

# PLACEMENT ACCOMMODATION ADVICE NEPAL

## SWAYAMSEBAK TRAINING AND PEER SUPPORT (STEPS)

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to all new volunteers soon to arrive in Nepal! This placement accommodation document will give you some information on what to expect when you arrive in Nepal concerning your future accommodation. Please remember that this document is a live document that will be in constant need of being updated in order to stay relevant in presenting volunteer's advice concerning finding accommodation in Nepal. After arriving in Nepal and during interaction with members of the STEPS team, you will have the opportunity to ask additional questions.

Housing opportunities for volunteers in Nepal vary according to the placement contexts. Rural versus urban areas and flatland or mountain areas provide different kinds of accommodation. We will therefore divide this document according to the different areas where VSO volunteers live.

### KATHMANDU

As your in country training will begin in Kathmandu, volunteers that are placed in Kathmandu will have the opportunity to start looking for accommodation right away. Some recruitment bases communicate that local counterpart organizations will facilitate and support the volunteer in finding a placement but reality shows that volunteers often having to do this alone.

#### → What can I do concerning accommodation search before my arrival?

You can orientate yourself on the following website: [www.nepalhomesearch.com](http://www.nepalhomesearch.com) has a range of flats available that give you an idea of what to expect. VSO's allowance is based on the market rate for accommodation<sup>1</sup>. Keep this in mind while conducting your search. You can start by checking the area in which your organization is based. It is advisable to live close to your work as travelling back and forth between your home and work can become tiresome and expensive depending on the mode of transportation. If you like to meet up with friends, go out for dinner or visit entertainment venues regularly: these areas are mainly in Thamel, Lazimpat or Sanepa.

Well known 'expat living' areas in Kathmandu are: Lazimpat, Thamel (Kathmandu's tourist hub), Bulawatar, Sanepa, Lalitpur and Patan. Areas with the embassies are

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<sup>1</sup> The maximum Kathmandu accommodation allowance is now rated 13.333 rupees a month including tax

especially popular. At the Nepali home search website you can search through all these different areas: they are separately named in the website's search engine. Be aware the most advertisements on this website are outdated. Most VSO volunteers in Kathmandu are currently based in or around the area of Lazimpat.

Add nice Nepali neighbourhood areas and out of ringroad areas that are nice to live as well?

#### → What can I do when I arrive?

Take it easy, don't feel like you have to find a place straight away. It is good to stay in the guesthouse for some weeks at least to build up relationships with other volunteers. In the meantime try to talk with existing volunteers concerning their accommodation. Also check if there are volunteers leaving, you might be able to take over their apartment/flat. Have a look at theirs if possible to get an idea of what your accommodation could look like. Then try to come up with a list of things that are important for you. **Keep in mind that in the end you might have to compromise.**

#### → Who am I supposed to contact to find accommodation?

The usual system of house searching in Nepal concerns getting in contact with a housing agent. These agents have a network of landlords and smaller area agents. A good agent will listen to your preferences, explain the limitations of the search and will have knowledge concerning different areas in Kathmandu. We will hereby list a number of agents below that have proved themselves to be helpful and trustworthy.

##### **Agent 1**

Sheila can meet up with you at the Pacific Guesthouse and can take you around on her scooter and bring you into contact with local housing agents. Be sure to send her a text message in advance with your preferences so she can start looking for flats of your interest in your preferred neighborhoods. Don't worry if you do not find your preferred flat straight away. She might have to take you around a couple of times. At some point you will get a good sense of what is available and if your demands are realistic.

Contact details:

Sheila Bajracharja

Mobile: 9808844810 / 9841540436

##### **Agent 2**

Sujan speaks good English and is very responsive to text message, phone calls and e-mail communication. He has a good idea of the living standards expatriates expect. He is also willing to give advice on negotiating to make sure you get good value for your money. He is based just outside the central valley but makes frequent trips into the valley for business so he can meet you anywhere. He can also assist in arranging furnishings (for a small fee of course). If you are clear about what you

want, Sujan will be able to direct you to places that meet your requirements which will help you find something suitable quickly.

Sujan Subedi

Mobile: 9813188062

## POKHARA

## BIRGUNJ

### CHECKLIST ON HOUSES:

- Is all the water running? Are there any leakages? Try all taps, toilets and showers.
- Is the water in the house drinkable or does it need boiling/filtering/water delivery.
- Is there hot water (a geyser?) is the geyser working properly?
- Is there some sort of electricity backup during loadshedding? (Options are a generator or an inverter)
- Is there internet or cable available? If not this will cost you 1000 rupees or more per month extra.
- Is the flat secure? Does it have bars on the windows?
- Is the flat close to other volunteers you can go to if needed?

### SECURITY ISSUES

#### **Earth quake safety:**

**Area security:** Make sure you check out the area during night time before you agree to take on the accommodation. Ask around with other volunteers or the VSO staff to ensure the area is safe. Look for street lighting at night as it can be dangerous to walk through small dark alleyways at night.

**Potential target areas during unrest:** Nepal is generally a safe country, but if there is political unrest some areas in Kathmandu might become less safe than others. Please keep in mind that close proximity to for example the prime minister house can provide risks in the future.

## SOME TERMS AND EXPLANATIONS

**Load-shedding:** The system where, in different areas of the city and all over Nepal, power is regularly cut off. There is just not enough power to keep the country running day and night so they spread it out. This indicates that you only have power at certain times a day. You can buy a so-called inverter with a battery charger that can save power when there is electricity and makes you able to use this power during load-shedding times. A decent inverter with battery charger can give your laptop 4 hours of power and some light in the house. All together this can cost around 20,000 rupees. We can get to know these times by looking at the most recent 'load shedding schedule'<sup>2</sup>.

**Semi-furnished:** A carpet on the floor can be considered semi-furnished.

**Unfurnished:** No carpet, nothing there.

**Fully Furnished;** This varies but usually means all basic furniture is provided such as a bed, living/ sitting room set etc. You will most likely need to purchase decorative items and maybe some kitchen items as well.

**Ground floor/top floor:** Ground floor apartments generally have less privacy as the area around it is the compound where people come in and park their motorcycles or cars. About 80% of the free housing market are ground floor apartments as people generally prefer living on the top floor where there is more privacy and more sunlight.

**Single entrance flat/connected rooms:** Many Nepali style flats have a corridor in the middle of the house with the rooms around it. This indicates that going from one room to the other will make you have to go through the public staircase or hallway.

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<sup>2</sup> Check the schedule online at [http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=pages&page\\_id=8](http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=pages&page_id=8)