CHOOSING A **PROGRAM PROVIDER**

There are a ton of fantastic agencies, programs, & organizations out there. There are also some pretty sketchy ones. It is getting increasingly difficult to see the difference based on a web page. Some of the smaller organizations don't have the funds to update their website because they are investing in participant safety while some other organizations with flashy sites are using it to draw in participants regardless of the quality of the program.

Here are a few of our general questions to ask when speaking with a program provider.

General Things:

- Why should I work with organization X rather than another organization?
- How long have you been offering this program/activity? Who developed it? What inspired it or what did it evolve from?
- What can I expect from the organization if I sign up? What is expected of me?
- (If applicable) What does my program fee cover? What additional expenses can I expect?

Participant Things:

- How old are the other participants in this program? Where are they mostly from? How many are there at a time? (Would they be people you want to hang out with?).
- how many people will I be connected with? How many people are there in total?
- What is the participant:staff ratio?

Travel Things:

- How many full-time staff do you have on the ground in my destination? (You are looking to make sure that they have support for you in-country. If they don't have full-time staff, ask them who is available in the case of emergency).
- How far is the closest hospital? How is health care paid for in this country? (Safety first! Are you comfortable with these answers?).
- Walk me through what would happen if I had an emergency in-country (ex. I broke my leg, natural disaster). (You want to hear the process and see if you are comfortable with that).

Background Checks:

- Ask if you can speak to a former participant who did this program. They should be able to connect you to someone who did the program. Ask a lot of the same questions above to them.
- Check to see if there are reviews of the program that are NOT on their own website. Remember that you will only get the ones who LOVED it and not those who HATED it. Read them with a grain of salt and be prepared to address any concerns mentioned in your phone call with the organization.

Volunteer Things:

- Why is this organization in need of volunteers? How do I know that I am making a positive difference? (You are looking to see that this isn't a "male work" project that is negatively affecting any communities).
- What training will I receive in order to be able to do the volunteer work that needs to be done?
- how is my program fee being allocated?

MOST OF ALL: Trust your gut!

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