

We adhere to a strict ethical and environmental code to ensure that the positive impacts of our assignments are maximised, and that any negative impacts are minimised.

Please read on to find out more about the standards that we set for ourselves.



Aims

Skills Venture aims to allow skilled business people in the UK and US to help to lift communities in Africa out of poverty by providing targeted and effective mentoring support to local entrepreneurs, and in doing so to create jobs and prosperity.

As part of its core ethos, Skills Venture is committed to operating responsibly by ensuring that:

- we focus above all on effective mentoring, and only match volunteers to entrepreneurs where there is both genuine need and a real likelihood that the mentoring relationship will be productive
- our volunteers are properly inducted and prepared for their assignment, and are supported throughout their stay by our local staff so that their impact is maximised
- our local staff are paid well and are given real opportunities for personal development
- we minimise any potential negative cultural impacts by sensitising our volunteers to local practices and values, and to the two-way nature of the learning process
- we support the local economy as far as possible by employing local staff and using local suppliers, in addition to the positive impact of our core service
- we minimise our impact on the local environment by working with local suppliers who use sustainable materials and forms of power as far as possible

Our responsible tourism policy is communicated to all of our staff, volunteers and entrepreneur clients so that everyone is aware of the high standards that we set ourselves, and so that we can monitor our performance against those standards when we ask for feedback and evaluation from our various stakeholders. Any complaints made in relation to this policy will be treated seriously and dealt with immediately.

Economic responsibility

Our core service provides a boost to the local economy by supporting the growth and development of small businesses through mentoring support and skills transfer, creating jobs and sustainable incomes in the process.

Beyond this, as far as possible, Skills Venture employs local people as mentoring facilitators, logistical support staff, and administrators. We ensure that they are paid fairly and promptly, are accorded all of the rights and privileges demanded by local labour laws (and beyond), and have excellent training and development opportunities. We give our staff clear job descriptions and contracts, treat them as equals in every way, and ensure that staff are not overworked or placed in situations that might compromise their own values or safety.

We work with local suppliers (such as accommodation owners) who operate a similar policy, and ensure that all of our suppliers are supplying us with quality goods that have been sourced or grown locally wherever possible, are paying their own staff fairly, and are not requiring their staff to work excessive hours or to participate in any dangerous practices.

Environmental responsibility

Skills Venture minimises unnecessary environmental impacts in its UK operation by disseminating materials electronically wherever possible, and by recycling all appropriate waste materials.

Volunteers are thoroughly briefed, and asked to sign up to a code of conduct, on how to minimise their impact on the environment (for example, by avoiding taking baths to reduce water consumption, and using solar power alone wherever possible). They are also encouraged to support local wildlife and conservation projects, many of which are in close proximity to Skills Venture project locations, and in particular to make a direct financial contribution through visitor fees.

Social responsibility

Skills Venture assignments have an innate positive impact on local communities.

As part of their (mandatory) pre-departure induction course, all volunteers are briefed about and asked to sign up to a code of conduct. They are given a thorough briefing in local customs and values and current political, social and economic situation in their destination country, as well as a copy of a book on local cultural values. They have access to 24/7 support on local cultural and social issues from our team of resident local facilitators.

Volunteers are also briefed on how (and why) to purchase goods and services locally, how to bargain in a way that is appropriate and does not deprive people of much-needed income, and how to relate to their entrepreneur mentees in a way that avoids any hint of perceived cultural or social superiority.