

MS. NAMRATA JENA, Masters in Development (Former Volunteer)

How do you feel as a returnee-volunteer?

Certainly a Wow! Got to break various stereotypes and ultimately gained immense experience. Yes, I feel every day that I was lucky enough to be part of this meaningful program wherein I could explore a different 'me' through exploring my skills and strengths. Today, I am out of my comfort zone and learning to absorb new perspectives.

What would you say as “before and after” in your life of volunteering?

Nice to reflect with you! I was always dependent on one or the other persons, very cautious and more concerned about safety in my life. This program has brought to me a chance to look at the differences between freedom and safety in one's life. Today, I have different perspectives no matter it is relationships or life or career.

What are your key takeaways from 8 months of German volunteer experience?

I have developed the skill of networking and sociability. I admire the structured and systemic way of living and it is everywhere. I have found in me a new person and to be independent. At present, I can say that I can innovate, ideate, build global relationships and absorb new technologies.

How would you describe your work environment in Germany?

Stress-free environment, mentor ready to support at all times there was no restrictions, and multiple learning experiences of interaction and working together. It is so vastly different from the Indian environment. Also, we get a chance to work with volunteers from other countries and learn the new culture of working and teaming up.



Were you able to connect with SDGs?

Yes, of course. An organization like Tafel, strives to provide affordable food to people who cannot have easy access to food on a daily basis. The clients at Tafel were mostly from the old age generation, single parents, large families, refugees and migrants. Hence, Tafel clearly worked toward SDGs like No Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Responsible Consumption and Production, Reduced Inequalities and Partnerships for the goals.

How did you manage your finances?

The living expenses are high in Germany. The host family and organization had taken care of our basic needs such as accommodation, food, travel cards, insurance, etc. However, in order to get a knack for living expenses, one needs to go out and observe. Shopping from bakeries, and supermarkets, and travelling to nearby cities and countries, give a fair idea of the cost of living.

Any challenges?

Language and weather will be a challenge for everyone. Learn the German language for smooth work and social life. Managing finance is important though basic needs are fulfilled through host families and organizations. Learn to live and explore with your stipend rather than saving.

Excerpts from the interview by Karthikraja, Volunteer in TAFEL, Germany