DUKEENGAGE-KOCHI, KERALA, INDIA
This program is organized by Global Vision International (GVI) and STA Travel in collaboration with DukeEngage.

Program Dates: May 26- July 21
(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

Program Focus
Assisting with community development, education, workshops and other activities ensuring equal opportunities for women, youth or people with disabilities in Southern India.

Curricular Connections: While all students are welcome to apply, this program may be of particular interest to students studying: education and teaching, special education, women and gender studies, pre-med students, human rights, international development, English language/literature, and foreign languages. (See below for additional details about connecting this program to your academic work.)

Service Themes
- Children & youth services
- Health & human services
- Women’s advocacy & women’s empowerment

Program Leaders
- Zeno Wijtten is Global Vision International’s India Country Director and a conservation biologist with a strong interest in integrated conservation and the role of community development, livelihood changes and empowerment in peri-urban areas. Publications include texts on wildlife ecology, conservation as well as peri-urban development.
- Jill Walker is Global Vision International’s Deputy Director of Programs. Formerly an environmental educator, Jill has been managing community development and conservation programs in the Asia region since 2007, based from Thailand, and focuses on providing support and training for all of GVI’s programs worldwide.
- Melissa Torres is the Vice President of Institutional Relations at GVI. She works with universities to develop service-learning, internships, and volunteer programs. Melissa has worked in the international field for almost 20 years.
- Kenneth S. Rogerson, Associate Professor of the Practice and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Sanford School of Public Policy, is the DukeEngage-Kochi Faculty Fellow.

Program Overview
During their eight weeks in Kerala in the South of India, students will be working alongside local experts, residents, and stakeholders to provide opportunities for learning, skill development, building capacity, or providing much needed stimulation. In conjunction with local independent and government organizations and other NGOs, objectives are focused on providing long-term skill-based support to local participants.

Working from existing structures and strengths within local centers and groups, DukeEngage-Kochi participants will support capacity building initiatives in the field of women’s empowerment, education, or special needs care. Participants might have the opportunity to assist in a number of different areas working with and teaching children and adults, assisting with, planning and leading classes, workshops or helping to develop infrastructure as part of integrated community development.

Students will be asked to lead their own initiatives, occasionally working individually or in small groups, but operating overall as a team. Locations will be based on the needs of project partners at that time. Students will learn details
about specific projects, long and short-term objectives, schedules and responsibilities during their orientation in India.

**Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

DukeEngage-Kochi provides students with an opportunity to learn and practice skills in strategic planning, preparation, and reflection in response to an objective or brief. It should also encourage them to develop and display adaptive behaviors through responding to change. Working for and alongside local partners should deepen the students’ understanding of community development and broaden perspectives of diversity issues. Through regular reviews and reflections on issues and changes in their adopted community, students may begin to develop ideas or critiques of desired changes in their own communities.

**Partnership Opportunities**

DukeEngage-Kochi students will work in a team or small groups to increase education and other development opportunities for Kerala’s disadvantaged populations. This may include working with children and women’s societies, community groups, care homes, schools and centers for children or adults with disabilities, and under-funded schools. Past volunteers have worked with:

Underfunded primary schools for students from low-income or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds:
- Creation of health and sanitation infrastructural improvements and a vegetable garden tying in with classes on healthy living and workshops for parents and teachers
- Providing additional support and guidance in English language education
- Running engaging sports and arts workshops to stimulate creativity and imagination
- Computer or English classes for teachers and adults
- Delivery of a range of ‘Life-skill’ based education classes and workshops for children and young adults

Child advocacy centers:
- Supporting the successful operation of a child advocacy center
- Facilitating child advocacy trainings at schools
- Tailored support for personal development for pregnant teenage girls

Women’s initiatives network:
- Adult English for women’s group leaders
- Delivering workshops focused on specific issues for women’s development and empowerment such as public safety

Care homes and schools for children with disabilities:
- Improvement of sensory input resources and general infrastructure
- Tailored support for personal development for residents or students
- Providing activities focused on learning and stimulation for residents or students
- Provision of workshops for teaching staff and parents
- Support provided in developing strong emotional well-being and understanding mental health issues

**Program Requirements**

Language: No specific language proficiencies are required. Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi or other Indian language proficiencies are beneficial. No previous experience or qualifications in the field of education or child advocacy is required to join the program, however, an interest and understanding of the importance of education, child advocacy, and teaching English is desirable. All students must have proficiency in the English language. Students must be willing to participate in training from our field staff in preparation for project work.

Coursework: No specific academic experiences required, however, courses in Education or having experienced the process of second language acquisition will be advantageous. Experience working with children or vulnerable adults will be a plus.

Other Skills: GVI staff and local experts in country will provide all relevant training. To ensure the safety of the children and vulnerable adults in the communities we work with, all accepted participants will be required to submit a
criminal background check no later than 2 weeks before their program start date. Should this document not be submitted before arrival in the field, the student/students will not be allowed to participate in community projects.

Personal Qualities: For this program, the ability and willingness to adapt to and balance their own expectations with changing partner needs are beneficial. The most successful candidates will have the ability to readily identify opportunities for positive contribution to partners’ goals and show a continued interest and high motivation to gain understanding and learn in and from an unknown environment.

Personal Competencies:
- Empathy and cultural sensitivity; effectively and respectfully communicates and interacts with people of different ages, races, religions, and cultures; demonstrates curiosity about the lives of others without judgment.
- Ability to work productively on a supervised team; responds to feedback and critique from co-workers and supervisors with maturity and openness to improvement; listens actively and communicates courteously; responds with patience and perseverance to new or unanticipated situations and obstacles; accepts responsibility for their actions; balances their personal expectations of the volunteer experience with the realities of working on short-term projects in cultural settings that are new to them.
- Self-reliance and self-confidence: understands and meets their own physical and emotional needs in new environments with an age-appropriate mixture of optimism and realism; must be flexible in response to the needs of the community.

Curricular Connections
Courses on South Asia, Women’s Empowerment, Social Justice, Human Rights, Indian languages (specifically Hindi, Tamil or Malayalam), and Education would likely be of interest pre- or post- the Kerala experience.

Program Details
Description of Community: Project work takes place around the city of Kochi (Cochin), a port town offering fascinating snippets of history and culture, including the oldest church in India, an extensive spice market and the famous 15th-century Chinese fishing nets. Kochi is a culturally rich urban Southern Indian town as well as a small tourist hub. This provides a mix of interesting architecture and blend of Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Jewish tradition alongside cafes and shops that appeal to Indian and international travelers alike. GVI has been operating in Kochi for almost seven years and are well established and respected within the community.

Housing and Meals: Same gendered students will share a room in a local guesthouse with western-style bathrooms and electricity. The guesthouse has a communal area for gathering and a restaurant or kitchen. The accommodation is comfortable and friendly. Laundry can be hand-washed, or students can make arrangements with the guesthouse managers or others in the local community. All meals will be provided. Breakfast will usually be provided at the accommodation and could be traditional Kerala style with dosa, idli, appam, or eggs, toast or fresh fruit. Lunch and dinners will be arranged on project sites or at local restaurants within walking distance. Meals are traditional style and may include rice, chapatti or appam and fresh vegetables, lentils and occasionally fish and meat. Care is taken to ensure food is not too spicy. Vegetarian or vegan options are always available and usually more common.

If you do not eat certain types of food for cultural, religious or personal reasons, please contact the DukeEngage office, dukeengage@duke.edu, to discuss whether or not your dietary needs can be reasonably accommodated at this program site.

Transportation: Students will travel by van to the partner site or project-work location. Most locations are within a radius of about 15-30 minutes or even within walking distance from the accommodation. Enrichment activities might include travel by traditional Kerala houseboat, a visit to the western ghats, watching or participating in cultural dance and performance art or cooking classes.

Communication: All students will receive a basic mobile phone with local SIM for calls. A small amount will be provided to cover local calls, but if students are using the phone regularly or use it to call family, they will need to cover the cost to top off their phones. Limited speed WiFi will be available at the accommodation and power cuts are quite common. Students are welcome to bring laptops, tablets or smartphones at their own risk and will find them helpful.
for doing assignments and preparing activities.

Local Safety and Security; Cultural Norms, Mores and Practices: As part of their planning, DukeEngage strongly advises all prospective applicants to familiarize themselves with the common challenges travelers encounter at this program site in order to make an informed application decision that is right for them. We recommend starting with these two resources:

- the International SOS (ISOS) portal for up-to-the-minute travel, health and security advice (Log in to the Duke ISOS portal with your Duke NetID)
- the Diversity, Identity and Global Travel section of the DukeEngage website.

Opportunities for Reflection: Although the days will be busy with preparation work, project work, meetings and organized cultural and social events, there will be time for structured and unstructured reflection after activities or at the end of the day. GVI staff or local experts will facilitate daily reflection sessions on progress with regards to objectives, adaptive action as well as cultural and social context and interpretation.

Other Opportunities: Students will have some late afternoons and evenings as well as some weekends free (whenever enrichment activities are not planned) to explore the local area and take in the local markets, cultural sites, yoga and massage, or just relax. Although the days will be busy with preparation work, project work, meetings and organized cultural and social events, there will be some down-time during project activities, as well. Ocean swimming will not be allowed in any DukeEngage program.

**Organized enrichment opportunities might include:**

- Backwaters Tour: Experience the backwaters of Kerala from a traditional houseboat. This is a unique opportunity to see local fishing villages. Students will sleep on board, see the traditional lifestyles and be offered traditional Kerala meals.
- Indian Cooking Class: Learn how to prepare a variety of local Indian dishes from scratch. Indian food uses a variety of herbs, spices and other colorful ingredients and techniques to make curries, breads, dipping sauces and snacks. Students will learn to make some dishes of their choice.
- Bollywood Dancing: Learn with a local instructor how to perform the dances made popular by Bollywood films. Students will learn about the significance of Bollywood and its place within India’s history and pop culture.
- Kathakali Dance Performance: A classical Indian dance-drama noted for the attractive make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion. It originated in Kerala during the 17th century.
- Malayalam Language Lessons: Learn to speak the local language. Several classes throughout the students’ stay after initial crash course during orientation.
- Munnar Mountain Tea Plantation Trek: Explore the tea estates and cardamom and pepper plantations and try local teas with views of the valley bordering Tamil Nadu. There is potential for elephant and other local wildlife sightings.
- Henna art: Watch in awe as local artists decorate your hands in beautiful traditional designs popular for weddings and other celebrations.
- Walking Tour of Fort Kochi Area: Learn about the area’s deep culture and history. Visit the beachfront where the famous Chinese-introduced fishing nets are used. Admire the Portuguese-style architecture and visit Vasco da Gama’s grave at St. Frances Catholic Church. Visit Jew town and the Paradesi Synagogue, which was built in 1567.

More Information
Interesting books

- India after Ghandi – Ramachandra Guha
- God of Small Things - Arundhati Roy
- The Ministry of Utmost happiness - Arundhati Roy
- Shantaram - Gregory David Roberts
- Midnight's Children - Salman Rushdie
- A Suitable Boy - Vikram Seth
- My Story – Kamala Das
- The White Tiger - Aravind Adiga
- More than a Native Speaker - D.B. Snow (TESOL), A handbook written by a volunteer teacher who had to figure it all out on his own.
- Learning Teaching, J. Scrivener (Macmillan), A very user-friendly and comprehensive guide sourced on many TEFL training courses, which covers teaching techniques for TEFL and some reasoning behind them.

Interesting Films

- Mr & Mrs Iyer - Aparna Sen
- Monsoon Wedding - Mira Nair
- Black - Sanjay Leela Bhansali
- Premam - Alphonse Puthren
- Bangalore Days, Anjali Menon