

The Structure of HVO

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For 25 years HVO has been providing a service, by filling a need for those in this country who wish to work and get involved with health care in developing countries. They wish to make a contribution but also to gain experience by participating in the global health care community.

To go it alone is extremely difficult. Finding a locale, understanding the needs, arranging travel plans, credentialing, finding contact people, and hoping, once there, you got it right. HVO provides the structure to assist volunteers with these issues, thus saving much time and effort, and allowing volunteers to spend their valuable time on productive activity in country.

The staff helps you to choose a program where your specific expertise is needed and then provides the communication links with a program chairman, previous volunteers, and with your counterpart at the program site, to assure you are prepared to be effective. Understanding in advance the credentialing requirements, transportation, places to stay and eat are invaluable as you arrive at a new place, a new culture, ready to begin work.

This structure has a flip side. While you view it from your perspective, so do the host institution, local providers, and MOH view it from theirs. They see an arriving person who has been appropriately selected, briefed on the problems and the needs of their locale, and who is equipped to continue an ongoing educational program. They see an organization, which has the appropriate structure to understand their needs and make program adjustments; to add, subtract, and fine tune; to be responsive to changes needed to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

But this flip side has an additional flip side, or consequence, for you. HVO volunteers are welcomed, trusted, appreciated and, most always, treated as colleagues and friends. This makes your job much easier. It allows you to teach to your limits, learn to your limits, and carry on the tradition for the next volunteer.

Richard Fisher, MD, is an orthopaedic surgeon and currently serves on the HVO Board of Directors and as chair of Orthopaedics Overseas, the founding division of HVO. Dr. Fisher has been an active HVO member for many years, and has served in Bangladesh, Peru, Bhutan, and Vietnam. He served as Country Director for HVO's USAID-funded rehabilitation project in Mozambique and was a member of the Technical Advisory Group for HVO's Vietnam Rehabilitation Project. Dr. Fisher is a member of the WHO Expert Panel for Clinical Technology, a participant in the WHO Global Initiative for Emergency & Essential Surgical Care, and co-editor of the WHO publication Surgical Care at the District Hospital. He was a Fulbright Fellow in Sri Lanka in 2007.