

Statement of Location Safety & Risk Avoidance

Occidental College places the highest priority on the safety and health of all students. Because socioeconomic, political, environmental, and other conditions vary widely, IPO, Faculty Directors or Advisors need to tailor program location and design to demonstrate the highest standard of care for students. Total safety cannot, of course, be guaranteed abroad, just as it cannot be guaranteed in the United States. However, faculty and staff must be committed to taking the necessary steps to maximize student safety at each and every program site.

Documentation gathered from the following types of sources is required to determine whether a site is safe and appropriate for students:

- Extensive consultation (phone and e-mail) with in-country directors of host non-governmental organizations, local NGO community, volunteer organizations, etc.
- In-situ knowledge and analysis of local institutional colleagues with whom we generally have long and trusting relationships.
- Monitor U.S. Government advisories, considering both those issued by in-country embassies and consulates and by the State Department in Washington, D.C.
- Through personal, professional, and online networks, maintain close contact with other development and health professionals around the world.

Document how safety measures are built-in to program design:

Site development must include several characteristics that have proven important over the years in minimizing safety risks in-country, including street crime, accidents, and exposure to political violence.

- **In-country Partner Selection** – Partners must be lawfully constituted and adherent to host-country standards for insurance, liability, employment, tax and other laws and regulations. A comprehensive health and safety service would include acknowledgment of and direct mitigation of in-country conditions, required codes of conduct, appropriate security measures (location, facility, transportation controls, etc.), emergency response plans and trained staff, a published “health and safety” statement.
- **Student Selection** – Extensive discussion with in-country directors as to required student characteristics given the location, type of work, local conditions, cultural realities such as level of required independence, previous travel experience, ability to acclimate to a particular culture, etc.
- **Intensive Orientation** - Verification of thorough in-country orientation including safety and security issues (unsafe areas/neighborhoods, unsafe forms of transportation, recent internal conflicts, areas of high robbery, theft, assault, etc.) and how to minimize these risks.
- **Housing , Transportation & Programming** – Verification of safe housing is defined as located in neighborhoods where employees, volunteers and other personnel are regularly housed. Whereas housing students in hotels readily identifies participants as tourists (even Western, privileged, imperialist forces). In contrast, students should usually live with fellow students or volunteers or community workers. These “home stay-like” components provide significant additional community perspectives on local issues. Hosts can provide precautionary advice to our students about local conditions. Transportation to/from housing to program site is without high risk or confirmation that a safe methods of transportation will be arranged. Learning activities must be located in safe areas and may never include “risky” tourist activities not essential to the educational goals of the course/program (such as bungee jumping, scuba diving, motorcycle travel, extreme sports, etc.).
- **Access to Medical Care** – Confirmation of adequate medical facilities including a hospital or clinic within a reasonable distance given local transportation. Detailed assessment of any other local medical or health concerns of which we need to be aware.