

## Introduction:

### 1a. Personal details and motivation:

My name is Vera Nitsche and I am 64 years old. Traveling has always been a passion of mine. Only now, as a pensioner, single and without everyday family commitments, have I fulfilled my dream of traveling extensively. For me, working in a country means immersing myself more deeply in the culture and mentality of the people than would be possible as a tourist. I am a mother of three children, have two granddaughters and have a wide range of professional experience as a primary school teacher and chemical laboratory technician. Since 2018 and 2021, I have been involved in two volunteer leadership activities. Through the Granny AuPair Agency in Hamburg, I became aware of social projects that are looking for pedagogy and creative manual work.

### 1b. Period and location:

From February 1 to March 31, 2024, I was in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India, as a volunteer in an NGO (non-governmental organization), the Hamara Saahas Trust. My working hours were from Monday to Friday approximately between 11 am and 3 pm.

### 2 My activities:

I had the freedom to choose my tasks according to my strengths and preferences. Here are some of my activities:

- Passing on the crochet technique and developing a learning concept
- Helping two 11-year-old girls with homework and introducing them to crochet
- Improving my English skills for communication and teaching the technical terms

- - Demonstration of various crochet applications such as flowers, bracelets and key rings
- - Encouraging the development of creative ideas and supporting their implementation
- - Organizing a sales stand and conducting sales trials
- - Creating a travel blog and generating donations
- - Setting up a WhatsApp business account and establishing contacts with tour guides and the women at the center
- - Development of an efficient support concept for the organization according to the "Walt Disney method"
- 2a. My main areas were:
- My main tasks were to teach crocheting at the women's center and speak English at the same time. In doing so, I built strong relationships by having face-to-face conversations, communicating via WhatsApp and spending time with the women outside of working hours. I also lived with the family of the founder Tamanna Bhati, her husband Raj and their 11-year-old daughter Gunjan.
- Experiences and adventures:
- 2b. Positive aspects:
- - Warm openness and mutual trust
- - Lots of humor, respect and community spirit
- - Constructive adaptation of tasks to include all participants
- 2c. Challenges:
- - Different skills and learning abilities of the participants
- - Overwhelming the younger girls and also some adults with my requirements
- - Constructive considerations with advanced learners to find simple methods for the success of slow learners
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- - Unclear about the financial allocation for material costs. Due to donations, I have set up my own budget for materials

## 2e. Special moments / encounters:

- Pick-up from the airport with scooters and transportation of my heavy suitcase on a scooter
- Individual naming for me: "V-nani"
- Amazing experiences in everyday life and at cultural festivals
- Participation in Hindu festivals and integration into the Indian family
- Playing with the neighborhood children on the street
- The openness of the Saahas sisters to show me their homes and introduce me to their families
- Designing my hands and feet with henna
- Camel safari, desert tour Osian - city on the Thar desert
- Getting to know Jodhpur City Tour Guides - being the only participant in the booked tours
- Wedding participation
- Life in the Indian family, being seen as a family member, being called Grandmother to Gunjan even to the outside world, Tamanna was happy to join my own 3 German children as my daughter. Raj didn't want to be a son-in-law, but also a son. That's how I ended up with an Indian family of choice.
- The respect for my age (not washing up, not cooking ...)
- being an oddity in public: "Can I take a pic?"
- to perceive the transformation of strangers into "Do you live in India?" in myself with joy.

## 3. goals and results:

My goal was to contribute my talents while taking into account the needs of the women, which I definitely achieved. The women have not only learned a specific handicraft, but have gained a technique with which they can make a variety of products. I was also able to improve my English skills and teach them to both the women and the girls.

Immersing myself in the Indian way of life. Getting to know the culture. The daily bus ride to the NGO was with locals - there wasn't a single tourist on the bus. Living on the outskirts of the city, playing with the neighboring children, celebrating Hindi festivals on the street with the neighbors

## 3a. Possible impact of my work:

- Development of an efficient support concept for the organization
- Continuation of the WhatsApp corporate account with my Indian SIM card (+91 82003 28675)
- Passing on the crochet technique to others and making my own creative work through the Saahas Sisters
- Role model for single, independent women with families and careers

## 4. lessons and learnings:

- Importance of social openness, tolerance and empathy
- Importance of quick action and flexibility in different situations
- Acceptance of failure and joint search for solutions

4a. Improving my skills / competencies:

- Increasing self-confidence and self-awareness
- Ability to acknowledge weaknesses and ask for help

4b. Tips for future volunteer assignments:

- Value of living together with the locals - here the founder, helped to reflect on the work
- Make clear arrangements regarding material costs
- Booking flights only with an "open-return ticket" and direct contact with the organization

4c. Recommendations for future volunteers:

- Contact the founder Tamanna directly by email
- Exchange with previous volunteers
- Direct communication of needs

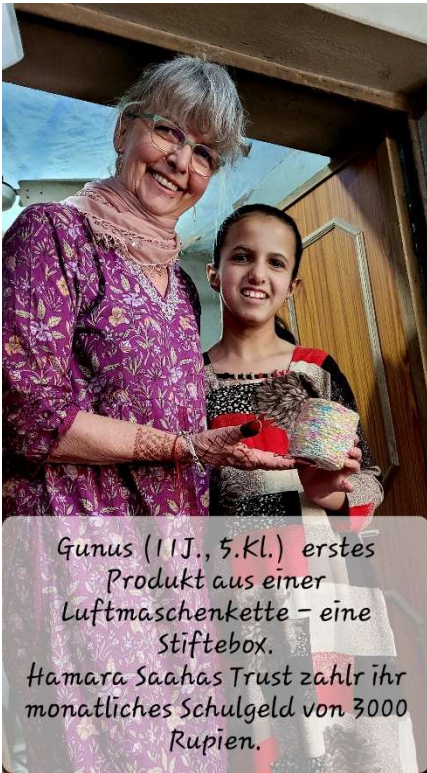
5. closing words:

In conclusion, I would like to say that this experience will remain unforgettable for me. My thanks go to the founder Tamanna and her lovely family, who always took care of me in a caring but never intrusive way and made sure that everything was made possible for my well-being. Thank you for providing me with my own room.

Thanks to the Saahas Sisters for their warm, humorous and lovely welcome.

6. attachments:

Quote from my daughter dated 24.2.24, which addresses the jealousy about quickly establishing good relations with the Saahas Sisters: "*You get in touch with everyone really quickly and very trustingly. That was already evident in your intercultural garden community. [...] Too bad, with your fellow volunteer [...] just see it as a reflection of how perfectly YOU fit in and that this is not a matter of course. [...] You are also filled with experience as a teacher, Mom, grandma, intercultural communicator and Chairwoman of the Board.*"



Gunus (11J., 5.Kl.) erstes Produkt aus einer Luftmaschenkette - eine Stiftebox. Hamara Saahas Trust zahlr ihr monatliches Schulgeld von 3000 Rupien.







Raj, Bhoomi, Tamanna, Gunjan