

# Salesian Missionary Volunteering News Update

Volume 13 Newsletter



## Formation is a key for success in SMV

April 2026

Dear friends of SMV,

As always it is a delight read about all the volunteering news throughout the Salesian world. During such challenging times in so many areas of the world our Salesian message of hope is so important. Salesian Volunteers are a unique expression of that hope in action. We invite all of our partners to pray for our wonderful volunteers throughout the world.

We warmly welcome Fr. Carlos Eduardo Mendez to our SMV Advisory Team. Fr. Carlos, originally from Venezuela, has joined the Youth Ministry Sector at the Generalate. We wish him well as he starts this very important work and look forward to his contribution on our team.

Many blessings to each and every one of you!

♥ WITH LOVE ♥

*Marco, Pavel, Chris, JC, Adam, Carlos and Lauren*

### Safeguarding and Volunteering

As you are well aware safeguarding is incredibly important for all Salesian work and this is true for volunteering. There are considerations for safeguarding for the young people with whom the volunteer is working and safeguarding for the volunteer themselves. As an Advisory Team we are looking closely at this topic in consultation with what is happening at a wider congregational level.

Our first task is to understand what Provinces who both send and receive currently have in place for this very important topic.

For this reason, we are asking if you can please share and policies or procedures that your Province/Sending organisation has in place. Please email them to: [salesianvol@sdb.org](mailto:salesianvol@sdb.org).

We sincerely thank you for your assistance in this very important matter!

## Psychological Support and Wellness for Volunteers NEW!

## SAVE THE DATE: Online Formation

The psychological and mental health well being of our volunteers is incredibly important. We know that there are many challenges that volunteers face during their service that perhaps they would not face in their regular lives. We want to understand how we can best support the volunteers to have an experience where they do not just survive but they thrive. We invite SMV coordinators, partners and those involved in Salesian volunteering to a 90 minutes on-line formation meeting to discuss this topic.

We have the opportunity to listen input from Antonella Sinagoga, psychologist and member of Congregational Youth Ministry Sector, to share experiences and learn mutually.

Dates of the meetings:

- 18th May at 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. (Italian time) → in English
- 19th May at 18:00 - 19:30 (Italian time) → in Spanish

Click [here](#) to register for this event.

The SMV Advisory Team can be contacted via email: [SalesianVol@sdb.org](mailto:SalesianVol@sdb.org)  
Our Website: <https://salesianvol.org>

SMV and the SMV Advisory Team is a joint initiative of the Missions and Youth Ministry Sectors of the Salesians of Don Bosco

# SMV Manual Reflection

By Leyre Sainz



## SMV Volunteer Manual - Why is training and formation important?

In this edition Leyre considers why the preparation of a volunteer is important. Formation is a foundational principle in all our Salesian work. Leyre highlights that the training and formation prior to departure are only the beginning of our accompaniment for volunteers. It is a continuous process.

## Reflection:

### The Importance of a Solid Training Process and Program

Salesian missionary volunteering is much more than traveling to another country to help for a while. It is an experience that involves encountering, learning, and committing to other realities. That is precisely why it is so important to have a solid training process and program that helps volunteers understand the experience they are about to have and how to do so responsibly.

Volunteering is often thought of simply as going to help, but it actually involves much more. It means listening, learning from the realities you encounter, adapting to new cultures, working as a team, and being part of a broader educational and pastoral project. For this reason, training plays a key role. It shouldn't be limited to just a few sessions before starting the experience, but should accompany the entire process: before, during, and after the volunteering experience.

Prior training helps each volunteer examine their motivations. It allows them to ask themselves why they want to have this experience and what they hope to gain from it. It also helps them prepare with an open, humble, and willing attitude. In many cases, volunteers arrive in places with social, cultural, or economic contexts very different from what they are used to. Without adequate preparation, these differences can lead to culture shock or misunderstandings. On the other hand, with good training, volunteers have the tools to better understand their environment, adapt to new situations, and interact respectfully with the people in the host community.

Furthermore, the training process is also a great opportunity for personal growth. During the preparation, participants develop valuable skills such as communication, teamwork, active listening, and conflict resolution. All of this helps not only to enhance the volunteer experience but also to gain self-awareness and confidence in facing new situations.

Another fundamental aspect is community life. In many volunteer experiences, living with others is part of daily life. Knowing how to share spaces, respecting others' pace, communicating when difficulties arise, and assuming shared responsibilities are key to successful coexistence. In fact, experience shows that many of the problems that arise in volunteering are related to living together. That's why it's important to address this aspect as part of the training.

In addition to all this, there is the spiritual dimension that is an integral part of Salesian missionary volunteering. It's not just about doing things, but also about finding meaning in what one experiences. That's why it's important to have time for personal reflection, dialogue, and accompaniment. These spaces help volunteers connect their service with their values and their own life path.

For all these reasons, it's important to remember that training doesn't end when the experience begins. Support during volunteering and opportunities to evaluate and share experiences upon returning home are also part of the process. These moments allow volunteers to reflect on what they've learned and discover how to remain engaged with social issues when they go back home.

In short, a good training program not only better prepares volunteers, but also makes missionary volunteering a more conscious, deeper, and truly transformative experience.

Leyre Sainz has been working with volunteers with Salesian Missions since 2023. She is part of the SMV training team for the Santiago el Mayor Province and participates in volunteer scholarship selection committees. She was responsible for volunteering at Ciudad Don Bosco, Medellín, for five years and has been a volunteer within the Salesian family for most of her life.