



UNITE FOR SIGHT

Volunteer Manual for Orissa, India

(Updated March, 2017)

This manual is written by alumni volunteers, for volunteers. In addition to carefully reading the manual now, and referencing it frequently prior to your travel to India, we suggest that you print this manual and bring it with you to India.

Pre-Departure Advice from Unite For Sight Alumni Global Impact Fellow

"I think future Global Impact Fellows should seriously study the training modules so that they have a firm understanding of international travel details before they leave. There is wealth of information in the modules, and if taken seriously they provide the volunteer with all of the intellectual knowledge necessary to prepare. That knowledge is the foundation for the experiences a volunteer will have on site."

Knowing Orissa, India

Once you have completed all of the Unite for Sight volunteer requirements, you will start packing and get ready to leave! It is recommended to learn some background information on India before you go. One of the first things to appreciate is that India is a HUGE country (more than 1/3 the size of the United States) that is divided into 28 states. Orissa is on the east coast of India, and it, like all other states in the country, has its own unique culture. Some helpful links are:

- [Lonely Planet](#) Includes info on weather, government, health & safety, people & society, time & place, culture & history, etc.
- [CDC Travel Guide](#) Health info for travelers to South Asia including vaccinations, health risks, diseases, what to bring with you, tips for staying healthy, and what to do after you return home.
- [Wikipedia](#) article on India.
- [The Times of India](#) National newspaper.

Weather

Orissa is hot in the summer! Remember to drink plenty of bottled water! It can be a challenge to dress appropriately while trying to keep cool, but it is not impossible to be both comfortable and appropriate. See tips under "Dress Code" below. Monsoon season is between June and September, so you will want to bring a rain jacket that can be easily carried for sudden mid-afternoon downpours. You may also want to bring a long-sleeve t-shirt for cool nights. If you are planning on being in Orissa during the winter, you will need a sweatshirt or fleece for nighttime.

Packing

Bring **medications, spare contacts, and hard to find toiletries** from home. Refer to Unite for Sight's inventory Packing List for recommended items. Most toiletries can be purchased very cheaply from local shops. You will not need very many clothes. It is easier to do laundry in small amounts every few days as opposed to saving it up for a week.

Toys Needed!!Children love playing with the toys in the play area of the Kalinga Hospital. Unfortunately, many of the toys have been well loved and are showing signs of wear and tear. If each new volunteer brings one toy the supply can quickly be replenished. A huge thank you! Your contribution will delight many, many children.

Important Items to Bring

Clothes

- Bring thin, light clothing.
 - These will help you keep cooler
 - Thin clothes will dry faster. You will hand wash everything and let it air dry, so bring thin clothes.
- Bring clothes that are comfortable.
 - Exercise common sense. Things like short shorts are not acceptable.
- Bring sandals. Shoes are good too, but you will usually wear sandals most often. Bring shoes that are easy to wash because they get dirty very quickly
- Business attire is not required, nor recommended. The eye clinic administrative staff wears clothes that are **business casual** -- a pair of kakis and a casual dress shirt. Other than the paramedics, most are in polo shirts.

Bed items

- **Pillowcase, sheets, and blanket** (not a necessity, but recommended)
- Pillows and beds are a lot harder in Orissa. However, they are not uncomfortable by any means. Most of the past volunteers have found them comfortable enough to get a good night's sleep.

Toiletries

- Bring **at least 2 towels**
 - Try to avoid bringing heavy bath towels. They will not dry quickly enough in the heat and humidity of Orissa.
 - India has special towels that are very thin, and highly absorbent. These towels are available locally in Dhenkanal.
- **Toilet paper!!!!!!** (you will not find any in the market)

- The toilets are western style, but higher. They come with hoses that spray out water. They are very easy to use, but toilet paper is still preferred by most volunteers.
- If you have toilet paper left at the end of your stay, leave it in the Volunteer Box, so that if someone in the future needs some, it's there.
- **Feminine products**
 - Though available in town, there is a good chance you may not get the exact type or brand you are looking for.
- **Medication suggestions**
 - Many volunteers have mild stomach problems at some point during their stay. Most have said that they have found **Pepto-Bismol** or **Graval** to be helpful. However, **check with your doctor** for specific suggestions based on your personal health history and needs.

Laptop

- **Since you will be working on projects at Kalinga, you should bring your laptop!**
- If you can bring a laptop, you should bring it with you. **It will be important to your work at Kalinga.** If you cannot bring a laptop, please let Unite For Sight know in advance.
- Be aware, however, that the laptop could get damaged, lost, or stolen. We are not aware of any volunteers who have had issues with their laptops abroad, but it is of course always a possibility, just as this can occur at one's university at home. We suggest that you back up your computer before transporting it abroad. This will prevent you from losing your laptop's data. You should also bring a **suitcase lock** so that you can lock your laptop in your suitcase in your room. It is also best to carry your laptop onto the airplane in a carry-on bag, instead of putting it into your checked luggage.

Books

- There can be a lot of down time, so bring a book or two to keep you busy.
- A collection of books has been started in the Conference Room. Feel free to take a book and read it. If you choose to keep the book, please put one in its place.

Snacks

- Dinner is not served until 8pm at night.
- Volunteers like granola bars, gold fish, cookies, etc.
- Volunteers suggest bringing lots of snacks, especially if you're not able to eat, or don't enjoy often spicy food.
- Bring food for breakfast (**granola bars, oatmeal**, etc.) if you have a hard time eating fried food early in the morning.

Ziploc Bags

- When you open snacks or food items, Ziploc bags will help you keep your food safe and also keep the insects away.

Slippers

- Bring **flip flops** to use in the hospital.
- You will be required to take your shoes off when in the hospital, so have a pair for inside the hospital.

Other items

- **Free-standing mosquito bed net** (absolutely essential!). There are mosquitos, large spiders, and other insects.
- **Bug spray.**
- **Soap.**
- **All toiletries** (be over prepared!).
- **Poncho** during the rainy season.
- **Cards, and other leisure materials.**
- **Flashlight or headlamp** during power outages at the hospital.
- **Power outlet adapter.**
- Some volunteers have found it helpful to bring a **water bottle with a built-in filter.**
- **Laundry powder.**
- Do **not** bring mosquito smoke coils, which release choking odors that can cause respiratory distress.

Dress Code

Both men and women in India tend to dress very conservatively, showing very little skin even in the middle of a hot summer day. The women in the eye clinic wear uniforms, and the men wear t-shirts or button-up short sleeved and polo shirts with loose light pants (khakis or running pants). **Women can purchase 2-3 "dresses" (long cotton tunics with matching pants) when they arrive in Orissa.** They are rather inexpensive, comfortable, culturally appropriate, easy to wash, and can be used for a day at work, weddings, going to the temple, etc. If you bring skirts with you, make sure that they fall well below the knee. Tops should not have a V-neck and should have at least short sleeves (no tank-tops!). Thick-soled flip-flops or Texas or running shoes are appropriate. You will be asked to remove your shoes when entering the hospital, businesses, and homes so it is convenient to be able to slip your flip-flops on and off quickly.

You should not bring scrubs with you to the hospital. You will wear scrubs when observing in the operating room and the clinic will provide you with scrubs.

It is best to bring multiple pairs of flip flops. Keens work very well. You will be required to remove your shoes when entering the hospital or almost any other building/store.

Lightweight (CoolMax or other wicking fabrics) tee-shirts are great to wear during the summer when it is very hot. Unite For Sight T-Shirts are also good to wear and will identify you as a Unite For Sight volunteer (*you would need to purchase the t-shirt from Unite For Sight before going to India*).

Arrival in India

There is a nonstop flight to Delhi on United Airlines from Newark, New Jersey that is very convenient if you are traveling from the East coast. This, as well as most other international flights, will arrive at the Delhi international airport very late at night. Your domestic flight to Bhubaneswar will not depart until the next day. This is perfectly ok.

You will arrive at the Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI), which is located about 19 km away from the city center. You will arrive at Terminal 2 (the international terminal) and will need to travel to Terminal 1 (the domestic terminal) about 7 km away to catch your flight to Bhubaneswar. As you leave Terminal 1, you will be bombarded with men offering you taxis to the other terminal. *DO NOT* take these taxis or accept help with your bags, as you will be expected to pay a tip/fee. Politely decline and ask an airport employee where to catch the free and frequent bus service between the two terminals.

When you get off the plane at the international terminal in Delhi, you will be escorted to Immigration where your passport and visa will be checked. You will proceed to pick up your baggage and then walk through customs. Once you exit customs, you should see a "Domestic Transfers Lounge" on your left. There will be guards in front of it who will ask to see your domestic ticket for the next day. They will direct you to someone who will write your name down. You can sit in the lounge (there are bathrooms and nice leather couches) until your name is called. You will then be taken directly to a charter bus with other passengers transferring to the domestic terminal. The bus will take you to the appropriate domestic terminal for your flight the next day. Inside the domestic terminal, you should be able to find a place to sit and wait until you can check in the next morning. There are guards at all entrances, so as long as you remain inside the terminal, it is very safe.

When you **arrive at the Bhubaneswar airport**, collect your bags and then proceed to the airport exit. Once outside, you will likely see a large mass of people shouting and holding signs. Find the sign that reads "Kalinga Eye Hospital welcomes Your Name". This will be the driver that will take you to Dhenkenal by car, which will be approximately 2 hours. The cost of airport pickup/drop off is \$40 per trip.

It is imperative that you provide Unite For Sight with your correct flight itinerary through the form on your profile page. If your plane is delayed, please **call Sarang (011 91 94370 94372)** to notify him of your new arrival time. You should not expect complications, but in the event that the driver is not there to meet you for any reason, you should not panic. You should call Sarang on his cell phone (011 91 94370 94372) or **call Kalinga Eye Hospital at +91-6762-2223949**.

You will likely meet Sarang somewhere along the way to Kalinga Eye Hospital. Once you arrive at the eye hospital, you will meet Sunil, who is in charge of the hospital. He will give you your cell phone and introduce you to the hospital.

You can change money at the airport, or you can ask Sarang to take you to a bank before you go to the hospital. The exchange rate in the airport is usually a fair rate, although there will be no bargaining. There is an ATM in Dhenkanal, but it frequently does not work. **The only consistent place to exchange money is in Bhubaneswar on the day that you arrive, or in the Delhi airport before you fly to Dhenkanal.**

Important Information about Eyeglasses and Arrival

You should not anticipate customs problems with the eyeglasses, but it is a possibility. If you receive eyeglasses with price tags on them, it is important that you remove the tags before packing them to bring to India. If the glasses are entering India with price tags, customs will be suspicious because it will appear that you are planning to sell the glasses in India. Customs may then reject the Certificate of Gift. If you are stopped by customs officers and told to pay to bring the glasses into India, then you should re-emphasize that you have the Certificate of Gift and that the eyeglasses will be distributed free of charge by Kalinga Eye Hospital in Dhenkanal to patients living in extreme poverty in villages. If they still state that you are required to pay a duty on the glasses, you should remove the bag of glasses from your suitcase and proceed without the glasses. You will most likely then be allowed to proceed with the glasses. If they still keep the glasses, Kalinga Eye Hospital can thereafter try to coordinate to receive the glasses from customs.



The likely reasons for being stopped would be if a) the customs officer chooses not to believe that the eyeglasses are for charitable purposes, despite the Certificate of Gift, or b) the customs officer wants a bribe.

a) We are aware of one other instance in which a customs officer stopped a volunteer in the Mumbai airport. The customs officer initially did not believe that the glasses were for charitable purposes. The volunteer displayed the Unite For Sight website on his iPhone, and the customs officer immediately realized that the glasses were indeed for a charitable purpose. The volunteer was able to proceed without any further difficulty.

b) We are aware of one instance in which a customs officer stopped a volunteer in the Delhi airport. Though the Certificate of Gift documentation was accurate and sufficient, the customs officer stopped the volunteer because he wanted a bribe. The volunteer said that she gave him a bribe, and she then proceeded through customs with the glasses. However, if you remove the glasses from your suitcase and say that you will proceed without the glasses, this will most likely rectify the situation. If you are willing to go without the eyeglasses, the officer will realize that the eyeglasses are not valuable enough for you to want to pay a bribe.

The customs process is very subjective and dependent entirely on the particular custom officer's personal beliefs and decisions. **We suggest that you bring a printout of the front page of the Unite For Sight website along with the Certificate of Gift.** It is very unlikely that you will be stopped by customs, but it is important to be aware and prepared for the unlikely event.

Program Site Contact Info:

- **Sarang's Cell Phone:** 011 91 9437094372
- **Sarang's Land Line Phone:** 011 91 6742553779
- **NYSASDRI (National Youth Service Action & Social Development Research Institute) Office:** 011 91 674 2555662
- **Unite For Sight-USA:** (203) 404-4900
- **UnitedHealthcare Global Emergency Response Center:** +1 410 453 6330 [Open 24 hours a day, call collect from any location]

Remember to bring these phone numbers with you during your trip. If your flight arrival time changes while you're in transit, be sure to call the local coordinators to inform them so that you will be picked up at your new arrival time.

Important Information about the Visa

Please review the "Instructions for Visa" in your profile page for complete details. **In summary, every volunteer who is not of Indian origin must have an employment visa.** The location on the Visa must be shown as Dhenkanal. You will be brought by Kalinga Eye Hospital to register with the local police in Dhenkanal within 14 days of your arrival to the country. Keep this in mind if you are travelling before your program date.

Arrival in Dhenkanal- Living Arrangements

You will be living in a dorm at the hospital, where the female paramedics also live. The costs associated with room and board options include:

- **Lodging without air conditioning:** \$5 per day
 - **Lodging with air conditioning in a single occupancy space:** \$11 per day
 - **Lodging with air conditioning in a shared space:** \$8 per day
 - **Internet:** Approximately \$8 per month
 - **Food:** Approximately \$5 per day
 - **Cap, t-shirt, memento:** complementary
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- Remember from the "Budgetary Information" in your login page that **you must pay for lodging in cash (USD).**

- Be prepared for power outages. Every morning and evening (and at other times, too), the power goes out for at least 1.5 hours. There was once a large storm that knocked out power for a week.
- You will be provided with a bed (mattress and pillow), one flat sheet that is used to cover the mattress, and a pillow case. **You should bring your own top sheet or light blanket and your own towels.** You should also bring a free-standing mosquito bed net. Please see instructions and links to mosquito net purchasing in the [Packing List Suggestions](#).
- If going during the winter months, it can get quite cold during the nighttime. Be prepared and **bring a suitable blanket** for sleeping.
- There is **air conditioning** in the rooms (cost is extra), but the air conditioning does not always work. Remember also that when the electricity goes out, there is no air conditioning. Therefore, you should be prepared for no air conditioning, and then you will be pleasantly surprised when air conditioning is functioning.
- Remember that the **Internet connection** may be slower and less reliable than what you are used to at home. There are times when the Internet does not work in the entire hospital. You may also use the internet at the Internet Cafe that is located in town.
- There is **no hot water**, so be prepared for cold showers. Since Orissa is muggy, hot and humid, cold showers are usually not a problem.
- American toilets are available in most rooms, but not all. Be sure to ask for one if you want one. To flush the toilet, you move the lever counterclockwise to increase water flow. To turn off the flushing, move the lever so it's facing downwards.
- Volunteers often like to **bring a lot of snacks** from home with them to eat during their stay.



**Non-Western style
bathroom.**

Mealtime and Snacks

- Breakfast is at 8:30AM, lunch is at 12:30PM, and dinner is at 8:00PM.
- The times are flexible give or take a half hour. But remember that the paramedics eat after the Volunteers, so be considerate if you are late.
- The cafeteria is located on the lowest floor. The hospital cook will prepare meals for you. Just sit at any table and the kitchen staff will bring the food to you. Do not hesitate to ask for more of a particular dish.
- **Culturally, it can be considered offensive to not eat the food that is prepared for you,** but you can decide what you do and do not want to eat.
- After you are done eating, take your plate into the kitchen and throw away excess food in the bucket and place plate right next to the sink/trash bucket.
 - If you tell the cook what you like, he will make it for you and you can always go back for more if you are not satiated.

- You can also buy snacks, drinks, bottled water, etc. from the little shop on the ground floor facing the stairs.
- You can also walk to the market about 25 minutes from the hospital to find a variety of restaurants.
- Ask for noodles (instead of the usual curry + rice) if you have GI symptoms, which can be common in India.

Staying Hydrated

- **Do not drink the water from the tap.**
- Places to find clean water include:
 - The little shop next to the cafeteria (you can get cold water here too).
 - In town, just ask for bottled water at any of the shops.
 - The filter located on the ground floor next to the public bathrooms. Make sure to flip the switch to the right (for cold water). Let the water run for 5 to 10sec before filling your water bottle to ensure that the water you are drinking is properly filtered.

Room Cleaning

- You will notice several people cleaning every day. Just ask them to clean your room and give them your room number. They will sweep, mop, clean the bathroom and take out trash. The cleaning staff will approach you to ask if you need your room cleaned once a week. Should you need it cleaned more, don't hesitate to ask.
- The staff soaks the entire bathroom when cleaning it, so remember to take out toilet paper from your bathroom before they clean it to avoid it getting soaked.

Laundry

- **Laundry can be done by hand.** Buckets will be provided by the hospital, and washing powder is available at the shops near the hospital.
- You can do laundry in the bucket in your room or upstairs on the roof. A suggestion from previous volunteers is to do smaller loads of laundry frequently.
- You can hang your clothes up to dry either in your room or up on the roof. Make sure to bring your clothes in if you see it is going to rain.
- Clothes generally dry overnight. The thinner they are, the faster they dry. So bring thin clothes!

Mobile Phone

- Ask Sunil for a phone or a SIM card to use during your stay. Phones from the United States or Canada usually need to be unlocked to change the SIM card; therefore, contact your phone company before you leave.

- Indian phone companies that you may encounter are Vodafone, Airtel and Uninor.
- All phones are prepaid. If you need to recharge your phone, just tell Sunil how much you want to recharge, and he will arrange it for you.
- Rs. 100 is a good amount to load on your phone.

Volunteer Work

The staff members of the hospital are your hosts throughout your visit. It is important to remember that, while you are working, you are also still a guest in the clinic. To leave the hospital with a good impression of you and of Unite for Sight, you should try to interact and talk with the staff while you have downtime. The more you spend time with and get to know the paramedics and doctors, the more you will enjoy your time and work at Kalinga.

A volunteer adds: "One of the things I enjoyed most about my experience was spending time with the paramedics once they got off of work. There were other volunteers who did not do this and I felt that they were missing out as a result. They never learned the paramedics' names



and had very few people to say good-bye to when they left." Another volunteer said that one of her most memorable experiences was becoming friends with the paramedics: "I was there for 3 months and got very close to them. All my memories teaching English, learning Hindi and Oriya, hanging out with them, going to the temples and to the market with them, and just joking around with them are very precious to me...My accommodations were very comfortable and the paramedics were very kind to me and treated me like a sister."

Your Primary Contribution: Front-Line Management & Global Health Delivery Projects

Your primary contribution to Kalinga Eye Hospital as a Global Impact Fellow will be your project(s) that you design with Unite For Sight before you arrive in Orissa. The majority of your time will be spent on your projects. You are strongly urged to bring your laptop. If you are able to bring your laptop with you to Kalinga, this will enable you to complete your projects most efficiently.

Unite For Sight works with each Global Impact Fellow to determine what skills, talents, and expertise they can bring to a project at Kalinga Eye Hospital. Past projects have included research studies, grant writing, report research and writing, writing case studies, marketing



Kalinga Eye Hospital. Photo: K. Walker

research, film and photo projects, patient education projects, editing of reports and other documents, and similar support activities that are important to the eye clinic's long-term sustainable operations. Participating on these special projects provides Global Impact Fellows with an immersive understanding about sustainable eye care and NGO management in India. If you have other ideas for projects that you would like to pursue, let Kalinga Eye Hospital and Unite For Sight know about your ideas. They encourage you to think of new ideas that you would like to pursue while at Kalinga Eye Hospital.

A recent volunteer explained: "I liked best that it helped me use the skill set I already have to contribute to healthcare delivery in underserved areas. It is so frustrating to always be told, "Wait until you are a doctor, then you will be able to help those people that you feel sorry for." Not only do I not feel sorry for them anymore--I have a unique cultural perspective on these people and totally respect their dignity and way of life--but I do feel like I struck a good balance between using my talents to the best of my ability to make a tangible difference in their lives and following medical ethics by not doing anything outside my ability range."

Examples of 2010-2011 Projects

- [Photo and Graphic Design.](#)
- Writing Projects: Case Studies
- Writing Projects: [Kalinga Eye Hospital Profile](#), [SarangSamal Profile](#), [Social Entrepreneurship in Orissa, India](#), [Sunil Kumar Mishra Profile](#), [Kalinga Eye Hospital Paramedics](#), [Volunteering at Kalinga Eye Hospital](#).
- Literature reviews about patient barriers to care, and a PowerPoint Presentation to senior eye clinic staff. What are newly published details about patient barriers to care that may be helpful to the eye clinic staff?
- Literature reviews about social marketing of healthcare in resource-poor settings, and a PowerPoint Presentation to senior eye clinic staff. What are cutting-edge strategies published in journal articles that may be helpful to the continued advancement and enhancement of Kalinga Eye Hospital?
- "School-based health intervention" literature review and presentation.
- Marketing plan proposal for Kalinga Eye Hospital.
- Development of a training program for staff in order to improve customer satisfaction.
- Writing grants to the European Union and other funding agencies.
- Writing and editing Kalinga Eye Hospital materials.
- Teaching the paramedics English.
- Data entry.
- Statistical analysis
- Development of Kalinga Eye Hospital website: <http://www.kalingaeyehospital.org/>

Data Entry

As part of every volunteer's experience here, they must do some data entry (the data from the surgeries observed must be entered). Downstairs, near the reception area, there is a small

office in which there is a computer. On this computer is an Excel spreadsheet where the information needs to be entered. When you get to the hospital, ask Sunil where the file is located. Things keep changing, so he is the best person to ask. Ask the paramedics for all the sheets on which you signed off. Once you have entered the data, give the sheets back to the paramedics so they can keep them safe.

Research Study Opportunities

If you would like to pursue a research study as your personalized project, this will require preparation far in advance of your time in Orissa. Contact Unite For Sight if you would like to pursue a research study, and see the [research steps](#). Research studies are especially encouraged. Alumni volunteers who did not do a research study, but saw their fellow volunteers pursuing research studies that produced interesting new knowledge, reported that they wished that they had decided to design and develop a research study as well. The process of research design, development, and implementation is challenging, but endlessly rewarding. Unite For Sight also connects volunteers interested in working together on research studies. For example, during Summer 2010, three volunteers from three different universities pursued a research study on medication management. The first volunteer's program dates were June 1-30. The second volunteer arrived on June 15 and stayed until July 15. The third volunteer arrived on July 1 and stayed until July 30. By utilizing a team of co-researchers, the amount of data collected was much greater than if only one volunteer had pursued the study for 30 days.

Outreaches and Eye Clinic Observing: Educational Opportunities

The eye clinic is well staffed and doesn't have a need for assistants to help with clinical aspects of the clinic's operations. However, there is ample opportunity for you to spend time in the



Outreach vehicle.

outreaches and at the eye clinic for your own personal educational opportunity. Some days will be spent helping in Kalinga Eye Hospital, preparing for surgeries, observing eye exams, and depending on the eye clinic's needs on each day, you may also help with pre-op and post-op surgery patients. One of the doctors, a medical assistant, and a financial manager travel to eye camps 2-3 days per week. You will be asked to attend the trips to eye camps depending on the number of patients expected to return from the camp. Traveling time to villages is usually 1-4 hours.

The camps run about 4 hours, during which time the doctor sees patients with acute eye problems while the medical assistant prepares cataract patients for surgery. These patients will return to the hospital to spend the night before their surgery the next day. You will have the opportunity to observe several cataract surgeries as well. Ask lots of questions. The doctors and medical assistants are more than happy to explain what they are doing or show you new and interesting eye problems they run across in the

camps or in the hospital. But remember to be silent during the exams and surgeries themselves. Ask questions after the doctor is finished with the patient.

Below, a volunteer recalls her experience at an outreach that was set up at a local government-funded hospital. The patients came to the government hospital, and Kalinga Eye Hospital's eye doctors provided on-site exams, diagnosis, and treatment. Those needing advanced ophthalmic care or surgery were transported to Kalinga Eye Hospital.

"One of my most memorable experiences occurred at an outreach camp set-up in a local government-funded hospital. I was observing one of the paramedics at work when the General Practitioner working at the hospital came up to me and introduced himself. I told him about why I was there, my background and my future plans to become a pediatric neurologist. He then offered to give me a tour of the hospital. We went from one dim room to the next. The sign to the hospital had advertised the facility as a "six-bed hospital". In reality there were six rusty tables, only one of which had a moldy mattress on it. Rain seeped freely through the ceiling, leaving watermarks and ceiling damage in its wake. As he showed me around, the GP spoke about how and why infrastructure was so poor in India. He told me about how if he spoke out about the unsanitary and poor conditions, he would be sure to receive a threatening letter from the government suggesting his license to practice might be revoked.



Lining up to test vision at an outreach.

Photo: C. Mazur

I ended up spending several hours with him. We compared marriage and dating customs in India and the United States, and were able to teach each other a lot about our respective cultures.

As we talked, patients would come in and he would explain their cases, histories and the factors contributing to their illnesses. He explained that 8 out of 10 cases he sees are malaria ones, and that most others are related to malnutrition."

Daily Routine

Eye care outreaches

- You may participate a few times in the eye care outreaches. Those participating for ten days might participate in one outreach, while those participating for longer periods may participate in multiple outreaches. If you want to attend the eye care outreach, you should be ready between 5am and 6:30am. Make sure to ask paramedics the day before to make sure exactly what time camp occurs.

- If you need to go to the bathroom at eye camp, be aware that you will not have amenities available and will have to go outdoors. Make sure to bring some toilet paper.

Surgery

- At least one volunteer must be present for each surgery. OT (Operating Theater) is either the night of the eye camp or the next day. Again make sure to ask paramedics to verify. Once you build a rapport with them, they will tell you what time things are.
- It is good to have more than one volunteer at a time if you actually wish to watch the surgery. Surgeries happen so fast that you do not have time to transcribe the information to the sheet provided by UFS (ask a paramedic for the paper before surgeries start) before the next surgery starts. If possible, have two volunteers go in, one to write, one to watch.



School outreach. Photo: C. Orrico

Independent Work

- Work is generally done in the conference room (AKA the meeting room) located on the third floor. Sunil's office is down the hall if you would like to ask him something.
- Since Kalinga is a professional environment, the days are very flexible. No one checks up on your day to day activities, and you are expected to be working on your projects. Sunil and Sarang will expect work to be finished in a timely manner. So you have to be proactive and responsible, just as you would be in a professional office setting in the U.S. If you are finished with your current task, do not hesitate to be persistent with questions for Sunil and Sarang.



Observing surgery. Photo: K. Walker

Internet

- Wireless internet access is available on your computer in the conference room. You can turn the internet on in Sunil's office or ask him to turn it on for you.
- **Remember to turn off the Internet when finished using it!** The people in the office will generally turn it off at the end of their day, but you can always go and turn it on. Just remember to turn it off after you are done.

Paramedics

- Spending time with the paramedics will greatly enhance your experience in Orissa. They are a very friendly bunch and enjoy the company of the volunteers.
- Some of the paramedics speak broken English. It is important to speak very slowly and use a lot of gestures with them to help get your point across. However, many of them have trouble understanding anything other than Oriya. But, there are many ways to interact with them. Some ways volunteers have interacted with them so far are:
 - Yoga classes (if you don't know any yoga, they will teach you!)
 - English classes
 - Dancing
 - Sharing about your family, and asking questions about their families. They love seeing pictures.
 - The paramedics like to have their photo taken. Just make sure to develop these pictures in town with adequate time for pickup (the store is opposite the Raymond's Saree shop) or share electronically.
 - One volunteer writes: "The paramedics all told me that they will miss me a lot and that I helped them in one way or another just by giving them hugs when they were tired or by having a sense of humor. The differences I make in the world can be large and take a lot of time (such as the research study which will help the hospital long-term but not necessarily while I was at Kalinga) or small and immediate (such as comforting a hospital employee who was having a bad day), and both are equally significant."



Eye Hospital paramedics. Photo: K. Walker

The Market

- The market is about a 20-minute walk from the hospital. You should only go to the market if accompanied by paramedics, or in a large group of volunteers.
- If you decide to take an auto rickshaw back, it should generally cost Rs. 30 for up to four people. If there are more people (the autos can fit 6 people easily), the drivers will usually ask for Rs. 40 or Rs. 50. These are the standard rates for everyone.
- Be careful about the food that you eat at the



market.

- Volunteers make their own work schedules, so you can go into the market anytime. There are plenty of stores littered along the main market street. They are worth checking out. Some things worth visiting in the market are:

Volunteers have enjoyed *eating* at:

- A/C Restaurant
- Jalu's Food Court
- Tea (Chai) Stand

Volunteers have enjoyed *exploring*:

- Raymond's Saree shop
- Textile stores
- Watering hole/ Sacred Tank

After Work

During non-working hours, there are many things to do around Dhenkenal:

- Spend time with the paramedics!
- Explore! The city of Dhenkenal is small but full of life. The main market area is a 5-minute walk from the hospital and simply walking around the shops and trying new and interesting foods and talking to people is an adventure in itself.
- There are many temples scattered throughout the city. The medical assistants and doctors love to show you their culture and are more than happy to take you along when they visit the temple.
- Take part in festivals and cultural celebrations when the opportunity arises. Look to see if there are any holidays during your time in India.

Items For Volunteers from Volunteers

- There is a box in the conference room labeled Volunteer Library Box. Feel free to take a book to pass the time. You can take a book home with you, but if you do, leave another in its place so that the collection isn't depleted.
- There is a black suitcase with things left over from previous volunteers in the conference room. **Do not** count on finding what you need in this box, it is more for use in case you forgot or run out of something.
- Please leave unused supplies for future volunteers. **This is not a trash collection.** So **only** leave things you think others might want to use. Also, if you see something that you think is garbage, throw it out!



Advice from Previous Volunteers

Volunteering

- Remember that you are volunteering because it is fun, you want to learn, and you want to help Kalinga Eye Hospital to continue growing and expanding their eye care delivery. The doctors and medical assistants want your help, but they are busy with patients and it is easy to forget that they have an extra pair of hands waiting for instructions. The best way to get involved is to be flexible and ask how you can be most helpful. No job is insignificant. Put 100% effort into every job assigned!
- A returned volunteer wrote in to reiterate the above paragraph, which she had recalled reading in her pre-departure preparations: "I think the best advice I can give is advice paraphrased from something I read during training: 'Help them where they need help.' You might go in expecting to do one thing, but they need you to work on grant writing or editing brochures. You are there to help them first in whatever area they might need help with and lastly for your own gratification...I think something I learned that goes along with 'help them where they need help' is to also be realistic. You might come in with very high expectations and a lot of ideas, but there might not be the capacity to fulfill them all. I was in India for a month prior to volunteering with Unite For Sight (the first month was with a university study abroad program), and I became very familiar with how Indians work and view time. We also learned a lot about this during the cultural training, but it was still quite frustrating at the beginning for me...as cliché as it sounds, patience really is a virtue...especially in India!"
- Another volunteer writes: "Be flexible! Try to learn Hindi and Oriya words and listen



UFS volunteer at an outreach.

actively for words you hear often and ask for their meanings. This will help you so much in both speaking and understanding the people you meet. Especially if you are doing a research study, learn to greet the patients in Oriya and it will set them at ease even if you can't say anything else in Oriya. Hang out with the paramedics and get to know them. You will get as much out of the experience as you put in, so make sure to take time to rest and recover and be alone so that you have energy to put 100% of yourself out there each day."

Culture

- In Orissa, people do not say hello, goodbye, or thank you. Many people who recognize you as a foreigner will say "hi" to you, but it is important to know about this cultural difference. Rarely do individuals thank someone else. You will occasionally see people bow their heads to another individual as an acknowledgement of their superiority, but that is about it. It is ok for you to thank people, but be prepared for people not to thank you in return.

- Remember what you learned in the [Cultural Competency Course](#) about slower pace and elastic time. As occurs everywhere in India and in most non-Western countries, there is a slower pace of life. This is not a "problem" with cultures and countries elsewhere. This is their way of life. Remember that when those from India visit the U.S. or England, they also experience culture shock. Their culture shock is regarding the fast pace. Focus on being flexible; you're experiencing a different concept of time, which is all part of your immersive cultural experience. Especially if you have never experienced elastic time before, you should again review the [Traits of a Successful International Volunteer](#) from your Global Impact Training.

Language Barriers

- Communicating with the paramedics and hospital staff can be challenging but extremely rewarding. Don't be intimidated to learn Hindi and Oriya, especially if you are working with the patients; even a simple Oriya greeting can make someone more comfortable. I found myself using some Oriya words of comfort in the operating theater when patients would become nervous about the surgery. I would rub their feet and tell them, "It's okay, it's okay", and even use simple Oriya as that helped a lot.
- Be ready to keep your eyes and ears open and ask questions so that you can figure out what Oriya and Hindi words mean and use context clues to figure out the rest of a sentence. Also be ready to change the way you speak English and even the way you gesture to be more readily understood. For example, I learned that "tomorrow" and "yesterday" are the same word in Hindi and thus people use the two English words interchangeably. I learned to say "before time" or "tomorrow past" when I meant yesterday, and "one day future" when I meant tomorrow: although the grammar is very strange, it was more easily understood by the staff. Also, another thing they say a lot is the word "mixing", as in "You are very mixing", which means that you are social and interact easily and pleasurably with others. Saying somebody is "not mixing" is not negative but means the person values their alone time.
- Listen to the English words they use and use those words in-context to be more readily understood; however, to help them improve their English if they desire, you can always tell them correct grammar afterwards.
- Similarly, I learned that Indians pivot their head from side to side in a specific way when they want to say "yes" nonverbally (which almost looks like a western shake of the head to mean "no"). This is different from the American nodding of the head up and down to say yes.



Testing visual acuity, 2014. Photo: C. Mazur

- All of these tiny changes worked their way into my communication over my 3 months in Orissa and I was rewarded by more effortless interchanges and by actually building close friendships with the people I met.

Leaving the Country

The airport does not open until 7am, so don't go too early if you have an early departure flight.

Parting Thoughts

HAVE FUN AND TRY NEW THINGS. Part of the excitement of working in another country is experiencing and learning about the differences between cultures. If you do not understand why things are done a certain way, just ASK. People are generally delighted when you try new foods, try to learn the language, or ask questions about their culture.