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TITLE INFORMATION

HOW TO BE AN AMAZING VOLUNTEER OVERSEAS

Rules Of The Road, Stories From The Field

Susan E. Gibson

Barlow Publishing (224 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

A guide to volunteering in other countries that offers welcome touches of realism along with idealism.

In her debut, Gibson, a longtime microfinance consultant who's served on numerous boards of nongovernmental organizations, offers the reader a book that's part memoir and part volunteering primer. The book begins with an introduction by Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Prize-winning economist who developed the system of microfinancing; Gibson first began volunteering in this field, which led to a career in international development. The author draws on her extensive experience, offering anecdotes, letters, and diary excerpts to show readers how they may have a meaningful and safe experience working overseas for nonprofits. This book is full of everyday advice for international volunteers, although some of it is fairly obvious, such as dressing for the weather, showing respect for local mores, and being careful regarding water and uncooked food. In fact, the advice on eating locally may well be discouraging to vegetarians, vegans, or people with other dietary needs. However, there are other bits of advice that a reader may not have considered, such as simply listening to a favorite song for easy self-care. The book is also fully up to date as far as Covid-19 safety considerations. Although this work is strongly based on the author's experience with microfinancing, this book will be useful for would-be workers in many other areas of international development, and it's full of suggestions for how to get your foot in the door of such organizations. Gibson offers especially good advice about doing homework on NGOs to avoid a mismatch between oneself and their missions. Overall, the book is skillfully organized with chapter summations and plenty of links to other resources.

A useful and anecdotal manual for those who wish to work for international nonprofits.

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