

Sudan Volunteer Programme: University Placement and Accommodation Guide



The following booklet provides general information to help newly arrived volunteers get their head around their university placement and their permanent accommodation. There is a lot to take in but SVP will be there to guide you through the process!

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PART ONE: The University

Your University Placement

SVP will take you to your first meetings with representatives at the university that will host you. If you have arrived when the university is closed for holidays or between semesters, we will still meet with them to establish stipend and accommodation arrangements; we can usually establish these before terms start. You will typically work in language or education departments. Other possible placements include academic research, staff training, and/or computer studies departments.

Your first meetings will invariably include the head of department (HoD) and the person that the university has nominated as your university coordinator. On occasion, you may also meet the dean of school and/or the vice chancellor. The more people you meet at an early stage, the more support you will have during your placement.

University Coordinator

SVP requires each university to provide a coordinator to mentor and oversee your timetabling and salary payment. They will also address any issues that arise during your placement. It is critical that the person assigned to you can speak English at a high level (particularly if you are a novice in Arabic) and that they have the capacity, time, and enthusiasm to oversee you effectively.

The university coordinator is the first person you should go to if you require any information or face any difficulty. It is important that the university elected coordinator can advocate on your behalf and network with the appropriate people to resolve any issue you are facing. You should immediately endeavour to facilitate a good relationship with this person, as you will work together as a team.

The Head of Department and Other Staff

It is the dean or HoD that has the final say in the department and they are responsible for overseeing the department as a whole. Within the department, what the dean, or HoD says is what will happen. Do not feel shy about going above your coordinator if you have an issue that needs to be resolved. It can save you a lot of time and energy to inform the HoD of your requests and/or issues. A leisurely coordinator will also feel compelled to act if instructed from a superior.

It is worthwhile scheduling regular meetings with the coordinator, HoD and other interested or useful parties. They can offer advice, give you pointers, keep you up to date with any changes, and help you clarify things. These meetings often happen informally, however if it is a more serious issue, do schedule a time for a formal meeting. While volunteers and coordinators tend to develop friendly casual relationships, it is important to remain formal, respectful, and polite in your conversations with the HoD, dean, or vice chancellor. Status matters in Sudan.

It is also important to foster good working relationships with other faculty members. They are your colleagues and can help you navigate the department and provide enjoyable social networks. They may come to you with questions about English idioms and correct grammar etc. Helping them out with these small requests greatly increases your esteem within the department.



Teaching Commitment

The contract that SVP and the university require all volunteers to sign specifies that you should commit:

- 10-16 hours teaching a week
- 5-10 hours preparation/ meetings a week

Some volunteers choose to do more than their contracted hours but this is by choice.

Your primary teaching role will be to facilitate English discussion clubs for either staff or undergraduate students.

There is a further expectation that volunteers spend time on campus engaged in informal discussion with students and faculty staff. Frequently, it is these informal discussions that have an enduring effect on second language learners and is an important aspect of your placement.

If the university has a limited number of classes for you to facilitate, they may also expect you to undertake tasks such as proofreading and/or editing of texts within the department.

Furthermore, you may be asked to teach short-term evening classes. These are typically open to the public and are a means for the department to generate income to cover resources and salaries. These classes are not part of the contractual agreement but bear fruit as you are paid extra for them (though ensure this is the case!).



Find out the standard rates for editing private theses before agreeing to undertake such work. You should be paid for editing these.

If you find that the university is not providing you with enough work, please let SVP know.

Please Note: Due to understaffing and because it is cheaper to employ an SVP volunteer, some departments will want you to teach proper undergraduate language or literature courses. The contract you will sign makes it clear that your primarily role is conversational English classes and SVP volunteers should not take jobs away from qualified local Sudanese; to do so is firmly against the SVP mission and our agreement with the Ministry of Higher Education. Unless you hold a PHD (or at the very least a Master's degree) and have experience lecturing at a university, you are unqualified to do such work and the students will suffer as a result. Please refrain from undertaking such work.

See clause six of the contract below for SVP's position on this.

Pay

The university pays you a monthly stipend. Generally, stipends are collected from the finance office and are paid in Sudanese pounds or by cashier's cheque around the end of each month. Some Universities are starting to pay by direct bank deposit. If this the case you will need to set up a local bank account.

It is important to be assertive about your stipend. During your first meetings with your coordinator and department head, ask questions about how and when you will receive your salary. Close to your first

payday, casually mention that you are looking forward to your first payment and ask when you can expect it.

If your pay is not available as scheduled, enquire as to the reasons. You will need to be persistent and regularly make your request, otherwise the issue will be deferred to a later date and no progress will be made. Keep asking for your salary until you receive it.

Inform SVP If there is a delay of ten days or more and we will work with you to secure its release.

Timetable and Classroom

During your first meetings, you should discuss your teaching timetable and take immediate responsibility for it. You should also take this opportunity to ask what the department's priorities are and to discuss what they and you hope can be realistically achieved through your placement.

Be prepared to negotiate over the class times, rooms, class sizes and number of classes per week. Bear in mind that some of these issues may be determined by the university's circumstance and thus not possible for the department to accommodate your requests.

You will need to be flexible. For example, administration deficiencies may result in 100 students turning up to your first class. It is extremely difficult to facilitate a discussion class with such a large numbers of students. However, if you are not proactive about it, nothing will change. It is up to you to establish a new timetable with the help of your coordinator. You could break the class in half and teach each group for one hour, rather than all of them for two. It is also very likely that the number of attendees will fall away as the novelty of a foreign teacher wears off and only the serious students will remain.

Insist on consistency with your weekly timetabling so that you can establish a routine and plan for your daily classes. Be firm and persistent with this request.

Ensure that a classroom/lecture hall is allocated for all of your classes. Have your university coordinator or another member of the department take you to your classroom/s so that you will be able to find it on your own later and can get a feel for the layout and the resources available of the room before classes start.



Find out who is responsible for unlocking the room and introduce yourself to this person. This is especially important if you have a class on Saturday when most staff will not be at the university and a guard will be responsible for opening and closing the class.

Always go to your class half an hour early, to ensure that it is open, with power and that it's not double booked with another class. Bring any issues you have with the classroom to the attention of your coordinator or the HoD, especially if you are having problems with locked classrooms and/or power cuts.

At the beginning of each semester, you will need to go through the process of re-establishing a timetable and securing a classroom, a process that can take some weeks if courses are delayed and/or your conversational classes poorly advertised.

Resources

Sudan is a hot country and students are more receptive to learning in a comfortable environment. Each class should come equipped with A/C and/or fans. Make sure that you have at least one of the two in the class: if you do not, ask to be reassigned a room that does.

Each class should also have tables, chairs, and a blackboard or whiteboard. Again, if they are not provided ask to be reassigned to another room.

Some universities even have audio-visual equipment though there is no guarantee that they will be working. It is wise to keep your lessons as independent of technology as possible. The frequent power and internet outages mean that technology cannot always be relied on to work at the appropriate time and outages can seriously disrupt a lesson plan if the teacher has incorporated them too heavily into the lesson plan.

If you do not have your own chalk or whiteboard, markers (your own are worth the investment) ask around the department for some. Often there will be a box in the Teaching Assistant's study or in an office. Ask if you can have a few sticks, it should not be an issue.

Many Sudanese students like class handouts so try to keep the students happy. However, printing is expensive and it is not worth putting yourself out of pocket over it.

Printing is beneficial in smaller classes and for novice teachers looking to establish a formal procedure to the class. Usually, printing can be done within the department: generally in the secretary's office. You will have to make a request to have any printing done. Office hours are irregular and it is wise to learn when a person is in or out of the office so that you can print off material.

If you are in urgent need of printing/photocopying and there is no available printer/photocopier in the department, have a back-up plan. Most campuses will have printing shops where you can photocopy and

there will be copy shops very near the campus. Some will have flash-drive facilities. The department is unlikely to reimburse you for these expenses, so think carefully about whether it is necessary or not.

Term Times

University term times vary from year to year, especially concerning start dates. Universities usually have a holiday between semesters. The lengths of these holidays vary so you should ask about term times when you begin your placement. Do not be surprised to receive vague answers, frequently dates are not fixed until a week before.

Universities typically close between June and September though, again, this also varies between universities. For all universities there is also a break of either 1 or 2 weeks for Eid al-Fitra and Eid al-Adha (The festival at the end of Ramadan and the festival of the sacrifice respectively).

It is common to find that although terms and classes have officially started your own classes have not. Typically, the conversational element of a course starts once the course proper has been established. This may be a week or two after the start of the term.

Beginnings of terms are hectic weeks. Be patient and in contact with your assigned university coordinator regarding updates about your formal start date.

A long break should not represent a problem for you as the demand for learning English is so high that there is always work, language clubs or university related activities going on. Alternatively, this provides a chance to travel or take people up on their invitations to visit their homes, which you may well receive.



Signing the contract

After the initial meet and greet, the SVP coordinator will arrange another meeting where the date that you can move into your accommodation (if you haven't already) and your initial class timetable is confirmed. The contract should be signed at this point. To formalise your placement at the university and to receive a stipend, you will need to sign a contract similar to the one below. Please read the contract carefully and seek clarification from SVP about any parts that are unclear.



Sudan Volunteer Programme (SVP)

Agreement between **INSERT COLLEGE NAME HERE**
and SVP Volunteer Teacher **INSERT VOLUNTEER NAME HERE**

INTRODUCTION

The Sudan Volunteer Programme ("SVP") is pleased to enter into the following agreement ("the Agreement") with

INSERT COLLEGE NAME HERE ("the College") to receive SVP volunteer:

INSERT VOLUNTEER NAME HERE ("the Volunteer")

from the **INSERT COMMENCEMENT DATE HERE**

Countersignature of this Agreement indicates acceptance of all the terms and conditions of the Agreement. Please return a countersigned copy of the Agreement to SVP.

BACKGROUND

SVP is a registered charity in UK dedicated to sending native speakers of English to Sudan to support the teaching of English as a second language at schools, colleges and universities. SVP's Sudan office is located in Bashir Nefiedi Building, Hashim Bey Street, Khartoum. The SVP Coordinator of Volunteers in Sudan is Amjed Mohammed Hawaz: 0921061861 The SVP Programme Manager is Tim McVicar: 099 9668 422. Both Amjed Mohammed and Tim McVicar are authorised to sign on behalf of SVP.

THE AGREEMENT

The parties agree as follows:

1. SVP will issue an ID card to each volunteer/s in Arabic and English identifying them as an SVP volunteer working with the College.
2. SVP will be responsible for organising the legal residency of the Volunteer in Sudan and for obtaining travel permits and all other necessary legal requirements.
3. The College will provide the Volunteer with accommodation, as detailed in clause 9 below, and pay the volunteer/s each SDG 1200 in cash per month as a living allowance for the duration of their time working at the College, including any holiday periods. The College will ensure that the Volunteer is paid promptly each month.
4. On the signing of this agreement, the College will pay a one-off administration fee to SVP of SDG 200.
5. The Volunteer will be native English speakers, graduate or undergraduate but will not normally be qualified or trained in the teaching of English as a second language. Volunteers cannot be expected to teach or fill in the College's standard curriculum or syllabus; their function is instead to improve the English language conversational skills of students in class settings and in informal discussion groups. The volunteer/s should be a good source of idiomatic expression, emphasis and pronunciation and suitable vocabulary in the subjects discussed. Homework may be set at the volunteer's/s discretion.
6. The College will ensure that the Volunteer is provided with a suitable classroom, and timetabling conducive for learning and for teaching and will ensure that the number of students does not exceed 50 in any given class. The English Language skills of students should be sufficient (i.e. lower-intermediate to advanced) for discussion groups and to benefit from spoken language training.
7. The Volunteer shall be available for work for a minimum of 20 hours a week and a maximum of 25 hours a week as follows: between 10-15 hours teaching, focused on the teaching of English; and between 5-10 hours lesson planning. The Volunteer, where possible, will make themselves available to talk to students and staff between the hours of 8am and 4pm. The volunteer shall also be available for

English Club outside the college as arranged by SVP for up to 5 hours per week.

In accordance with the above, the College shall provide the Volunteer with a teaching timetable, after discussion with and agreement by the Volunteer and the SVP Volunteer Coordinator/Programme Manager on arrival of the Volunteer at the College.

8. The Volunteer shall be given a minimum period of one week's travel leave, every three months (on top of public holidays during such periods).

9. The volunteer must have their own individual bedroom unless the Volunteer agrees with the College that they will share a bedroom. The Volunteer must have access to a kitchen with a cooker, fridge and water supply, unless the Volunteer agrees with the College that this is not necessary. The accommodation should include a toilet and washing facilities, as well as A/C and/or fan/s. If possible the accommodation shall be inspected and approved by SVP at the start of this Agreement.

10. The College will provide medical support to the Volunteer or enable the volunteer/s to contact the SVP Sudan clinic when required. SVP is responsible for medical insurance of volunteers. Costs of medical treatment will be borne by SVP.

11. The College will appoint a coordinator to support the volunteer and liaise with SVP if any issues arise in relation to teaching, accommodation or the late payment of salary.

CANCELLATION

This contract may be cancelled at one month's notice by either the College or SVP.

SIGNATURES

Agreed to and accepted on behalf of SVP

SIGNATURE

NAME
POSITION
DATE

Agreed to and accepted on behalf of the College

SIGNATURE

NAME
POSITION
DATE

Agreed to and accepted by the Volunteer

SIGNATURE

NAME
POSITION
DATE



Trouble Shooting

Regardless of the university, you are 100% certain to run into administrative difficulties. Patience, fortitude and good humour will take you a long way as will a can do and flexible attitude. An important thing to remember is that the reason you are in Sudan is to teach. All the organizational and bureaucratic issues that must be dealt with are hindrances but ultimately they should not distract from or prohibit the teaching of students.

The realities of Sudanese public universities

Most Sudanese public universities are cash strapped with limited resources, bureaucracy heavy and generally disorganized. Simple tasks often involve complex processes that require the intervention of numerous people.

Communications in Sudanese universities are conducted via sit-down meetings and official letters. Email communications are not effectively utilised and still considered informal. While mobile phones are ubiquitous, they often serve to delay meetings rather than speed up their occurrence. This reliance on sit down meetings may often cause delays, as the HoD or vice chancellor are often tied up in other discussions. Slow official communication channels lead directly to widespread delays in timetabling, salary payments and/or resolving grievances.

Sudanese public universities also have a radically high turnover of staff. It is unusual to find the same person in the same position over a number of years. This is because Sudan suffers from a significant “brain drain”; the majority of PhDs, post docs, lecturers, deans and admin staff across all departments seek employment outside of Sudan due to the possibilities of higher salaries and greater professional opportunities. This “brain drain” leaves universities and departments understaffed and in a precarious state of structural instability.

Those that remain are often highly overworked, lecturing in a number of different departments and also burdened with extensive administrative responsibilities. The low salaries, increasing costs of living and inflation also compel many to undertake private work on top of their wide-ranging university commitments. Often it is not that a university staff member is inefficient, rather that they are juggling far too many commitments at once. Unfortunately this “brain drain,” as well as the overworking of those that do remain, is particularly prevalent in Language and Education Departments where our volunteers tend to work.

Despite a lack of basic resources and widespread understaffing, public universities are compelled to offer as many spaces to students as possible to cover salaries and resources because the endowment from the government is nowhere near enough to cover operating costs. Certainly, the need to teach such a high number of students in limited periods puts major burdens on lecturers and on students.

Underfunding combined with trade sanctions affect the quality of the courses. It is extremely expensive and in some cases impossible (due to the sanctions) for university staff and students to access leading academic databases, forcing a reliance on out of date textbooks, research and materials. The lack of computer resources for students and staff means that many students still submit hand written assignments. While classrooms are clean and generally adequate, regular power outages, the heat, and too many students signed up to a course impinge on effective education.

Many students and staff that work and study in Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman use public transport to commute. The transport network in the three cities is highly congested, with common peak hour delays as well as sporadic flooding or an accident on a main arterial route bringing traffic to a standstill. It is common for students and lecturers to spend an hour waiting at either end of their journey to and from the university. In some universities, noticeably the University of Khartoum, civic unrest can force universities to close, sometimes for months.

Given these difficulties, a degree of admiration must remain for those who work and study in such conditions. The resilience, tenacity and self-discipline of students and lecturers in such environments is commendable and to be respected.

Volunteers that thrive in Sudan are those that accept these realities and use their own initiative and networking skills to resolve issues if they arise. While administration procedures are challenging, the enthusiasm of both staff and students more than compensates.

The most common problems you will face are:

1. The late payment of salaries

The late payment of monthly salaries is common for all university staff. A late payment of an initial volunteer salary is typically the result of confusion between departments, with contracts submitted by the department you have signed with to the wrong department or person to action it. Due to the high turnover of staff in finance and HR departments, those responsible for the release of your salary will often be new to payments for SVP volunteers and upon receiving the salary request will often seek further clarification or approval from the vice chancellor.

Unfortunately, this clarification or approval must come in writing from the department or vice chancellor's office, a process that invariably takes days or weeks without pressure from the volunteer, the university coordinator, and the SVP coordinator.

Alert SVP if this coordinator immediately proves ineffective in helping you secure your monthly salary. Be proactive and persistent.

Before SVP intervention, it is advisable that you speak with the HoD or a senior member of staff capable of actioning your request. It is daunting at first but you will quickly learn whom in the department you can rely on for support. Critically

SVP intervenes when a salary is delayed for over 10 days. SVP will meet with those responsible and work to action its immediate release. If the coordinator judges that the delay is unreasonable, SVP will write an official letter and meets with the dean or the vice chancellor of the university to discuss the grievance. If action is not immediate, then SVP trustees and/or Ministry of Higher Education representatives approach the vice chancellor for clarification and a further meeting if necessary, threatening termination of contract if not resolved. 90% of the time, volunteer persistence, coordinator intervention and a formal letter is enough to resolve the issue.

Fear not, your salary will be paid. SVP has only had one instance where a university failed to release salaries for volunteers. SVP has cancelled placements with this university.

2. Delays

Sometimes there are delays to the start of term. The reasons for this vary, despite the best of intentions by your department and university to get the term underway. Patience is required.

Talk to your coordinator and the HoD regularly, get updates on developments from various sources, and enquire if you can initiate informal English clubs in your department for students who are also hanging around waiting for classes to begin. Hang around the campus and get to know staff and students. Just by talking one on one with them and in small groups, everyone will be learning something. This is another case of if you are proactive, flexible and tenacious you can make a frustrating situation work for you and

your students. Keep SVP informed as to what is going on and they will also be working on the case for a resolution and start date.

The term will eventually start and you will be paid for the delay period even though you are not teaching. After the term formally commences it normally takes a few weeks of lectures for the timetabling of your conversational classes to be organized. Bear with this. Gather as much information as you can from your university coordinator and stay in the loop.

Undergraduate conversational classes will conclude a week or so before exams start. Again, you can expect to have to ask for exact dates.

3. An ineffective Coordinator

Unfortunately, being allocated an effective coordinator is a hit or miss affair; sometimes coordinators are extremely helpful, while others are ultimately useless. It is difficult to grasp the efficacy of the university coordinator during the first meetings. Typically, we only discover their worth after an issue arises. Try to engage the coordinator in your initial meetings to get a feel for his or her competence. SVP will be doing the same.

When you meet with your assigned coordinator, it is very important to check his or her status in the university. Your coordinator should at least hold a junior faculty position. PHD and master's students are generally unreliable in such a role as their grades depend in some part on their relationships with department staff. As such, they may be unwilling to bring your problems to their professors' attention. They may also be overworked and have agreed to the role at a superior's request, without thinking through the details of what will be required of them. Furthermore, graduate students may not know the processes involved in securing monthly salaries, whereas a faculty member will. It is equally important that your coordinator is not in too senior a position, as this may make them regularly unavailable or prone to delegation to unreliable subordinates.

Occasionally, SVP makes a request to the HoD to change the coordinator assigned to the volunteer/s if the coordinator proves unhelpful or unsupportive. This is done in a way that will not alienate or cause bitterness with the original coordinator. On occasion, the university may need to change the coordinator as roles and responsibilities change within the department. If your coordinator is promoted and/or leaves, ensure that the new coordinator is capable of undertaking his or her role.

4. Getting a timetable but not being allocated a classroom

If you are not issued a classroom, inquire as to why not and find out when you will be issued one. It is essential that you have a classroom allocated before the start of the first class. If you do not quickly receive classroom confirmation take the issue up with your university coordinator and if need be go further up the command line until you get what you need.

5. Too many students allocated to your class

The contract you sign with the university states that there should be no more than 50 students in any class. This is not a perfect world and sometimes you will be given a class with many more students. A blanket refusal to teach the class won't help the situation. Problem solve, talk to your university coordinator and consider ways to reduce the class number to a manageable number. Reschedule some of them to another time or class. As a teacher if you are spread too thin, you will find too hard to reach some students and they in the end will be the ones who suffer.

6. Too many students for the classroom size

Inform the university coordinator and see if a new and suitable room is available. This should not be too hard and should only take a few days organization, plenty of time for the next class.

7. Power outages during classes

Power cuts are part of life in Sudan. So it will be a case of when, not if, you experience one during or before class. When one occurs, power may well start up after a few moments but if not, assess the eagerness of the students to continue, especially if it is the middle of summer. Perhaps bring the topic of power cuts into class discussions and or offer to relocate the class to the shade outside.

If the class is an evening one and it is getting hard to see you can use things like smart phones for illumination (which many of your students will have) or you can perhaps introduce students to ghost stories.

8. Locked classrooms

A locked classroom is just another one of the daily issues that everyone must face and be solved through networking. Get to know the caretaker, find out who amongst the staff has keys and/or find a backup classroom that you know will be unlocked. If you should happen to change the classroom location, it may be an idea to post one student at the locked classroom to inform other students of the change as they arrive.

9. Sudani Time

Sudanese people are late arrivers culturally. You more than likely will not change this. Just go along with it and work with it. You can expect students to keep on arriving well after the scheduled start time of the class. If you have an important announcement, it is probably best to leave it until you have all your students in the class to save yourself having to repeat yourself. Do not stress over the issue, make light of it. Sudanese people do know how to laugh.

10. Prayer

It is common to have proceedings interrupted by people needing to pray. You will regularly find that staff and students alike will stop what they are doing to pray. You should respect this.

You will often find that students turn up late for class because they were praying: it is important to remember that for many of the students the class comes second to their religion.

If you have a class that starts around a prayer time it might be an idea to discuss with the class at the commencement of the course to see if they want to start the class half an hour later or if they are happy with the original start time and a stilted start.

11. Arriving to classes to find they have been cancelled

In the event of class being cancelled without you being informed, it would be worth getting in contact with your university coordinator to find out the reason and to make sure it is only a one off occurrence.

12. Irregular attendance at classes due to scheduling conflicts

Students have many commitments. Often the English conversational classes are not compulsory. Thus a student will attend when they can but may have to sacrifice some of your classes to meet requirements for other courses. If you notice that a student is attending irregularly you may wish to have a quiet word to them. This also allows you to get to know your student more. Remember students are under pressure and they probably do not need more.

13. Request for you to undertake extra classes

As a resource within the department, you may find that other teachers will ask you run conversational classes for their classes. This is a nice idea as it provides student's exposure to a native English speaker but logistically it can lead to an excessive workload. If the university coordinator has not requested that you take the class then you do not have to take the class. Be careful not to spread yourself too thin and over commit yourself.

14. A student with a bad attitude.

Due to the age of students, classroom management is not often an issue. Very rarely, a student may negatively disrupt class proceedings. If you feel a student is disrespecting you or causing problems in the class ask them quietly to speak to them at the end of the class. Find out what the problem is and if necessary warn them that you will not tolerate the behaviour in class. Be polite and diplomatic and. If it is a continued problem talk to your university coordinator to have the student barred from class. They will support you on this.

PART 2: PLACEMENT ACCOMMODATION



After a few weeks housed at the SVP flat in central Khartoum you can expect to start packing your bags once again, this time on the last leg of your journey to the place you will come to call home.

The accommodations of previous SVP volunteers have ranged from extremely rustic to the mildly luxurious. Most accommodation is somewhere in the middle: Spartan, functional and secure. It is unlikely your accommodation will be beautiful but you should find it safe and with functioning amenities.

Each institution offers different accommodation options. Larger institutions may have staff apartments, whilst smaller institution may have staff dorms. Sometimes universities will pay for a private flat or rent a room for you at a guesthouse.

It is likely that you will be placed with another volunteer or with local faculty staff. We will discuss your options with you prior to placement.

SVP endeavours to inspect accommodation prior to your arrival in accordance with our accommodation guidelines.

Acquiring your Accommodation

Your accommodation will be one of the core parts to the contract you sign with your institution. It is provided free by the institution and should come equipped with comfortable and standard working amenities. Prior to putting pen to paper, you should have the chance to inspect the accommodation with the SVP coordinator and any concerns can be raised either in the contract itself or in discussion with the institution.

SVP will accompany you to this meeting with your institution and you can liaise with the SVP coordinator regarding any concerns, they are there to represent both you and SVP. SVP has dealt with many accommodation inspections and contract signings. So, before signing your name make sure that all your concerns, should you have any, have been addressed and you have received a satisfactory answer and outcome from your institution. It should be noted that unreasonable requests are not likely to be met and one should not expect to be living in the lap of luxury.



Types of Accommodation

Apartment/Flat

Some larger universities are able to provide apartment style accommodation for faculty members. The university may own these having had generations of staff residing in them and are likely to be rather run down from wear and tear. These are typically for the exclusive residence of the SVP volunteer/s. If the university does not own a flat, it may rent one to accommodate the SVP volunteer/s.

Benefits: Autonomy

Drawbacks: Responsibility (electricity etc.)

Guesthouse

Larger universities have guesthouses for visiting dignitaries and guests. SVP volunteers have been housed on a permanent basis in guesthouses. The condition of the guesthouse depends on how it is managed, some are well maintained (particularly the UofK guesthouse) some are in disrepair (River Nile guesthouse) A guesthouse will have private or shared sleeping quarters with accompanying washing facilities, with the communal and cooking facilities generally shared.

Benefits: Cleaners!

Drawbacks: Visiting hours/Impersonal

Apartment/Guesthouse

A variation on the above is an apartment that also acts as a guesthouse. Volunteers may be placed in the apartment on the condition that when dignitaries and guests (or if faculty need temporary housing) arrive they will be entitled to reside at the premises as well.

Teachers Mess

Mayz al-mu'allimiin as are dorm style teachers' accommodation. Often younger teachers and teaching assistants live here. Living is fairly communal. Volunteers will have their own room unless agreed by the volunteer beforehand.

Benefits: Communal

Drawbacks: Exhausting

Makeshift Accommodation:

Unused classroom or rooms within the institution.

Benefits: Convenience!

Drawbacks: Always onsite

General requirements

SVP accommodation guidelines state that the accommodation should:

- have adequate security with key locks and no means of access without a key. Only appropriate administrators and those residing at the flat should have key access.
- have adequate privacy in the flat and in the volunteer's bedroom.
- be free from vermin or severe insect infestations.
- have regular and reliable electricity.
- have regular and reliable running water.
- have clean reliable toilet, washing and cooking facilities.

- be free of leaks, drainage and major structural problems.
- Include a single bed and bedding.
- Include a desk and some form of wardrobe for clothes storage.
- have working fans or A/C.
- have kitchen facilities, including a fridge, a cooker and cooking utensils.
- have toilet facilities located within or very near the accommodation. A western style toilet is preferred but not compulsory.
- gas: how to top up and who pays?

Inspection checklist

The following is a short list of things that you should check on your first visit to the accommodation.

Kitchen: Sink and running water, fridge, stove and gas supply, Cooking supplies and utensils.

Power Supply: Is there a top-up meter or not? Who pays and how?

Water Rates: Who pays and how much?

Bathroom: Toilet, bath, shower and water pressure.

Bedroom: Bed, closet/draws, desk, privacy, A/C and fan

Communal Area: Who uses it? Are there table and chairs?

Infestations: The accommodation should be free of infestation from the usual culprits.

Security: Doors should have locks and be secure; all windows have latches, working hinges. Lights for stairwells.

Laundry: does it have a washing machine or will you have to wash by hand? If so, are suitable buckets and basins should be provided?

Handyman: Is there an appointed person to contact who can deal with maintenance and day to day upkeep problems? It is typically the guard.

Volunteers are usually responsible for the cleaning flats and rooms during residence. They are also responsible for general maintenance such as buying and replacing lightbulbs and cleaning products



Etiquette

It is important to remember that those living near and around you work, study, and live according to a social framework that is likely to be different to your own. Volunteers are expected to adapt (as much as possible) to this social framework and refrain from behaviours that put themselves, SVP or the university in disrepute (loud gatherings, public intoxication, noise etc.). Be a good neighbour and/or roommate.

Contact Person/People

It is essential to find out the name and contact details of the person or people in charge of the accommodation. There is likely to be someone always onsite such as a guard able to address minor issues or at least know the people to call. Your university coordinator should also be a

first point of contact as they can assist navigating the university bureaucracy in the event of a problem. The more contact numbers you have, the better.



Trouble Shooting

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.” Sudanese Proverb

Issues will arise from time to time. It is important to deal with issues proactively sooner rather than later. If you cannot resolve the issue yourself (e.g. buying and laying traps) ask for help from your university and/or SVP. Possible issues include:

1. Water

Tap water is safe to drink in the larger towns and cities though can have a brownish hue and muddy aftertaste. Some volunteers choose to adapt to local water, while others stick with bottled water.

In some areas, tap water is turned off in the evenings or intermittently during the day. It is a good idea to keep hold of large water bottles, filled and on hand for such things as washing, cooking and flushing the toilet.

If the water is running in other buildings nearby but not in yours the problem could be the water pump, which either needs to be turned on, repaired or replaced.

Water rates can usually be paid when you top up your power. Ask the specific procedure from another resident or your university coordinator.

2. Rats/Mice

Unfortunately for the squeamish, rats and mice are common in Sudan. They often live in the spaces between floors in old buildings. It is critical that anything that may attract vermin is stored in sealed containers or removed from the accommodation as soon as possible (including food waste in rubbish bags).

Keep doors and windows closed, especially overnight and block all holes in walls or gaps in floors and roofing. Invest in some traps – the sticky ones work best. These can be purchased from pharmacies or larger supermarkets. Ask SVP or a friend for help if you are not up to the challenge. If there are more than one or two rats around then the university needs to be informed so that they can contact exterminators.

3. Power Outages

Power outages occur occasionally. If the power is out in the whole building or neighbourhood there is very little that you can do other than wait for it to come back on. Outages tend to last only a few hours at a time. It may be worth investing in a torch or candles if the electricity proves erratic.

Keep an eye on your power-meter so that you can top it up before it runs out of credit. If you are responsible for topping up the meter find out how to do this and where. If it is someone else's responsibility then you need to inform him or her well in advance. If you top up even though someone else should pay, keep the receipt your money back.

If your credit runs out at night chances are you will have to wait until the next day to something about it. It would be wise to keep regular tabs on your meter and remember A/C drains power.

4. Gas

At some stage, your gas bottle will run out and will need to have it replaced. Contact the person overseeing your accommodation for advice.

There is a good chance you will have to arrange the replacement yourself. Things will go much smoother if you petition a local resident or friend for assistance. Most petrol stations have refuel points. If it is less than a few kilometres away, most stations will have boys with specially designed bikes whose job it is to pick up and deliver gas bottles for a cheap price. Some may even have vehicle service. If you prefer you can also hire your own amjad or rickshaw driver for the round trip. The bottle will be replaced for a fee. Keep the receipt if the university has agreed to pay.

5. Flatmate Conflicts

Living with other people can sometimes be tiresome. If you are placed with another volunteer, it is very likely that you will spend a lot of time together. Different living styles and personality types can eventually lead to problems. It is important to establish your routines and boundaries with your flatmate. Delegate cleaning tasks and/or come to agreements on other responsibilities. Ensure that you have adequate time

away from each other to give each other space and try to resolve things in a friendly respectful way. Talk to SVP if the issue is serious or ongoing.



If you are living with Sudanese part of the problem can be cultural, especially when it comes to sharing.

If a fellow resident is encroaching on your private space or they are helping themselves to your food and belongings, bring the issue up with the person and see if it can be resolved. If the issue is not resolved, then raise the concern with SVP.

If you find it is beyond your ability to work the problem out in house, in a mature fashion, contact SVP to mediate and in the unlikely event, that a resolution is unreachable, steps can be taken for alternative living arrangements.

6. Guard Issue

Guards are likely to be posted on the gates of your accommodation. Most of the time you will find them whittling away time. The guards are there to stop uninvited persons entering. It is very important to greet the guards as you enter and exit; introduce your guests to the guards. This is for your own security but also an expected part of Sudanese culture. If you have amicable relations with the guards things will go a lot smoother should you ever have a problem with your accommodation, most are skilled handymen and eager to help.

If you find that the guards have started acting coldly to you, it is worth reflecting on why. Consider the actions of some of your guests and the times they are arriving, are you making too much noise or being disrespectful of local customs? Seek to resolve any perceived slight as soon as possible.

7. Damage

If any damage occurs during you stay, be sure to assess whether it is wear-and-tear or inflicted damage. If the issue is wear-and-tear then report the issue to your university appointed contact on site to start the process of repair or replacement.

If you have caused the damage chances are you will incur the costs for the replacement or repair especially for broken windows, lost keys etc.

8. Flooding

If a water pipe bursts (more common than you would expect) and your accommodation starts to flood contact your university appointed contact straight away; they will be able to get hold of a plumber to sort the problem. In the meantime if you know where the water mains tap is turn off the water. Most Sudanese accommodations have tiled floors so it should be easy to mop up the flooded water or direct it down a drainage hole with the scraping mop. Be prepared for the problem to take a day or two to be resolved.

9. Noise

Be considerate of your neighbours and flatmates.

10. Theft

Violent crime against volunteers is non-existent, although there have been occasional cases of petty theft. Anything of significant value or extra hard currency should be hidden or stored in the SVP safe. Although insurance does cover losses from crimes over 25 sterling, initial purchase receipts and police reports are necessary to file such insurance claims. In the case where a theft does occur, contact SVP immediately.