

REFILWE HANDBOOK FOR RESIDENT VOLUNTEERS

Thank you for considering joining our community, to volunteer your time, effort and talent to serve poor and severely disadvantaged people living in settlements north west of Johannesburg, South Africa.



**Breaking the
cycle of poverty...**

This handbook is a living document that aims to give you an accurate picture of life at Refilwe. It is designed to serve as a guide to those in the process of making a decision about volunteering and also as a reference for those people who have recently joined us as volunteers and are trying to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

Note that only people over the age of 18 are eligible to be resident volunteers, unless they are part of a group with an adult leader, in which case they must be over 16. The minimum period for a volunteer to stay in our cottage accommodation is one month.

Please let us know if you have questions or want to make suggestions. Refilwe's residential volunteer programme is new, so it's important that you give us feedback. It will help us to improve the way we do things, better ministering to the community with happier volunteers!

BACKGROUND TO REFILWE

The word Refilwe is taken from one of South Africa's indigenous languages (Tswana) and means "gift" or "to give".

Refilwe has its origins in a vision given by God to two ladies, Jean Stewart and Yvonne Jaques. In April 1991 they started a clinic on a small site in the vicinity of the Lanseria Airport. From this grew a wider ministry to the needy people of the area, including training in needlework, a school and a hospice for terminally ill people. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was presented to those who came to the centre, this being the core of why help and support were offered.

In November 2005, the present site was made available to Refilwe by the Anglican Church. This has made possible the expansion and work which is now the focus at Refilwe - to spread the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, by addressing critical needs in the following areas;

- Medical
- Child Care / Education
- Life and specific skills training
- Income generating activities

The Refilwe Community Project is situated close to the Lanseria Airport, north of Johannesburg and serves a severely disadvantaged community. Most of these people live in small, scattered informal settlements throughout the area.

HIV & Aids, Unemployment, limited education, lack of skills & poor housing are just some of the challenges facing this community. Most of those who do work, earn very little – a typical breadwinner may earn as little as R500 a month and might have five or six dependants. A great number of these people do not have access to clean water, electricity or basic social services.

All these challenges lead to a variety of social problems-both psychological and physical. Many cases of physical abuse have been identified, and the ones that suffer the most are often the children.

Due to the stigma still associated with AIDS coupled with the lack of education, many people still suffer and die without help. Often people are rejected by their families, friends and communities and find they have nowhere to go in times of need.

Much emphasis is placed on ensuring that the affairs of Refilwe are managed according to the best principles of sound and good governance and that Refilwe is a good citizen. Its statutory position is that of a registered non-profit making company with Non-Profit Organisation and Public Benefit Organisation status in terms of current legislation. A Board of Directors and an Executive Committee of the Board govern the affairs of the organization. The Executive Director (Jaco van Schalkwyk) is a member of the Board and is responsible for the implementation of the policies and guidelines determined by the Board and the Executive Committee.

Vision & Values

Each day at Refilwe begins with a Scripture reading & prayer, either done in department or individually (Volunteers are requested to take part in all spiritual activities whilst on site). Volunteers are encouraged to have either individual or group “quiet times” because it is only as we receive grace ourselves that we have the resources to be a blessing to others in need ... “portions for those for whom nothing has been prepared” (Nehemiah 8 v 10). The whole effort of receiving those who are hungry and thirsty, needy and sick is for Jesus’ sake.

The vision of Refilwe is to assist and guide the poor and needy who come into its sphere of influence to become regenerated in God’s sight and to be empowered to achieve sustainability in the spiritual, mental and physical aspects of their lives. This defines the activities on which Refilwe focuses.

Refilwe’s policy is that, when programmes, projects or individuals become self-sustainable, they will be encouraged to leave Refilwe’s sphere of influence but Refilwe will always remain available to them if called upon.

Refilwe's value system is founded on the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore if there is any doubt about Refilwe's ability to meet its own predetermined key performance indices the proposed activity will either not be done, or, if it is a high priority, something else will be stopped to release management time and financial resources for the new activity. Otherwise resources to do it well must be found.

Information about Living at Refilwe

Perspective

Refilwe is out of town, northwest of Johannesburg, near the Lanseria International Airport. It takes about 40 minutes to get there by car from the centre of Johannesburg or Sandton, and 20 minutes from Randburg. From O.R. Tambo International Airport it's around an hour's drive. The closest supermarket is 5 minutes' drive.

The most striking characteristic of the 18-hectare Refilwe site is that it's always in the process of development. Each week there are noticeable differences – a new piece of garden here and a renovated cottage there. There's a sense in all this activity that God's work is being done and the people who do it find it fun and fulfilling!

Jaco van Schalkwyk, the Executive Director, leads a dedicated team with energy and enthusiasm. So much has been achieved since the organisation started 16 years ago, but there's so much more still to be done (only 7 ha of the property have so far been developed since Refilwe moved on to it in November 2005). There is therefore an endless need for volunteers to bring love and skills that will contribute to building a productive community that has self-esteem and solid values.

The Refilwe site is divided by the Crocodile River, with the Clinic, Community Centre, Crèche, Skills Workshop and sports facilities on one side and accommodation, library, computer centre, school and offices on the other. The terrain is mostly rugged with small buildings scattered across it. Several types of farming operations in varying stages of development decorate the landscape.

The 2 volunteer cottages each sleep a maximum of 12 people, in 3 bedrooms with 6, 4 and 2 beds respectively. Each cottage has a sitting room with TV, large bathroom (showers only) and a kitchen with a microwave and fridge.

There are currently 8 cottages accommodating our 42 children, with the last two cottages being renovated. This will bring our total capacity up to 10 cottages and around 55 children on site in the God Parents Project. In each one of these cottages a 'godparent' heads a 'family' of no more than 6 children.

Fees

An indication of the approximate fees is presented below

Period of Stay	Cost(ZAR)	Cost(USD)	Cost (Euro)	Cost (GBP)
1 Year (invoiced as 2 consecutive 6-month stays)	9 000	1 500 (deposit 500)	1 125 (deposit 325)	750 (deposit 250)
4 - 6 months	6 300	1 050 (deposit 350)	800 (deposit 270)	525 (deposit 175)
2 to 4 months	60 per day	8 per day	7 per day	5 per day
1 to 2 months	100 per day	14 per day	12 per day	8 per day

Please note that these figures are subject to amendment in the light of changes in exchange rates. When finalizing arrangements more exact figures will be presented.

A 33% deposit is payable to us 2 months before your arrival date and is non refundable. Receipt of the deposit secures your accommodation booking, along with required documentation as specified in the provisional acceptance letter.

The balance is due 1 month before arrival. Payment for an additional 6 - 12 months is payable one month before the beginning of the 6-month period.

The fee includes 3 meals a day and accommodation (bed linen and towels provided). It does not include spending money, transport or toiletries/medication. Volunteers usually spend about R1 000 (SA currency) a month on these items.

Health and Immunisation Requirements

Refilwe is a large site and the work can be both physically and emotionally demanding, so volunteers need to be fit and healthy to flourish.

Please check with your local travel clinic and/or health department as to current immunisation requirements. The following immunisations should be considered;

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Tetanus
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Polio
- Chicken pox
- Influenza

Our local travel clinic can also provide the above immunisations if necessary. We also recommend that you be tested for Tuberculosis before and after your visit to South Africa.

First Days at Refilwe

You will adjust more quickly and easily if you arrive with a flexible, tolerant outlook and well-developed sense of humour, because ours is a dynamic, unpredictable environment. There may be electricity cuts or water cuts. Sometimes a great opportunity presents itself that necessitates changes in plan, or an emergency arises. All this and much more has to be handled by a small staff with limited resources and if you're used to first world efficiency and strict time keeping, it can be frustrating.








Your first few days at Refilwe are spent settling in, adjusting to the new environment and attending orientation programmes, depending on which projects you are preparing to be involved in. Jet lag will be treated sympathetically!

Our site is a very busy place with people often in a rush, but please don't be intimidated by this. Nobody expects you to know what's going on at first and we welcome your questions and comments. Due to the fast pace here at Refilwe it is often hard to give you a complete schedule of the activities that you will be doing. Sometimes certain projects come along that requires a shuffle of the schedule and we ask that you accept this challenge with grace and patience. As far as is possible we are committed to give you detailed tasks in advance. At the same time you will also quickly be introduced to "Africa Time" – a concept that is hard to understand (sometimes even for those of us born here). Loosely it means that time keeping is not as important as it should be and can cause great challenges for visitors from first world countries. We ask your patience as we all deal with this challenge.

Please ensure that the Office Manager in the office knows about any medical condition or allergies, as well as the details of your medical insurance, so that proper action can be taken if a need arises.

Volunteer activities

Please share your expectations with us upon arrival as it helps us to make your time at Refilwe as meaningful as possible. Remember, you are a great asset and blessing to us but we want to make sure that you leave with a sense of personal achievement as well. We have some routine tasks that all volunteers help with like milking the cows, cleaning the piggery, tending the gardens, etc. These are all important tasks in the day to day running of our project. Where possible we will make use of your skills as set out in your application. There are often volunteers on site busy with specific projects like assessing programs and writing policies, etc., but we also need help in other areas like;

-  Helping with homework
-  Spending time with the God Parents
-  Projects for the children during school holidays
-  Painting
-  Landscaping
-  Project management
-  Sweat equity as part of the site maintenance team (manual labour duties)

We also encourage our volunteers to get involved with the families and children on site after hours through visits to their homes, picnics, game evenings, etc.

Meals

Lunch is served every day at 12.30 p.m. in the Community Support Centre. Volunteers usually prepare breakfast and supper themselves and have these meals in their cottages. Occasionally you will be invited to have supper with one of the Refilwe 'families'.

You are welcome to snack on anything you have bought yourself. However, please do this in an unobtrusive way, realising that if you are amongst others they may well hope for a share, especially the children. If you share snacks with one, you will be expected to share with the others and you will set a precedent for future occasions.

Refilwe is a strictly no alcohol & no smoking environment.

Living in a Volunteer Cottage

It is, of course, necessary to have a set of "house rules" for volunteers so that misunderstandings are avoided and everyone knows what is expected of them. The volunteer house rules complement the rules and procedures for everyone else living and working at Refilwe.

The rules help us to manage the households as effectively as possible with everyone's best interests taken into consideration. The rules are open to review, so you are welcome to suggest changes.

The most important principle to follow is always to be considerate of all those on whom your action(s) or inaction may impact. Think through the possible implications of what you plan to do before doing it.

Living at close quarters with others means that it's very important to be clean and tidy at all times. It isn't acceptable ever to put off cleaning/tidying up after yourself. It's also important that your bed is always made before you leave the cottage as donors often visit Refilwe and want to see the volunteer cottages when they tour the site.

You need to be aware of whether other people in the cottage are sleeping or studying and regulate noise levels accordingly. Some people need to rise early for work and others don't. Remember to be very considerate of your companions' personal space and be sensitive to when they need time alone.

The volunteer cottages are out of bounds to the children and you are expected to enforce this rule.

Please respect other people's belongings. It's not acceptable to help yourself to anything that isn't yours, including snacks and toiletries.

We ask that you do not move to another bed without first discussing this with Volunteer Co-ordinator, as the bed allocations are planned in advance and moving could cause problems with new arrivals. From time to time, we may ask you to move to a different bed, but we do try to avoid this.

On departure from Refilwe please ensure that all your belongings either go with you or are suitably disposed of. This includes toiletries, food, clothing and medication. If you're not taking it home either throw it away or give to someone specifically.

It is very important that you never leave the property without the knowledge of the volunteer co-ordinator. If you plan an activity off site, please let the volunteer co-ordinator know so that he/she is always aware of where you are. There is a register in every cottage and you are requested to sign out when you leave the property and sign back in when you return.

Laundry

A laundry facility is located on site just outside "Philadelphia" and is available to all volunteers. The facility is managed by Julia, one of the God Parents so please introduce yourself to her and check the schedule if you want to make use of this facility. There is also a washing trough in the kitchen should you want to do hand washing. Alternatively you can make arrangements with Julia and for a fee she might even be available to do your washing.

Working Hours, Time off and Leave

Residential volunteers at Refilwe work 8 hours per day, Monday to Friday. There is a certain amount of flexibility and changeability within this framework, depending on the work you're involved in at various times and also the needs of the organization.

Volunteers working at the crèche might work from 6.30 am to 3.30 p.m. with an hour for lunch, while others might start at 8 a.m. and continue until 5 p.m. Sometimes extra help is called for in a crisis or to fill in for someone who is ill.

Over weekends activities are organized for the resident children and volunteers are welcome to participate or even initiate their own programmes.

Volunteers are asked not to go out at night from Sunday to Thursday, as the security gates are locked at 7 p.m. In the event of a special occasion, please arrange before the time with the Volunteer Coordinator. On Friday and Saturday evenings special arrangements can be made.

In the interests of everyone's welfare and to avoid unnecessary anxiety and inconvenient searching, it is essential that volunteers sign out and in every time they leave the property. A book is provided for this purpose in each cottage.

We ask volunteers staying for a short period (1 – 2 months) to limit leave applications to a day or two here and there. Those staying from 2 to 6 months are entitled to take 8 working days leave (not necessarily consecutive days) and volunteers staying a year are entitled to 15 working days leave. Applications for leave must be made a minimum of 2 weeks in advance.

Transportation

A mini-bus is currently an important item on our prayer list, however, transport to and from the shops or other local destinations can be organized by booking the approved driver the day before you want to go out. You are liable for the cost of the distance you travel – the rate being R2,50 per Kilometre plus any parking expenses incurred. Ensure that you get a receipt, please. Refilwe vehicles are not available to volunteers to drive due to insurance restrictions.

In Case of Illness

In cases of accident or emergency, we have two private hospitals with 24-hour casualty service within 15 – 20 minutes drive.

If you are mildly ill and do not have appropriate medication, please visit the Office Manager or the Clinic on site. Minor accidents can also be attended to at the Clinic during the hours that it's operational. Let your programme manager know if you need time off work.

If you would like to see a private doctor or dentist, the clinic staff or Volunteer Co-ordinator, will refer you to someone suitable.

Acclimatization quite often involves experiencing illness some time during the first couple of weeks. This usually manifests as vomiting and/or diarrhoea for a day or two. Please report your illness to both Volunteer Co-ordinator and your programme manager and light duty or time off will be arranged.

Telephones, Computers & E-mail

Due to ongoing cable theft in our area we do not currently have land lines. It is suggested that volunteers have their own cellular/mobile phone and/or data cards, whether they bring one from home or buy one on arrival. Internet access is available in our computer centre between 20H00 and 22H00 only.

Maintaining a Harmonious Environment

At Refilwe we strive to have a harmonious, smoothly-running environment. Please remember to:

- stay calm in a crisis or tense exchange
- get enough sleep so you don't become irritable
- keep noise levels reasonable
- minimise all kinds of waste (electricity, water, etc.) to keep our bills down

- report breakages right away to the Office Manager so that the item can be repaired or replaced
- clean and tidy thoroughly after yourself and insist the children you work with do so too
- carefully look after all the resources that you use e.g. linen, crockery, microwave oven, cutlery
- always treat Refilwe guests hospitably
- look presentable and encourage the children to do so as well
- be a good role model
- be punctual
- ask about anything you need to
- Communicate positively and constructively to solve problems.
- Use water and electricity as sparingly as possible.
- Encourage adults and children to participate in the recycling program. This is a new initiative and needs continuous reinforcement.

What to Bring

Bear in mind cupboard space is limited, so don't over pack.

Appropriate working clothes at Refilwe are jeans/casual pants/comfortable skirt or dress and T-shirts or collared shirts (better protection in the sun). For shoes, trainers or rugged flat sandals are best. A pair of heavy duty working gloves is recommended.

Clothes should be hard wearing and easy to wash.

You'll also want to pack a few clothes to wear in your off time, depending on how you plan to spend it. Remember modesty is always expected on Refilwe property!

Winter – can be very cold at night, so you'll need sweaters and a jacket, but it can get very warm during the day, so layers are advised. Bring warm slippers, warm pyjamas and a woollen cap.

Summer – mostly warm or hot but it can get chilly, so one or two sweaters and a light jacket are suggested. Bring sleepwear you don't mind being seen in, a sun hat and swim-suit (there's no pool at Refilwe, but you may get an opportunity to swim elsewhere). A light raincoat will also be useful.

NB Alarm clock, high factor sun screen, a torch (flashlight) and insect repellent/mosquito net.

Toiletries and Medication – bring all the toiletries you usually use including soap. Basic medications like pain killers, anti-histamines for seasonal allergies, anti-septic and diarrhoea/vomiting remedies should also be packed, along with your prescription medication and prescriptions. Multi-vitamin supplements are strongly recommended.

The Working Environment

Your work assignments will be allocated after discussion about your talents, skills, interests and inclinations. We usually try to give volunteers the opportunity to experience several different programmes and most are required to do some regular manual labour, gardening or farm work, in addition to their specialist work.

In whatever section you are working, you will have a Programme Manager. Feel free to ask this person anything you need to. You are encouraged to make constructive comments and suggestions too, but remember that Refilwe staff has the wisdom that comes with experience and in many cases things are done the way they are for good reasons.

If you notice a possible problem with any of the children, clinic patients or even adults in the community, please raise it with your manager, who will advise on how the problem should be dealt with. Sometimes staff is too busy to pick up differences in behaviour or physical condition and will appreciate your help. If there is relationship or other problems that you don't feel comfortable mentioning to your manager, discuss it with the volunteer co-ordinator or Executive Director.

Remember children are continuously testing their boundaries and they know that one area they can get away with a lot is new volunteers! Be aware and be firm. Get advice on dealing with difficult behaviour when you need to.

Working Together under Stress

Our volunteers come from various countries and cultures, have varying religious beliefs and are of different ages. Some come as part of a group, others individually. Some have contacts in South Africa and many don't. Each person has a unique blend of contributions that they are able to make to our community and will return home with unique interpretations of their experience. Finding your niche is both challenging and rewarding.

Occasional clashes between volunteers are inevitable; however, it is important that these conflicts do not have a negative impact in the work situation. If a solution to a particular problem cannot be found, please consult with Executive Director or Volunteer Co-ordinator. Gossiping and/or any form of anti-social behaviour are not constructive to any community living and will not be tolerated.

Considering that residential volunteers are living in an unfamiliar environment and sometimes face challenging emotional demands in their work, it is understandable that they feel moody and/or frustrated from time to time. It's important that irritability does not interfere with professionalism in the course of work and working relationships, so if you feel you need some extra time to yourself, please discuss it with Volunteer Co-ordinator.

HIV/AIDS

South Africa is generally known to have a high incidence of HIV and AIDS, so some potential volunteers are concerned as to how much exposure they would have and whether they would be at risk working at Refilwe.

As in most disadvantaged communities in sub-Saharan Africa, some members of the community that Refilwe serves are HIV positive. Anyone identified with 'full-blown' AIDS is referred to a facility where they can be properly cared for.

Volunteers should be aware of the following facts:

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that causes AIDS. A member of a group of viruses called retroviruses, HIV infects human cells and uses the energy and nutrients provided by those cells to grow and reproduce.

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. It is a disease in which the body's immune system breaks down and is unable to fight off infections, known as 'opportunistic infections', and other illnesses that take advantage of a weakened immune system.

A person who has HIV carries the virus in certain body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk. The virus can be transmitted ONLY if such HIV-infected fluids enter the BLOODSTREAM of another person. This kind of direct entry can occur through the linings of the vagina, rectum, mouth and the skin, such as a cut or a sore. Usually HIV is transmitted through:

- Unprotected sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal) with someone who has HIV
- Unprotected oral sex with someone who has HIV
- Sharing needles or syringes with someone who is infected
- Infection during pregnancy, childbirth or breast feeding (mother-to-infant) transmission.

HIV is not an easy virus to pass from one person to another. HIV is NOT transmitted:

- through food or air (e.g. by coughing or sneezing)
- There has never been a case where a person was infected by a household member, relative, co-worker or friend, through casual, everyday contact such as sharing eating utensils or bathroom facilities, or through hugging or kissing
- Sweat, tears, vomit, faeces and urine do contain HIV, but have not been reported to transmit the disease (apart from 2 cases involving transfer from faecal matter via cut skin)
- Mosquitoes, fleas and other insects do not transmit HIV

Security in South Africa

South Africans are generally very friendly people, but there is a criminal element in our society that you need to be aware of.

When you're out and about in Johannesburg or elsewhere in the country, please keep the following advice in mind:

- Be alert at all times. Be aware of the people around you and the environment around you. If you feel uncomfortable in a crowd, move away from them

- Try not to carry your passport with you, unless you need it. Keep a certified copy of your passport in a safe place.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash with you
- If you are going out and are not sure if it is a safe area, check with Refilwe
- If you go out at night, go in a group and stay together
- Carry your purse, handbag and camera securely
- Make sure you have the telephone number of Refilwe with you
- Whenever you go out, make sure somebody knows where you're going and when you intend to be back
- Please try to limit expensive jewellery.

If you decide to hire a vehicle and drive yourself

- Keep all the doors locked when you drive and when you leave the car
- Do not pick up strangers (including children)
- Be alert when stopped at intersections or traffic lights. Keep an eye on the hawkers
- Know where you are going and exactly how to get there.
- Have your drivers licence with you at all times
- Do not leave valuables in view in the car. Put them in the boot/trunk
- Do not drive with the windows wide open
- Do not assume that other road users are going to obey the generally-accepted rules of the road
- At night, watch out for animals and people wearing dark clothing which makes it difficult for you to see them

Security Arrangements on the Site

Refilwe takes a number of precautions to secure the property and the people living and working there.

- A private armed response company is contracted to assist immediately they are alerted to a potential problem
- The property is fenced and the gates are locked from 7 pm. to 6 a.m.
- The area around the cottages is floodlit
- Cottages have burglar bars and can be locked securely
- There are 8 families living on the property, all ready to help as necessary
- Residents are advised not to walk outside alone at night.
- Volunteers should not walk around remote areas of the property alone at any time

All these rules sound intimidating but they are not really. You will soon adapt to them and there are permanent Refilwe staff who will be only too happy to help or guide you if you feel a bit intimidated.

The rules are there for the good of everyone at Refilwe and to ensure that volunteers enjoy their time here.

We appreciate your desire to help and look forward to working with you. We trust that your time at Refilwe will be as meaningful and valuable to you as it will be to us.

May the Lord bless you in all you experience and do here.

