



Women's Empowerment Project



Availability: All Year

Project Start & End Days: Saturdays

Project Work Days: Monday to Fridays (weekends are free)

Support Provided: Program Manager gives detailed introduction and culture training on arrival along with an area orientation tour. Head Teaching Coordinator provides project-specific training and supervises classes daily. Our teaching staff assists participants with lesson planning, guiding them on the specific curriculum to follow each day and conducting daily/weekly meetings with them to monitor progress. Participants also have access to our in-house teaching library consisting of manuals, books and various teaching materials to help with lesson planning and providing general guidance.

Age Requirement: Must be 18 years or over

Nearest Airport: Cochin International Airport (COK)

Location of Project: Classes are conducted at the various community centres and private residences in Fort Kochi. Projects are all a 10 min walk from our volunteer house.

Location of Volunteer House: The house is in Fort Kochi itself (in the heart of Fort Kochi still) and walking distance to quite a lot of amenities such as ATMS, Supermarkets, Tuktuks, bus stop (just opposite us) and mobile shops etc all within 5 mins walk. The house is brand new so our volunteers are the first ones living in the newly built property. The house is split on two levels with three apartments and a gorgeous rooftop.

Meals Provided: Breakfast, lunch and dinner (Except Sunday dinners)

Background to this Program: The situation of Keralan women has been shaped heavily by its traditional culture, colonial history and post-independence policies.

It is no secret that gender stereotypes adversely impact women, particularly in rural communities of developing countries like India. Women here continue to be seen as “dependent wives” or “supplementary earners” at best. Traditional familial responsibilities of a woman, especially as a mother/wife/homemaker, constrain them in their choice of employment, as do her family’s and society’s attitudes towards certain types of employment.

Most women in Kerala are literate in Malayalam and whilst there is a high percentage of highly ‘qualified’ or ‘educated’ women there is relatively little space for women in leadership and empowered roles. In Kerala, especially in the lower strata of society, women sense of alienation and insecurity that comes in the midst of economic growth, increasing disintegration of community/family spaces, saturation of ‘secular’ dreams, and an increasing sense of social, economic and political insecurity.

Women’s empowerment can come in many forms and we have chosen to focus on ‘English Education’ as a tool to equip women with more confidence and make them more employable, while developing their basic life and language skills. The women we work with come from poor to lower- middle income families and mostly from the Muslim communities. Most have had early marriages and have been denied the opportunity to pursue their “dream career” in order to raise families. A lot of these women are keen to learn English to enhance their personal growth, increase their self- esteem and confidence, and enable them to become more employable in the future. For many, conversing with our volunteers is also a welcome break from their mundane daily routine.

What our Volunteers do on the Project: Volunteers will be teaching English at basic level to advanced levels to women in small to mid-sized groups in the afternoons. Sessions will be held from Monday to Friday in the mornings from 10-12

pm and afternoons from 2-3.30pm. Each session will be conducted in a close-knit, comfortable environment with small groups of 3-10 of women. A significant amount of preparation (1-2 hours daily) is expected from volunteers to plan for these sessions.

Volunteers can get help from our staff on the topics for the lessons and creative ways to teach, but lesson planning and teaching are ultimately the responsibility of the volunteers themselves. The session will be conducted at our own teaching centre, which is well equipped with desks, chairs, white boards, books and various teaching resources. As this program is evolving, we welcome volunteers input in any way to help make and design appropriate courses that can aid our programs. Our local team are always at hand to support you and for any language barriers they will be mediators. Any relevant resources and materials brought will be highly appreciated.

Classes will focus more on speaking English (than reading and writing) and will also include basic grammar sessions. We employ various techniques, such as role play, in order to maximize the practical impact of this initiative. We ideally prefer students who have some teaching background for this project, however anyone who is keen to help and has good English skills is also a good fit.

Recommended Attire: A conservative dress code needs to be adhered to while at the project. Knees and shoulders must be covered, as well as any tattoos or body art. Rest of the clothing can be comfortable and casual.