

BEGINNINGS AT UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Being with students, and to see their enthusiasm for Pakistan, has been a refreshing experience. I met a number of students on 25th October, led by Syeda Hanniya Kamran and coordinated by Dr. Rihab Khalid. We were fortunate that pro-Vice Chancellor Kamal Munir was also able to attend. The meeting was held in a committee room at West Court, Jesus College, arranged by Lucey Couch, Assistant to Master Sunita Alleyne, OBE.

The meeting had been convened by PakSoc to work out ways to help Pakistan at this juncture. Since they had been considering arranging for fund raisers to send funds for relief and rehabilitation work, and since I don't believe in charity, I was able to share my alternate point of view.

I believe it is important to provide expression of empathy and solidarity with those who are today in a destitute state. Some funds are always useful if they are provided in a manner to help them towards path of self-reliance, but what is important is to provide opportunity to those interested to provide them to assure the communities of their support.

Among the most important aspects at this time is to provide hand holding, support and encouragement to help them rise above adversity themselves.

Who are Climate Volunteers?

Climate Volunteers (CV) are those individuals who would like to spend time in areas that have suffered climate emergencies. The process is similar to those volunteers who would like to provide humanitarian assistance to marginalized communities; however, CVs have to do more than just helping affected communities. They will need to work out ways to help in Zero Carbon villages to complete their community structures, at the same time learn how to survive under difficult conditions of living a life with limited resources.

It is Climate Volunteers, who will bring back rich experience of living with those who have begun to fend for themselves, and to provide them hope for better future and a more humanistic world.

The fact that they have decided to go through some difficult decisions even to arrive in a flood affected area but even more so from their desire to learn about sustainable living and how to work out ways to inflict least damage to the biosphere.

What is Climate Volunteers Village Hospitality Program?

This program is designed to be drive by village communities in Mirpur Khas, Sindh, Pakistan, four hours drive from the large megalopolis of Karachi. All the communities in the area had lost all their belongings due to the catastrophic Floods 2022.

The main centre is Pono Village where special accommodation built in an enclosed area in the village will be provided. You will experience the rural life of Pakistan but more than the ways of sustainable living and a proof of how much can be achieved through participatory efforts and when those affected do not feel that they are victims but are proud to be partners.

The residents of all these villages are extremely generous and are becoming ready to receive visitors to come and participate in various ongoing development activities.

What is Volunteers Accommodation?

Each room of 12'x12' size has a small attached bathroom, to be used by volunteers on sharing basis and is designed to be climate-resilient and safe. The structure is a prefab bamboo LOG (Lari OctaGreen), which is lined with reed matting externally and internally and rendered with lime mud plaster. The floor consists of simple lime sand pozzolana flooring.

A separate enclosure is being formed in Pono village and will have solar lighting on sharing basis which will allow cell phone charging and minimum lighting at night. There is no running water but it will be available in buckets which will be regularly filled by the village hospitality crew.

What Kind of Food will be Available?

All effort is being made to provide hygienic food which will be largely vegetarian and will be cooked on the earthen Pakistan Chulah stove by female hospitality committee members. The food will be served in earthen plates etc. which are being fabricated in the nearby Lachman village by expert female potters. The city of Mirpur Khas is 30 minutes' drive away. A car will be available for those who would like to go the town from time to time.

What About Medical Emergencies?

A small dispensary will be available with a paramedic on duty. In addition, government support is being sought to have an ambulance service available. First aid boxes and other protective gear will be available.

What Should You Bring with You?

All volunteers must ensure that they have clothing according to weather conditions. Female students should wear trousers and tunics and all should bring their walking shoes, hats or caps and sleeping bags. Please bring any particular medicines that you need as well as for water borne disorders and malaria. Mosquito netting and mosquito repellents will be provided.

What is the Outline of the Program?

A slide presentation was prepared to apprise interested universities organized by Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge, INTBAU and Heritage Foundation on 27 October 22, for which the link is attached. Of course, for each group the program would be fine-tuned and revised according to particular interests of the participants.

Link: <https://bit.ly/HFClimateVolunteers>

