

Apply today and you could be...

A Mental Health Development Worker at the Meedumpitiya Rehabilitation Centre in Uva Province, Sri Lanka

What's the context and purpose of the role?

People suffering from mental health problems are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Sri Lanka, with fierce social stigma and a lack of appropriate services leaving them excluded. Since the 2004 Tsunami, the imperative to offer accessible client-centred, mental healthcare has grown. The Meedumpitiya Rehabilitation Centre is a peaceful and quiet place in the Sri Lankan hill country. The centre provides in-patient mental health care to women and is looking to improve its rehabilitative activities. Previously the centre often functioned as a long-term residence for clients rather than a rehabilitation centre. The aim is now to introduce recovery focused services that will allow clients to leave the centre and re-integrate into society. Some initiatives such as income generation projects, family meetings, referral and follow-ups are being introduced. As a mental health development worker you'll feed into the development of existing projects and services and introduce new ones. You'll work closely with local staff, introducing best practice in mental health care and client-centred approaches.



What does the role involve?

- Improving and developing rehabilitation activities such as income generating activities, community involvement, referral and follow up systems
- Providing training for staff at the centre on rehabilitation therapy and other mental health issues
- Proactively working with staff and other volunteers on the planning of integrated mental health services in the province and feeding into VSO's overall strategy to improve mental healthcare in Sri Lanka.

What skills, experience and personal qualities are needed for the role?

You'll need to be a qualified and registered Occupational Therapist, Psychiatric Nurse or Psychiatric Social Worker with at least 3 years' experience in developing community-based mental healthcare and rehabilitation services. Good training, communication and interpersonal skills are important. You'll also need to be patient and flexible and have realistic expectations of what can be achieved in a resource-poor and hierarchical environment. Cultural sensitivity is crucial and you need to be happy to ride a motorbike (VSO will provide training) and live in a remote (but beautiful!) setting.

And the rest...

You'll be based in Badulla, a hill town with a range of amenities, such as an internet café, good local market and a few small supermarkets. Uva Province has some stunning rural scenery with impressive ancient religious sites, green misty hills, waterfalls and tea estates. There's also a variety of wildlife, even in the town, especially monkeys and you might see the odd elephant wandering past your house! The climate is hot and tropical with little seasonal variations.

We'll ask you to commit to 12 - 24 months to make a sustainable contribution to our development goals. In return, we'll give you comprehensive financial, personal and professional support. We'll provide you with extensive training before your placement, and our financial package includes a local salary, return flights, accommodation, insurance and more. When you return to your home country, we'll help you to resettle and many of our returned volunteers stay involved with us long after their placement ends. www.vso.org.uk/volunteering