the local coordinator, medical clinic, or anyone in Nepal it should be fine. In the event that your family, etc. need to contact you for whatever reason they can email volunteers@helambuproject.org or call one of our field staff and we will pass the message.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Cultural sensitivity is a large part of our work and will be a large part of your volunteer experience. When encountering other cultures we are often times confronted with the fact that many things we take for granted and assume to be universal are in fact not. Being culturally sensitive requires you not to form judgments quickly and **open your mind to different ways of understanding everything.**

Do's & Don'ts

When in doubt look around and do as other adults do. If you don't know if something is okay, just ask.

The following are things you shouldn't do in order to be culturally sensitive:

- Shoes off at door – never bring them into the house (even carried)
- Don't step over other people, tables, plates, books, etc.
- Don't sit on any of the small tables (they might at first look like benches) – sit on stools or on the ground on mats, cushions, etc.
- Don't place books on the ground, in your pocket, etc.
- Don't whistle indoors.
- Don't wear clothes inside out.
- **Don't intentionally kill anything**, even small insects.
- Don't speak badly of anyone or criticize things.
- Don't place your belongs by or cover shrines or religious places of importance.
- **Don't wear revealing clothing** – shorts, tank tops, spaghetti strap shirts, short skirts, etc.
- Don't be needlessly/constantly noisy/chatty – silence is okay.
- Don't touch members of the opposite sex.
- Don't point the soles of your feet at anyone or at religious sculptures when sitting on the floor.
- Don't use your left hand to pass or give people things.
- Don't throw things in fires even if your homestay families do. Fires are often considered sacred and trash, etc. should not be thrown into them.
- Don't wear tight pants – you will have a hard time sitting on the floor with them.
- Don't dry your clothes or shoes near the wood stoves.
- Don't stretch out your legs towards the wood stoves or point the soles of your feet at them.
- Don't share your drink with other people or put your drink back in the pot. If you don't want to drink it you can just leave it.
- Don't touch anyone's head or shoulders, even the students.
- Don't use your finger to point at things or people; use an open hand.

The following are things you should do to be more culturally sensitive:

- Circle religious monuments (monasteries, *stupas*, *chortens*, *mani* walls). **clockwise** – ie **always have them to your right**. You should do this even if it means going out of your way to circle something.
- Talk about your family to bond with people: who is in your family, what they do, bring pictures of them, etc.
- Allow people space to respond to your questions. People like to think before they reply in Nepal.

- Greet people with prayer hands and “*namaste*” or “*tashi delek*.”
- Participate in daily chores and/or field work (you may have to be insistent)
- Keep your belongings neat and tidy (yourself as well).
- Give people multiple options when making a suggestion or request that leaves room for them to politely decline without saying no (eg. “should I come over for dinner tonight or should we eat dinner together another time”).
- Be aware of other people’s time.
- **Ask about people’s culture, religion, beliefs, language, etc.** Listen and make an effort to learn about what people want to share. **Remember to listen and not challenge people** when they discuss their beliefs.

Photography

It is understandable to want to photograph your trip to Nepal. However, you need to be sensitive whenever you take photos. Always ask permission before you take someone’s photo, ask before you take photos inside monasteries and religious sites, and be aware that having a camera on you may change how people treat you. Nepal is home to many tourists and often times having a camera or a large camera on you when you talk to someone or interact with them will mark your status as a relatively wealthy westerner and as a tourist. It’s always best to take photos and then put the camera away and never take photos when you first meet someone – wait until after you establish a relationship. It’s also always a nice thing to develop your photos in Kathmandu and send some of them up with our field volunteer!

Gender & Relationships

Women status in relation to men in Nepal is complicated – no quick or easy generalizations can be made. Female volunteers will be treated as guests and afforded much the same respect as Western male guests. In Nepali culture it is never appropriate to publicly touch someone from the opposite sex. If a Nepali man touches you, casually or otherwise, whether in Helambu or elsewhere, you should politely but firmly establish a boundary. Be aware that many Nepali men have warped views of foreign women and sexuality because of western media. If you are a female volunteer and ever feel uncomfortable around a man, you can excuse yourself and just sit near other local women. It also isn’t culturally appropriate for women to go off with men alone to secluded areas. If anything like this happens, please call our field coordinator who is a local woman and will be able to address the situation.

For volunteer couples, you should refrain from public displays of affection or touching. We recommend that couples say they are married because dating is non-existent in rural Nepal. If you plan on doing this, then you should stick to your story and not change it. We also ask that couples do not sleep together while in the village.

Monastery/Nunnery Etiquette

Helambu's monasteries and nunneries are beautiful places that you will most likely want to explore. We encourage this but want you to be culturally appropriate when you enter these places. When visiting or entering a monastery:

- **Don't kill anything (even insects)**
- Don't tell lies
- Talk quietly.
- Leave your shoes outside.
- Avoid sitting or standing with your back to the main altar.
- Never point with your fingers. If you want to indicate something, use an open hand – preferably your right hand.
- If you sit on the floor, please do not point the soles of your feet towards the altar or stretch out your legs to point at the altar.
- Never whistle indoors.
- Ask before you take pictures.
- Feel free to make a donation in the donation box – it pays for monastery upkeep.
- Also feel comfortable prostrating three times when you enter or leave a monastery. You may also offer a khada (ceremonial scarf) to the altar.
- If you are with young monks or nuns please show them the same respect as an adult monk or nun – don't touch them, etc.
- When a high lama or Rinpoche is in the room and you want to leave do not show your back – simply “back” out of the room without turning around.
- Always sit on the floor in a monastery.

Home stay Etiquette

If you want to bring your homestay family a gift, you should bring something of practical use that is not too expensive. Soaps, tea, honey, jam, a small towel, hat, etc. are all great gifts because they can be used and are of appropriate value. While you may have extra gear, equipment, etc. that you want to gift or lead behind, be aware that when giving a lot to one or only a few families in a village does create problems later after you leave. For these reasons, please be aware of what you donate or give as gifts. It's best not to give gifts to break the ice – **give them after you have established a relationship**. If you don't have a gift for everyone or don't have one at all, it's fine and not expected.

SAFETY & RISK

The most important thing to keep in mind is that safety and risk are always relative. You will be the judge of what is safe and what isn't for the most part and you should always err on the side of caution because you will be in a foreign place with less emergency resources than normal.

Theft

Petty theft is common in Nepal, especially Kathmandu. You should be careful of unnecessary or overt displays of wealth and don't let others know where you keep your valuables. The best way to stop theft is not to bring any expensive things you don't need (iphones, other gadgets, etc). Many of these things may not work in villages where there is limited power anyways. In general, your things will be safe in your homestay families' house and we have never had a problem. This said, don't leave expensive things out where children or people who wander by can pick them up. When out in communities or travelling keep track of your valuables and don't leave things laying around.

Medical

Managing your health in Nepal and Helambu requires you to be proactive. The following are some general guidelines:

- Drink only boiled liquids or sterilized water
- Only eat cooked foods or foods that can be peeled
- Wash your hands several times a day, before you eat and after you use the toilet
- Stay hydrated – bring oral rehydration salts for when you walk or when you are sick.
- Treat diarrhoea immediately with activated charcoal, 2 teaspoons of turmeric in luke warm water, oral rehydration salts or similar natural methods before you require antibiotics.
- Only eat cooked foods.

Traveller's diarrhoea is common and often times goes away if you adjust your diet and respond appropriately. There are other gastrointestinal conditions that are common in Nepal, if you have serious diarrhoea for more than several days or other serious medical concerns you can call CIWEC clinic (Phone # 4424111) and consult with a doctor. You can also call one of Helambu Project field coordinators who have experience dealing with medical issues in the Himalayas and can offer advice.

Please read this article: http://www.ciwecclinic.com/articles/understanding_diarrhea.php to find out more about diarrhoea in travellers.

Trekking

The region we work is also famous for its trekking. Many volunteers spend their Saturdays and free days trekking to nearby villages and pilgrimage sites. If you do this it is often good to bring a friend (especially if you are a woman), make sure you know the way, and be adequately equipped for your trek. We advise against doing longer treks alone because even a twisted ankle can become a serious problem when you are alone. A good solution is to take locals with you or hire a local guide for the day. It's often more fun and you often get to learn much about the region that way. Women should be aware of who they trek with because travelling alone with a man is culturally inappropriate. Either way to be sure to let your homestay family know where you are going, your route, and when you plan to be back. You can also call and let the volunteer coordinator your plans.

BEFORE YOU COME

Packing list

The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of what you will need in the village – check the weather section to see what you will need for when you come. All of these items are available in Kathmandu.

- Sleeping bag (light weight is fine)
- Medicine (prescribed and/or over-the-counter, there are no nearby pharmacies)
- Emergency phone numbers (insurance, hospitals, embassy, etc.)
- Head lamp / flashlight
- Water bottle
- Water purifier
- Oral rehydration sachets
- Rain coat and pack cover
- Copy of your insurance
- 3 sets of conservative and comfortable clothes that will easily dry (it's not appropriate to wear short skirts, shorts, tank tops, or other revealing clothes in Nepal)
- Bandanna
- Sunscreen / sun hat
- Sturdy footwear, preferably water-resistant or water-proof
- Lots of reading materials
- Soap and Shampoo
- An open mind & patience

Donated Goods

Please feel free to bring school supplies for the school. Crayons, pens, pencils, kids' books, small art supplies are all great – it give you something to use in class. They mean a lot to the kids. From past experiences, it is better to buy school supplies locally instead of bringing them from your home country unless they have been donated to you. Buying school and sports materials in Nepal supports the local economy and is often a fraction of the price you may pay in the west. If you are unsure about whether something is or isn't available here please feel free to ask, but all standard supplies and

equipment is available in Kathmandu and can be purchased before you head to your school. If you bring in kind donations or buy them in Kathmandu and will need help carrying them, please let us know beforehand so we can arrange a porter. In this event, we will cover the cost of a porter.

Insurance

All volunteers must have basic medical coverage. A scanned copy of your insurance must be emailed to volunteers@helambuproject.org (Subject: *Your Name's* Insurance). You can provide this information before you head to village, but you will not be taken to your field site unless this information has been sent to us. Two of our previous volunteers recommended the following websites for travel insurance (if you have any others please send us them):

<http://www.haylor.com/Site/1126916479/default.asp>

https://www.wallach.com/secure/hcglobal2000_application.asp#app

Vaccinations

You should consult a travel doctor or your general practitioner. Helambu Project does not require you to have any vaccinations; however, we have the following vaccinations when we travel to Nepal: typhoid, Hepatitis A & B, Rabies pre-exposure, MMR, tetanus, polio, and meningitis. The area we work is not in a malarial region of Nepal nor will you travel through one if you leave from Kathmandu.

Official recommendations on vaccines for Nepal can be found here:
<http://ciwec-clinic.com/>

Fundraising

Our work is largely possible because of fundraising. We have long term dedicated fundraisers that have supported our organization from the beginning and with their work we have been able to accomplish much. While often times you may feel uncomfortable or awkward when fundraising, we strongly encourage all of our volunteers to at least to some fundraising before or after they come. There are so many ways to raise money, many of them are a lot fun, and we will be able to help support you work with materials, advice, and whatever else you may need. You can also talk with us and discuss how fundraised money can be spent and for which types of projects it should go towards. If you are interested in fundraising, please write to fundraise@helambuproject.org.

RELEVANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Helambu Project

You can give these to your family in case they need to contact you

Nima Sherpa, field coordinator: +977 9841-862-460

Ola Perczynska, Project Manager: +977 9818-460-987

Daniel Coyle, Project Manager: +977 9841-180-525

Health & Emergency

In case of an emergency contact Helambu Project staff and we will help arrange whatever you need. You can also call CIWEC for medical advice if needed.

CIWEC Medical Unit: 4424111

Ambulance (Patan Hospital): 4521048

Ambulance (Red Cross): 4228094

Tourist Police: 4247041

Nepal International Clinic: 977-1-4434642

Himalayan Rescue Association: 977-1-4440292

Embassies

It's always a good thing to have your embassy's number with you and even register with them before you leave Kathmandu.

Australia: 1-4371678; www.embassy.gov.au/np; Bansbari

Canada: 01-4415193; www.cconepal.org.np; Lazimpat

China: 01-4411740; www.chinaembassy.org.np; Baluwatar

France: 01-4412332; www.ambafrance-np.org; Lazimpat

Germany: 01-4412786; www.kathmandu.diplo.de; Gyaneshwar

India: 01-4410900; www.south-asia.com/Embassy-India; Lainchaur

Japan: 01-4426680; comjpn@mos.com.np; Pani Pokhari

UK: 01-4410583; www.britishembassy.gov.uk/nepal; Lainchaur

USA: 01-4411179; <http://nepal.usembassy.gov>; Pani Pokhari

For embassies and consulates not listed above, refer to Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mofa.gov.np) or Department of Immigration (www.immi.gov.np/location.php).

USEFUL PHRASES

Keep in mind that many common English words are the same in Nepali (bus, class, school, etc). Also, never underestimate the power of sign language – you can actually communicate a lot!

English	Nepali
Full / Enough (Food)	<i>Pugyo</i>
Thank you	<i>Dhanya baad</i>
You don't have to	<i>Pardaina</i>
Excuse me	<i>Hajur</i>
I don't understand	<i>Maile bujina</i>
I'm sick	<i>Malaai bimari laagyo</i>
Boiled water	<i>Umaleko paani</i>
Rice	<i>Bhaat</i>
Tea	<i>Chiya</i>
Potato	<i>Alu</i>
Too much	<i>Bhadhi bhayo</i>
A little bit	<i>Ali kati</i>
Toilet	<i>Charpi</i>
Please Stop (bus & actions)	<i>Rokhnus</i>
Please give me....	<i>Malaai dinnus</i>