



SMV

Salesian Missionary Volunteering News Update

Volume 16 Newsletter



VMS



What is our volunteer process?

October 2026

Dear friends of SMV,

We send you peace and joy wherever you may be in this great world! This month is an exciting month for SMV as the Advisory Team comes together in person and focuses all our energies on our SMV work!

This edition Petra, from the Czechia Province, offers us a reflection on the importance of preparation and process for our volunteers. There are many programs and provinces throughout the world who carry out preparation and process very well! We have much that we can learn from each other.

At this time of the year we give special thought to our volunteers around the world. Some of our long-term volunteers have just begun their experience and others are heading towards the end. We offer them our heartfelt prayers of solidarity and gratitude for their generosity.

Sending you many blessings,

♥ WITH LOVE ♥ *Marco, Pavel, Chris, JC, Adam, Carlos and Lauren*

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

This month the SMV Advisory Team will meet to discuss our past, current and future work. Our major goal is to support SMV, particularly coordinators and receiving communities. If you have any feedback or something you would like us to consider, please email:
salesianvol@sdb.org.

SAVE THE DATE - 2027 SMV WORLD MEETING

We are including this information again this edition to sure you have it written down in your calendars!
Meeting date: October 17 - 22, 2027 in Madrid
More details to come soon.

Exciting New Resource: GOOD PRACTICES FOR RECEIVING VOLUNTEERS

The SMV Advisory team, along with you many of you, our stakeholders, have been working with Fr. Silvio, Councillor for Formation, Fr. Jorge, Councillor for Missions and Fr. Rafa, Councillor for Youth Ministry to write "Good Practices for Salesian Communities Receiving Volunteers".

This is a practical piece of writing that is derived from consultation and more importantly, excellent experience in the field of volunteering. This important topic has brought together the Formation, Missions, and Youth Ministry sectors. We are really pleased to share this with you and invite you to join us for the launch of the document.

Please join us for the launch and discussion about this important document on:

7:00pm (Rome Time)
Thursday 29, October 2026

Register here for the link to
access this event

The SMV Advisory Team can be contacted via email: 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 Petra Klašková



SMV Volunteer Manual – Good Intentions are Not Enough – Process Matters

In this edition, Petra reflects on the importance of having a strong process in place to support volunteers before, during, and after their experience. While many aspects of volunteering are beyond our control, being well prepared for the things we can influence helps create a more meaningful and successful experience for everyone involved.

Reflection:

Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Why Process Matters in Mission Volunteering

Every year, volunteers come to us at SADBA (Salesian Association of Don Bosco, CEP) full of enthusiasm, ready to give a year of their life in service. Their motivation is real, and it matters. But after more than twenty years of sending volunteers, we realize that good intentions are the starting point, not the guarantee. What makes the difference between a transformative year, and a painful one is a good process.

As a sending organisation, we are going to share our side of the process. Let us remember that there need to be a solid process on the part of the receiving province as well. We think of this process in three parts. Each of them asks something neglecting any one of them puts the whole experience at risk.

Preparation takes up almost an entire academic year — eight residential weekends, one each month. During the first half of preparation the candidates explore the mission of the program, examine their own motivations, and discern whether they are truly ready to give a year of their life. The second half turns to practical readiness — living in another culture, safeguarding, crisis situations, fundraising, practical training etc. An inherent part of this is presence of former volunteers so that they can share their experience. Time itself is an important ingredient in the whole preparation: it lets motivations settle and clarify. Throughout the course, a team of five or six — SADBA staff, former volunteers, and Salesians brothers and sisters — accompanies the candidates individually, talking through their preparation, fears, and plans at every weekend. The course ends with a formal sending ceremony in the name of the province.

The service year does not run on its own. The coordinator from SADBA stays in regular contact with each volunteer, holding a structured individual video call every month, if a special situation appears she helps to solve it anytime, when needed we are cooperating with the receiving province or community. The coordinator is also in touch with the receiving community. WhatsApp works well for everyday contact; anything important goes by email.

The return is often harder than the departure, so we begin preparing volunteers for it within the final three months of service, asking concrete questions about where they will live and what they will do next. In the first weeks home, the coordinator checks in on how the volunteer is doing and offers professional support if needed. Volunteers complete a structured feedback questionnaire which helps them to reflex on their experience and on the other hand helps SADBA to get important feedback and current information. The receiving community is asked for feedback too. Within two months after everyone has returned, we hold a post-return weekend with a professional-led group reflection, space for individual conversations, a talk on reverse culture shock, and a special closing liturgy. We also encourage volunteers to share their experience, together with them we organise lectures for parishes and public – the mission does not end when a volunteer comes home; it simply changes shape. We keep inviting returned volunteers to preparation weekends — connecting with others who have lived through something similar is often what helps most. Former volunteers love to come, sometimes even years later.

If there is one lesson underneath all of this, it is that no process is ever finished. **The most important quality of a good process is its openness** — a constant willingness to ask what needs to be modified and to build that learning back in.

Petra Klašková is the lay director of SADBA (Czech Republic, Europe). Years ago, she spent a year as a Salesian mission volunteer in Tanzania — an experience that still shapes how she sees mission work: as a constant process of stepping outside oneself, encountering otherness, and standing in solidarity with others. Alongside her work at SADBA, she is also engaged in ecumenism and theology studies.