

Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective Volunteers

1) **What can I expect as a volunteer in the refugee camps?** The only thing we can assure you of is unpredictability. Humanitarian crises change on an hourly basis. You need to be adaptable and be able to work well with a team. We encourage you to go with an open mind. Don't be too rigid with your role as a volunteer. Be open to helping any way that you possibly can.

We also emphasize that working with these populations and in these conditions is very challenging work and should not be taken lightly. This work is not something you do during a gap year whilst trying to "discover yourself." You need to have it together and be strong enough to support the people around you. It is important that you have good communication skills and are comfortable communicating effectively with people who don't speak the same language as you or who share different beliefs. Note that many of the volunteers you may be working with may also not speak the same language as you, so this advice should be taken in many circumstances. You are often acting as an advocate for vulnerable people so it is important that you can communicate with them, as well as with the other people working in the camps. This is a responsibility, and it's one that needs to be taken seriously. You will be witnessing the best and the worst of humanity, make sure that you do a self-check and know how to be helpful, not hindering. "Help" is going to be different depending on which organization you volunteer with and what kind of assistance you are providing. Be sure to check in and communicate thoroughly with those involved before making the trip out so that your time volunteering will be productive and fulfilling for you and the people you work with along the way!

2) **Is it safe?** Your mission will be as safe as you make it to be. If you are aware and respectful and you communicate well, you will be completely safe and at ease for the duration of your time in camp. Things are unpredictable and you need to pay extra attention, but in general working in the camps is not a dangerous thing to do. If you are working with a medical team, make sure you are up to date on all of the necessary vaccinations (the NGO will walk you through this if you aren't sure) and if you are working in camp separate from the medical care providers, make sure you know where to find them if you need help. Most refugee camps will also have a point of contact for emergency services, be sure to familiarize yourself with the police and EMS numbers in the area before you leave and make sure that you always have a phone and your identification on you at all time.

3) **What NGOs are available for me to work with?** Please refer to our volunteer section on the Resources page of the website <http://www.keepitinsight.org/resources>

4) **How do you pay for your trip?** Lots of people ask this question, and it can be a tricky one to answer. If you have the support of your community and are comfortable crowd-funding, that can be a very effective way to not only raise the funds, but also to get the word out about the refugee crisis. Many volunteers do a massive fund-raising campaign before their trip and donate the remaining funds once basic costs are covered to the NGO they worked with. Lots of volunteers also pay their own way. If you are smart about booking and careful with planning, traveling around Europe and affording the day-to-day costs in Greece isn't a huge financial burden.

5) **What is accommodation like?** This depends on which organization you work with. Some NGOs have you stay at a hotel, some of them have apartments or other accommodation for their volunteers. This information will be available for you through the group you go to work with.

6) **Do I have to be registered with an NGO to go and work in the camps?** Yes. Before the military camps, camps like Idomeni and Eko in northern Greece did not require a check-in and volunteers were free to come and go. In many cases, this endangers the vulnerable people in the camp. Missing people were a huge problem in all the unofficial camps in Greece and are a frequent problem that refugees face on their journey. For their protection, you need to be registered with an organization to volunteer (they will handle this process for you). To be the

most effective, register with an organization before heading into the field rather than trying to find one once you're there.

7) **Do I need to speak any specific language?** No, but a willingness to learn a new language and make an effort to communicate is always appreciated! NGOs who find them necessary will recruit translators to assist. The most common languages you'll encounter when working in the refugee camps of Greece are Arabic, Kurdish, and Farsi. Greek formalities are also encouraged to show some respect for the locals. Other locations you might work include Italy, France, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. We always encourage you to learn a few basics before heading over!

8) **What should I pack?** This will depend on the nature of your work and which time of year you go. Check in with the people on the ground with the organization you choose to go with and they will assist you.