

# Volunteer **ROB DAVIES**

## Partner organisation **SHARANA | INDIA**

Rob Davies, an Assistant Manager at Deloitte, had been field managing outsourced internal audit engagements and mentoring chartered accountants for many years and he was keen to find a new role that would have a lasting benefit for others less privileged. This led to an interest in volunteering and he jumped at the opportunity to combine his skills in audit with his wish to visit India and work hands-on in International Development.

### THE ASSIGNMENT

Rob travelled to India for four months to support an educational and community development organisation called Sharana, based in the coastal city of Pondicherry. Sharana had recognized the need to develop their income generating projects as part of a strategy to become more self-sustainable and less dependent on overseas donors. They were keen to work with accountants who are commercially minded and could help their inexperienced staff plan, prepare and manage retail opportunities selling the crafts of local women.



*“Going to volunteer at Sharana is one of the best things I have ever done. I have grown in confidence, met some fantastic people and had the experience of a lifetime! I feel that whilst I have contributed to making a real difference in people’s lives I have also taken a lot from the experience for myself. I will definitely be going back to see the friends that I have made.”*

**Rob Davies**

*“Rob Davies’s contribution to Sharana was immense. He added a great deal of value to the Projects he was involved with. As one of our Social Worker said towards the end, ‘Rob is no longer looked upon as a volunteer but now as staff’”*

**Rajkala, Director of Sharana**

### WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

Rob provided budgeting and costing advice which gave Sharana’s management team greater understanding of their product costs. Staff were then able to make informed decisions on how much they needed to charge and whether it was worth continuing with all of the product lines. Rob also assisted in setting up a brand new Christmas market stall and worked with staff to develop safe, secure and efficient cash management systems. Sharana were interested in giving their staff a greater understanding of basic finance and Excel to improve efficiency and reporting techniques with financial and non-financial data. Rob gave one-to-one coaching sessions for staff on basic Excel techniques including using formulas, filtering and sorting data. He helped the organization by increasing the confidence and capabilities of the finance staff, as well as improving communication between finance, programme, and management teams. They now have better understanding of internal controls and procedures and can create realistic programme budgets. Rob also ran a one hour English class for 6 – 9 year olds who came to the office to do their homework, as they didn’t have electricity at home. The students loved getting support from a native English speaker.

### LOCAL IMPRESSIONS

**Rob:** Pondicherry was still under French jurisdiction until 1954 and it still retains a Gallic flavour in parts. There is even an Alliance Française where you can watch French films on a Sunday night. Pondicherry is a good base to visit surrounding beaches where you can take surf lessons. Within a month I managed to see Varanasi at dawn, the Taj Mahal at sunrise, a wild bear in Rajasthan, and a fortune teller in Jaipur!