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The ethics of aid: Is voluntourism ever ethical?

Voluntourism is an industry in the aid world that sends tourists into developing nations in order to be agents of change. These volunteers, however, receive little to no training, are not culturally or linguistically educated, and rarely have work experience in community building. Many question whether such a system is inherently unethical, as the volunteers often benefit more than the communities they serve, sometimes at a price to the integrity of the area in need. This paper explores the realm of international voluntourism, addresses objections and ultimately concludes that voluntourism, though imperfect, is not by nature unethical. Further, it seeks to reconcile methods of aid with communities needs as well as the interests of the volunteers.