

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Introduction

The aim of this volunteer handbook is to give an outline of how best to support the girls as a volunteer at the boarding house. We found that it was really important to have at least a rough lesson plan prepared beforehand, otherwise the time spent with the girls was not as fruitful as it could be. This handbook is also a good opportunity to share with future volunteers what worked and what didn't and also how to make sure that the outcomes that you as a volunteer are aiming towards are attained.

The name 'Veerni' embodies the soul of the project, meaning "women of strength and fortitude, confidence and determination". Veerni's mission is to educate and empower adolescent girls from the desert areas around Jodhpur so they can lead healthy and productive lives free from poverty, coercion and disease. This is to prepare them for a life where they can exercise their own human rights. To this end, Veerni provides high quality secondary education in a safe and supportive environment. Veerni believes that there can be no true democracy without the full participation of women in their communities, and that an education is the most effective intervention.

Volunteering at Veerni for a month was an incredible experience; one that we will cherish and remember for many years to come. Although initially a month seemed like quite a long time to both of us, we found that because every day was so rich and full, our time flew by. For the month we stayed at the DuragNiwasguest house which is part of the Sambhali Project, a similar initiative to Veerni that aims to support a different group of girls in Jodhpur. Our days generally consisted of sightseeing and exploring Jodhpur in the mornings, and then having lunch and volunteering with the girls in the afternoons. In the evenings we would usually return to DuragNiwas tired but very content.

We have learnt so many valuable lessons from our time in Jodhpur, it has been a journey of many laughs but also moments of frustration and even slight homesickness that is almost inherent in coming to such a different country. The one thing that always kept us smiling was definitely being able to see the incredible transitions that the girls have made through their improvements in English. Their company is so uplifting, and on many occasions, it has made us very grateful for what we have and thankful for the opportunities that are possible for us as two young students. Our experience has made us realise that we are all brothers and sisters in this world, and no matter how many thousands of kilometres we are apart, we are still connected. It is for these reasons that our month at Veerni is an experience that we would strongly recommend to anyone who is interested in making a visible difference, and having a lot of fun whilst learning about another culture.

Accommodation

It is recommended that volunteers either stay at DuragNiwas Guesthouse (if there are 2 or more volunteers), or at the Veerni Institute with the girls (if there is only 1 volunteer).

DuragNiwas Guesthouse
1. Setrawa House
K.N. College Road
Raikabagh, Jodhpur, India 342001

The guesthouse is a 25 minute drive away from the Veerni Institute, and caters to your every needs. It is run by Govind and his wife Mukta, who are very hospitable and willing to help you with anything you need. All meals are provided at the guesthouse, which is part of the living expenses. The food at the guesthouse is a very high quality and very delicious. All food prepared at the guesthouse is safe to eat and it is all prepared in a clean and safe way. There is no need to avoid any of the food offered to you at the guesthouse.

Upon arrival, you will be notified about the water situation at the guesthouse. It is recommended that you either purchase a box of 10 water bottles for the duration of your stay, or you can use the filtered water downstairs on the ground level to refill your bottles. Do not drink any tap water as it is not clean enough to drink. Avoid using the tap water for small things, such as washing your toothbrush, rinsing your mouth. Just stick to the filtered or bottled water at all times. This will ensure you stay healthy and free from sickness.

The rooms are very cosy and secure. Depending on the room you are given, some are larger than others. However, all rooms provide you with a comfortable bed and bathroom.

The location of the guesthouse is very central. It is close to shopping malls, such as the Blue City Mall, where you can purchase various souvenirs, t-shirts, jewellery, shoes etc. It is also just a short rickshaw ride away from Fresh and Green, the grocery store. Most things that you may require are within walking distance of the guesthouse. There is also a park right next door, where you can enjoy a leisurely stroll and escape from the “hustle and bustle” of India!

Any questions or queries would be happily answered by Mukta or the other staff working at the guesthouse. They are also more than happy to order a rickshaw for you, or even to organise weekend trips away to visit other parts of India. They are there to help you so don't hesitate to ask them any questions you may have.

Our Experiences

Emily Bassett

We spent the duration of a month in Jodhpur, volunteering at Veerni School every weekday afternoon. I spent the majority of my time focusing on a group of 8 girls (Bhawana, Seema, Sangeeta, Hem, Ranjana, Tanu, Shobha, and Worship), ranging from ages 11 - 15 years. Each girl in my group was from different castes. I found that most of the girls in my class were quite strong readers. I mainly focused on improving the girls English comprehension, as well as playing games, doing arts and crafts and continuing to build each girl's confidence.

Each day prior to visiting the school, I would sit down and plan my lesson for the day. I tried to alternate between teaching English, and playing games, arts and crafts, and dancing. This was effective as it gave the girls an opportunity to both learn and improve their English studies, as well as being able to have fun, go outside, and be creative. Initially, the girls were quite shy and it was difficult to know whether they understood what I was saying. However, once they warmed up to me they became much more confident in their English speaking and understanding. I found that a really good way to get to know the girls was to take them outside to the park and play sports games with them. This really encouraged them to come out of their shells and build their confidence. As well as this, they really enjoyed playing outside with their friends and building their teamwork skills. It was helpful for me because I felt that I got to know the girls a lot better after having seen them working together in a team and interacting with each other.

The English classes, at times, were quite difficult. The girls would much rather play games and do arts and craft, however strengthening their English skills was an important goal that I wanted to achieve with them. I found that making the classes practical, and using a more 'hands on' approach was very successful. For example, games such as 'Simon says' and singing nursery rhymes were really successful in both improving their English, as well as entertaining the girls.

The experience I had at Veerni was indescribable. I cannot even begin to summarise the impact every single one of the girls had on me and my perceptions of the world. Each and every girl is so intelligent and capable of achieving great things in their lives. I am so thankful for being able to be a part of such an amazing project. On a different note, my experience at Veerni also taught me so much about the world, and really opened my eyes to the issue of gender equality.

Erica Longhurst

Travelling to India has been a particularly incredible experience, particularly because it is my first trip overseas. I feel that I have learnt so much through being not merely a tourist, but a volunteer who has the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of young women living in India today. Patience and good listening skills are the two most important skills that you need to develop whilst you are in India.

Getting to know the girls

We were both assigned a group, each containing 8 students each, that we were to work with for the duration of our stay at the Veerni Institute. The day we arrived, we met with our respective group of girls and introduced ourselves. Initially, each girl was quite shy as we were new and foreign to them. However, after the first class we had with our group of girls, they quickly warmed up to us and their confidence bloomed.

We found that a great way to get to know each girl was through various games and sporting activities. The first week we were at the Veerni Institute, we took all the girls to the park and played some ball games, as well as some basic teamwork-building games and skills. The girls thoroughly enjoyed these games, as it was a chance for them to get outside and play with their friends. It was really helpful for us as volunteers because it helped us to get to know the girls, as well as offering us an opportunity to test our own ability in giving instructions and providing simple explanations for how each game is to be played. It was a lot of fun and thoroughly recommended to any prospective volunteers.

Another good way to bring out the girls' confidence was through arts and crafts. We got the girls to draw various things, comprising of their families, their houses, animals. We also got them to make collages by cutting out different items from fashion magazines. Not only did the girls enjoy these activities, but it also allowed us to learn more about them. Once the girls had finished their works, we would ask them about what they had drawn, or what they had made. By getting them to explain to us what was in their artwork, we were both improving their English speaking skills, as well as improving our understanding of each girl and the different backgrounds that they have come from.

The girls were very eager to tell us about themselves, and they were each very proud to be attending the Veerni Institute. It is clear to see that every girl values education of women, which is very pertinent in a country such as India.

It was so rewarding for us to be able to get to know the girls individually and develop a special connection with each of them. Their strength, confidence and intelligence was really inspiring to us, and really changed our perception of the world. It truly was a remarkable experience, one we will never forget. The bond we developed with each girl, we will carry close to our hearts for the rest of our lives.

Daily Schedule of a Volunteer

Time	Activity
7.30am-8.30am	Wake up and get ready for the day, eat breakfast with the other volunteers at the guest house etc.
8.30am-9.00am	Prepare for a plan for the day, focusing on what is going to be achieved in the afternoon.
9.00am-12.30pm	<p>This is a great opportunity to explore Jodhpur! Key highlights include the Clock Tower, The Fort and the Blue City. Mukta and Govind who run the guest house are very helpful making sure that you feel welcome in India, so make sure that you chat with them and ask them for a map of the city.</p> <p>Another option is to come to some of the morning classes that Sambhali runs at the guest house. For example, there are sometimes seminars on women's rights in India which are really interesting to attend.</p>
12.30pm-1.30pm	This time is a good chance to have perhaps a rest and to get ready for teaching in the afternoon.
1.30pm-2.00pm	The Veerni driver will pick you up at around 1.30pm and take you to Veerni.
2.00pm-3.00pm	Lunch is served to the girls, which is a great opportunity to sit down with them and enjoy a lovely meal. It is also a good opportunity to have a read through the many Articles of Interest and Veerni documents that are in the sitting room.
3.00pm-5.00pm	This is when your assigned group of girls will meet for their afternoon sessions with you. We structured our week by assigning Monday, Wednesday and Friday as days that were focused on developing reading and comprehension skills, whereas Tuesday and Thursday were game days (this could involve a trip to the park/grounds, some dancing or even some yoga stretches). It was also beneficial to have a project that the girls worked on each week. For example, we made collages together that consisted of various fashion items (watches, handbags, pants, tops) from fashion magazines. Colouring and drawing is also very popular.
5.00pm-5.30pm	This time is a good opportunity to debrief with Mahendra (the project manager) about how your day has gone. He is very helpful, and very happy to answer any of our questions and address any of your concerns.
5.30pm-6.00pm	The trip back to DuragNiwas in the Veerni Jeep.
6.00-late	The evenings are a great chance to share dinner with the other

	volunteers (most of whom will probably be working at Sambhali). They will have such interesting stories to share, and it is a great chance to relax after your long day.
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Weekends

The schedule of the weekends is quite variable. The girls go to school on Saturday mornings, and then usually present a show with singing and dancing in the evening. On Sundays, they have a day off, and once every month, all of the parents come to see their girls to talk to them and to see their progress. Thus, the weekends are a good opportunity to do some travelling and some sightseeing - Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, is only a bus trip away, and definitely a place to see if you get the opportunity.

Approaches to Learning English

We don't want to beat around the bush - it is definitely a challenge to teach a group of girls English when it is their second, and sometimes even third language. However, we found that patience and a good sense of humour definitely got us through moments of confusion and helplessness when faced with language barriers.

Comprehension Activities

Word Matching

This activity requires a hat/bag filled with cut out pieces of paper that have both TOPIC WORDS and words that BELONG TO THE TOPIC WORDS written out on them.

1. TOPIC WORDS: These words can be printed on say, pink paper for example, to help with differentiating them from the words that belong to these words. Choose a topic area that is of interest to the girls, for example:
 - a. animals
 - b. foods
 - c. countries
 - d. colours

Now, match these topic words with words that belong to the topic.

- a. animals - sheep: fluffy, white, soft.
- b. countries - India: mango, peacock, spices.

Now comes the sentence building part. Get the girls to make sentences from these words. For example, "the sheep has a soft, fluffy white coat", "India is famous for its mangoes, peacocks and spices."

This is a good activity because it can be easily adapted to make the tasks a bit easier, or a bit more difficult.

Actions

This activity is similar to the previous one in terms of setting it up, but involves the students reading particular instructions and then carrying them out to test their level of comprehension.

From a hat/bag, a student will draw out a strip of paper with an instruction such as, 'touch the wall', 'pretend to throw a ball' etc. This can also be made to be more difficult or more simple if necessary.

Describing Pictures

This is a good activity for verbalising what is happening in an image. The student will be asked to look at a picture (any magazine or storybook is appropriate for this activity) and then say what is happening in that image. For example, you could ask them to describe the emotions of what one of the person is feeling, the colours and the objects present in the image.

Games to help the girls learn English

Chinese (English) Whispers

All the students are sitting in a circle. One student starts with a sentence, and then whispers it to the person on their left. The next student whispers it to the next student, and the sentence is carried all around the circle until it reaches the person on the right of the student who started the sentence.

'I went to the market, and I bought a...'

This is a good game for getting the students to remember a list of English words (and thus improving their vocabulary). One person starts by saying, *I went to the market (bazaar) and I bought a _____ (e.g. chicken)*. The next student has to say what the student(s) before them have said, and also something that they would buy as well. For example, *I went to market and I bought a chicken and a pear*. This continues around the class until the last person has to list all of the things that each person has bought.

Memory

This is a really fun game that can be altered for different levels of English understanding. The most basic version involves the use of pictures accompanying words, while the more difficult version has only words.

It begins by making card pairs, with the name of certain objects on two sets of cards. Examples include, 'roses', 'pot', 'cat', 'dress', 'jacket', 'candle' etc. Make sure that each card has an identical pair (if you're doing the basic version, ensure that each card also has a picture to accompany the word). To play, spread all the cards out face-down on a desk. Each student takes turns and can turn over two different cards. If they do not match, the student must turn the cards over face-down again and the next student gets a turn. The game continues until all pairs are found.

The aim is to try to remember where the other matching pair is. It also helps with reading and understanding English words.

'Simon says'

Begin introducing the game with the teacher giving out instructions. You can be flexible with the kind of instructions you give. Start simple, with touching body parts (e.g. *"Simon says touch your head"*), then you can work up to more complex instructions.

Once students get the hang of the game, get each student to act as the "teacher" and allow them to give out instructions for all students to follow. Ensure that each student gets the opportunity to play this role.

Categories

Either make cards, or use ones already available. The cards could include different animals, foods, country names, or any topic. The simplest version of this game uses picture cards so that the students know what each card is.

Instruct the students to put each card into a category (these could include “big” and “small” categories for animals, or more complex categories such as “birds” and “mammals”). This is a flexible game, and can be manipulated for different levels of understanding of English. Ensure you monitor the game so that each student gets the chance to play a card in a category.

Opposites

Either make cards, or use ones already available. The cards should include opposite pairs (e.g. *up and down*, *light and dark*, *black and white*), which the students have to pair together. This game can be manipulated for different levels of understanding of English.

Another variation of this game is to get students to make their own opposite pairs by drawing, writing and cutting out various cards. This is a good way to introduce creativity and fun into a game that will help to improve their understanding and meaning of English words.

Crosswords

These are a really good opportunity to help with English reading and comprehension. Students must understand each questions, as well as answer it by writing an English word.

Give each student their own crossword to ensure they are independently working through it themselves. Provide assistance and guidance when necessary.

* Crosswords can be downloaded from the Internet on various topics. Alternatively, you can make up your own.

Word searches

These are really fun and are an excellent way of summarising and emphasising various words or topics you have covered. Get students to use different colours to colour in the words they find.

In order to make it more fun, make it a competition. The first student who finishes first can be rewarded with a prize.

* Word searches can be downloaded from the Internet on various topics.

Alphabet challenge

Make up a worksheet with all the letters of the alphabet. Each student has to find a word that begins with each letter of the alphabet. In order to make it a bit harder, do it in topics (i.e. one alphabet challenge can include having to find an animal beginning with each letter of the alphabet).

Again, you can make it a competition so the student who completes the worksheet first can be rewarded with a prize.

Songs that can help the girls learn English

- Heads, shoulders, knees and toes
- Old MacDonald had a Farm
- Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
- Jingle Bells

Fun Games and Activities

Dodgeball

Objectives:

- Build confidence
- Get to know the girls
- Building teamwork skills

Materials needed:

- Large ball (basketball, dodgeball etc.)
- 2 equal groups of girls
- Outside area

The game begins by drawing a large circle in the dirt. Split the girls in half - with 2 equal groups. One group stands inside the circle, while the other group spreads out around the outside of the circle.

The group outside the circle throws the ball and tries to hit people inside the circle. People who are hit inside the circle are then eliminated. The game continues until all the people inside the circle are eliminated.

Notes:

- Tell the students that they can only throw the ball from the waist down in order to avoid people getting hurt
- If the game is too slow, make a time limit for the group outside the circle, where they have to hit all students in the circle in a certain amount of time

Red light, green light (stop, go)

Objectives:

- Builds confidence and verbal communication
- Fun

Materials needed:

- At least 16 students
- Outside area

The game begins by assigning one student to be "in". The rest of the students line up behind a line, about 50 m behind. The student who is "in" faces away from the rest of the students and claps their hands, while counting to three. At this time, all the students have to run towards the student who is "in". Once the student who is "in" gets to 3, they can turn around. Anyone who is seen moving is eliminated.

The game continues until someone is able to touch the student who is "in". At which point, this student is "in" and the game starts again.

Notes:

- Monitor the student who is "in" - sometimes they will argue over whether they saw someone moving or not. Just be aware of this and resolve it as quickly as possible

Tunnel ball

Objectives:

- Encouraging teamwork
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Large ball (basketball, soccer ball etc.)
- At least 2 equal teams of students
- Outside area

Students are split into 2 equal groups. Each group lines up, one after the other, and opens their legs. Each student lines up behind the other and matches their legs. The student at the front of the line gets the ball and rolls it in between their legs, and through the entire team's legs. The student at the end then gets the ball and runs to the front.

The game continues until the first student reaches the front again. At this point, the whole team must sit down - signalling that they have finished. The winner is the team who completes this the fastest.

Notes:

- It is handy to demonstrate with a couple of students first so that everyone knows what to do
- Make sure the ball passes through everyone's legs
- Monitor the game to ensure everyone is playing correctly to the rules

Over, under ball game

Objectives:

- Teamwork skills
- Verbal communication skills
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Large ball
- Outside area
- At least 2 equal teams

Split the students into 2 equal groups. Each group stands in a single line, with everyone standing behind one another. The person at the front starts with the ball. Each consecutive person does the opposite - either over (pass the ball above your head), or under (pass the ball in between your legs). The person at the end must get the ball and run to the front of the line. Then the game continues until all students have been through.

It is a race between the 2 teams. The fastest team to get through the whole group, and finish with the first person at the front again wins.

Notes:

- Monitor the game to ensure it is always over the head, then under (in between the legs)
- Make sure every student has a turn at running to the front of the line

Captain Ball

Objectives:

- Team work
- Throwing skills
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Outside area
- Large ball
- At least two equal teams

Divide the students into two equal groups. Get them to stand in a line with one person (who is holding the ball at the start) standing about two metres away from the front of the line, and facing the line of team members. The person holding the ball then throws it to each of their team members, and the team members then throw it back to the person at the front of the line. Once a team member has thrown it back to the person who started with the ball, they then duck down. This continues until all of the students are ducking down, and the team to finish with all of their members ducking down first wins.

Notes:

- Make sure that the people throwing practise their aim by throwing the ball to the chest of the other players

Bull Rush

Objectives:

- Exercise
- Fun

Materials needed:

- A large field/space to run around

Designate one person to be in. Make sure that everyone is standing behind an imaginary line at the other end of the field, and that the person who is in is standing at the other end of the field. When the person who is in says 'bull rush', everyone must run to the other side of the field and try to avoid getting caught. If they are caught, then they must also join the person who is in, and help them tip more of the other players who are still in. The game is finished when there is no one else left, and everyone is 'in'.

Duck, duck, goose

Objectives:

- Fun
- Encourages communication
- Exercise

Materials needed:

- Large open space to run around

Form a circle with all students. Designate one person to be in, who will walk around the circle tapping each person's head exclaiming "duck" or "goose". If the person who is "in" taps your head and says "goose", then the person "in" and person who has been tapped must race around the circle. The person "in" must make it all the way around the circle back to the open space before the other person tags them. The game continues like this. If students get tagged, they remain "in".

Handy Tips

- Make sure that you speak very clearly, loudly and slowly when you are giving instructions. Make it as easy as possible for the girls to understand what you are saying.
- Hanging up the artworks that girls have made is something that really inspires confidence in the girls, and is something that can really cheer up their dorms.
- Try to learn more about the interests and passions that the girls have, as this will help you organise lessons that are of particular interest to them.
- Make sure that you are sensitive to any of the cultural customs that the girls may respect. It is sometimes hard to be aware of all of these, but just try your best.
- Make sure that you ask Mahendra or any of the matrons any questions that you might have. They are more than happy to offer their support and guidance, and provide you with certain materials that you might need.

Arts and Craft

Chain Decorations

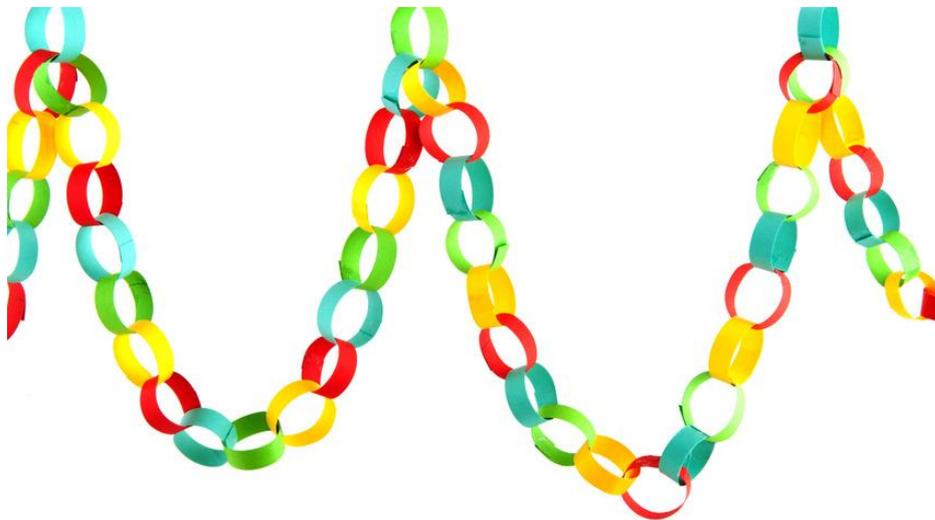
Objectives:

- Decorations
- Creativity
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Strips of differently coloured paper
- Scissors
- Sticky tape

This activity is great for making very appealing wall decorations for any occasion. To make a chain, just connect strips of paper into a chain by sticky-taping them together in loops. See below for how the end product is meant to look:



Collages

Objectives:

- Decorations
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Large piece of cardboard

- Various fashion magazines
- Scissors
- Glue

Complete your own collage prior to instructing the girls to make their own. Showing them what you have done is a great way to explain, with minimal words, what it is that you want them to do.

Get the girls to cut out various fashion items (clothes, watches, jewellery, bags etc.) that they like and stick them onto a large piece of cardboard. Then get them to decorate their work. Once they have completed the collages, go around and ask each girl to name and describe the items they have chosen. This is a great way to incorporate some English speaking skills into the activity.

Drawing

Objectives:

- Creativity
- Individuality
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencils (coloured and led)
- Crayons and pens

This activity is great because it is very flexible. You can either instruct the girls to draw something specific, something from a topic you have covered, or just anything they feel like drawing.

Regardless of what you have instructed, remember always to be positive and encouraging about whatever they choose to draw. Creativity is very important so ensure that they are completing their own drawing individually, not simply copying you or someone else in the class.

Origami

Objectives:

- Creativity
- Following instructions
- Satisfaction

Materials needed:

- Coloured paper

Again, this is quite flexible in what you choose to do. Stick to something simple to make, to ensure everyone can complete their own piece of origami. You can either show them, step by step how to make a particular figure. Alternatively, you can provide them with the origami book (at Veerni) and allow them to choose what they want to make.



Either way, ensure you help each individual girl if they are struggling . Remember, the end result is important so be patient! The girls love to

make things and be able to keep them, so a piece of origami is always appreciated by them.

Pipe cleaner finger puppets

Objectives:

- Creativity
- Confidence
- Fun

Materials needed:

- Pipe cleaners (multiple colours)
- Small buttons (for eyes)
- Cotton wool balls (for head)
- Glue

These are fun finger puppets that can be made as characters in a play that you could present at the end to develop good communication skills in English. Twist the pipe cleaners around your finger to shape common animals, and then add a head and some eyes by gluing the cotton wool balls and the buttons to the top of the animal.

Be creative with whatever creature, animals or monsters the students want to make. This is a really fun activity that they will love!

Beading

Objectives:

- Creativity
- Fun
- Independence

Materials needed:

- Thread
- Beads (variation of different colours and shapes)
- Scissors

This is a really good activity to encourage students to work independently. It also allows them a chance to be creative. They can choose to make a bracelet, necklace, ring, or hanging ornament. Let them thread the beads in any pattern they want.

This activity is great fun and students always enjoy it. It is also a great opportunity to allow them to 'show off' what they have made by wearing their beautifully finished jewellery!

Conclusion

Volunteering at the Veerni Institute is not only beneficial for the girls, it is also such a rewarding and personally relevant experience. It expands your knowledge surrounding world issues, as well as building you as a person.

It truly is an amazingly unique experience and one that we would recommend to all.