STREET KIDS DIRECT
OVERSEAS VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS: INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATION PROCESS

NB: this document only applies to volunteers and visitors from outside of Central America.

DEFINITION

Overseas Volunteers

This refers to volunteers from outside of Central America who, following an application process, come to work either with SKD across their partnered projects in Central America or with one or more specific project. To work with SKD in this capacity they are required to complete a SKD DBS check in the UK or the equivalent in their country of residence. They will also have to abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and the code of conduct of each local project with which they work. For more on what is required of volunteers see the **Individual Volunteer Application Process** below.

Visitors

This refers to those who come to visit one or more SKD-partnered project either individually or, more rarely, as part of a group. Any visit to a local project will need that project's authorisation before taking place and there must be at least one person designated as host accompanying the visitor(s) while they are with the project. Because they will not have received an SKD DBS check – whatever other checks they may have had in the past – they are not to be left alone *at any point* with a child or group of children or vulnerable adults. For an SKD staff member or volunteer to invite someone to visit (e.g., friend or family member), if the visit is taking place in work time it will need prior authorisation from the SKD director or their delegate. All visitors must agree to abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and the code of conduct of each local project which they are visiting.

Group volunteers

This refers to visits by groups (eg, church groups, youth groups) who make a visit which involves some level of engagement or interaction with a local project that will include the possibility of working without supervision with any child or group of children or vulnerable adult. All such groups must follow the **Group Application Process** below which also defines the two types of group visit welcomed by SKD. To work with SKD in this capacity every member of the group is required to complete a SKD DBS check in the UK or the equivalent in their country of residence.

They will also have to abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and the code of conduct of each local project with which they work.

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PROCESS

This process consists of a clearly defined stages which are outlined below.

1. Initial contact from a prospective volunteer

This contact is forwarded to the SKD Overseas Volunteers Coordinator (or designated stand-in) for logging, acknowledgement and response.

2. Acknowledgement and response

Most usually an email. This will be accompanied by a document outlining any potential volunteering opportunities, along with the criteria required for each one. The inquirer will be asked to let SKD know whether or not they wish to continue with the application process – and for which opportunity (or opportunities) they wish to apply. If so, they proceed to step 3. From this point on the person becomes an *applicant*.

3. Application form sent

An email is sent to the applicant along with the standard SKD application pack. This includes:

- Application form
- Volunteer reference forms. One of the references **must be** from a church leader.
- Code(s) of conduct for volunteers
- SKD safeguarding policy

The applicant will need to agree to to abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and the code of conduct of each local project with which they work.

4. Receipt of application

All references will be taken up and the application forwarded to those who decide on volunteers within the local projects.

A decision is made at this point whether to move the process to the next stage (interviews) or to contact the applicant and inform them that they have not been successful on this occasion (with reasons why).

5. Interviews

This stage may include an interview with a representative of SKD within the applicant's country of residence (eg, the UK), as well as with those representing the local project(s) to which they are applying.

If the interview(s) process is successful, then at this stage the appointment of the applicant will be subject to an SKD DBS check in the UK or the equivalent in their country of residence.

6. Information prior to arrival in country

The successful applicant (henceforward "volunteer) will be sent a 'volunteer pack'. SKD and the local projects will liaise with them about accommodation, language training (if needed), and anything else necessary.

The local project(s) will assign a line manager to the volunteer who will contact them prior to their arrival Central America. Also prior to their arrival they will be expected to complete an online course in safeguarding.

7. Arrival and stay in country

The local project(s) will be responsible for induction which will include (but not be limited to):
- Cultural orientation
- Safeguarding training specific to that country and/or project
- Security training specific to that country and/or project

During the volunteer's time with the project they will receive regular supervision from their line manager. Pastoral support will also be provided by SKD and/or the local project.

8. On their leaving the organisation

The volunteer will be expected to have an 'exit' conversation with SKD and/or the local project. SKD, together with the volunteer, are responsible for ensuring that the volunteer receives proper debriefing once they return to their country of residence.

GROUP APPLICATION PROCESS

SKD welcomes two types of group visit which are broadly defined as follows.

A. **A vision/experience visit.** The main purpose of this visit is for the group to understand more about the local project(s), within the wider cultural context in which they operate.
B. **A service/volunteering visit.** The main purpose of this visit is for the group to provide some service to the local project(s) which genuinely adds value to their work.

Obviously, there is some overlap between the two types of visit. However, it will be very important to define the visit's main purpose at the beginning of the application process, as each type of visit will require a different kind of resourcing from the local project.

The group application process consists of a clearly defined stages which are outlined below.

1. Initial contact from a prospective visiting group

This contact is forwarded to the SKD Overseas Volunteers Coordinator (or designated stand-in) for logging, acknowledgement and response.

2. Acknowledgement and response

Most usually an email and/or a telephone/Skype call. This will be accompanied by a document outlining the two types of visit and what possibilities exist for each one. The group representative will be asked to let SKD know whether or not they wish to continue with the application process – and for which type of visit and which opportunity (or opportunities) they wish to apply. If so, they proceed to step 3. From this point on the group becomes the *applicant*.

3. Application form sent

An email is sent to the applicant along with the standard SKD application pack. This includes:

- A Group application form
- An SKD reference form for the designated group leader(s) (one of the referees must be the church leader, head of school, or someone in position of overall authority in the organisation)
- Code(s) of conduct for volunteers
- SKD safeguarding policy

At this stage the group leaders will need to agree to abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and the code of conduct of each local project with which they work.

4. Receipt of application

All references for the group leaders will be taken up and the application forwarded to those who decide on volunteers within the local projects.

It is very likely at this point that, if the head of the applying organisation is not also the group leader, SKD will contact them directly as part of the reference process.

A decision is made at this point whether to move the process to the next stage (interviews) or to contact the applicant and inform them that they have not been successful on this occasion (with reasons why).

5. Interviews

There will be an interview with the group leader(s). This stage may include an interview with a representative of SKD within their country of residence (eg, the UK), as well as with those representing the local project(s) to which they are applying.

If the application is successful, please note that reception of the group by SKD and/or any local projects will be subject to every member of the visiting group having a DBS check in the UK or the equivalent in their country of residence and SKD having received evidence that these checks have taken place.

6. Information prior to arrival in country

The successful applicant group will be sent a 'group pack' which will include helpful information on selecting a team, training for a cross-cultural visit, how to debrief during and after the visit and more. SKD and the local projects will liaise with them about accommodation, language training (if needed), and anything else necessary.

The local project(s) will assign a host or hosts to the visiting group who will make contact with them prior to their arrival Central America. Also prior to their arrival they will be encouraged to complete an online course in safeguarding.

7. Arrival and stay in country

The local project(s) will be responsible for induction for any visiting group which will include (but not be limited to):
- Cultural orientation
- Safeguarding training specific to that country and/or project
- Security training specific to that country and/or project

During the group's time with the project they will receive support from their host(s). Pastoral support will also be provided by SKD and/or the local project.

8. "Going home"

The group will be expected to have an 'exit' conversation with SKD and/or the local project. The group themselves are responsible for ensuring that every member receives proper debriefing once they return home.

VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS: A FINAL NOTE

Wherever possible, SKD welcomes visitors and volunteers to encounter, experience and work alongside its partner projects in Central America, so long as such visits genuinely enable both the visitors/volunteers and the local projects in their work and development.

The expectation is that all visitors and volunteers will happily abide by the SKD safeguarding policy and codes of conduct. However, please do note that failure to do so may lead to an individual or group being excluded from access to any SKD-partnered projects (and/or being "sent home" at their own expense).