

Go Abroad Again: Get Involved & Volunteer

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MINNESOTA

Study Abroad Returnee

CONFERENCE

The logo consists of four blue circular swirls arranged in a 2x2 grid, enclosed within a blue square border.

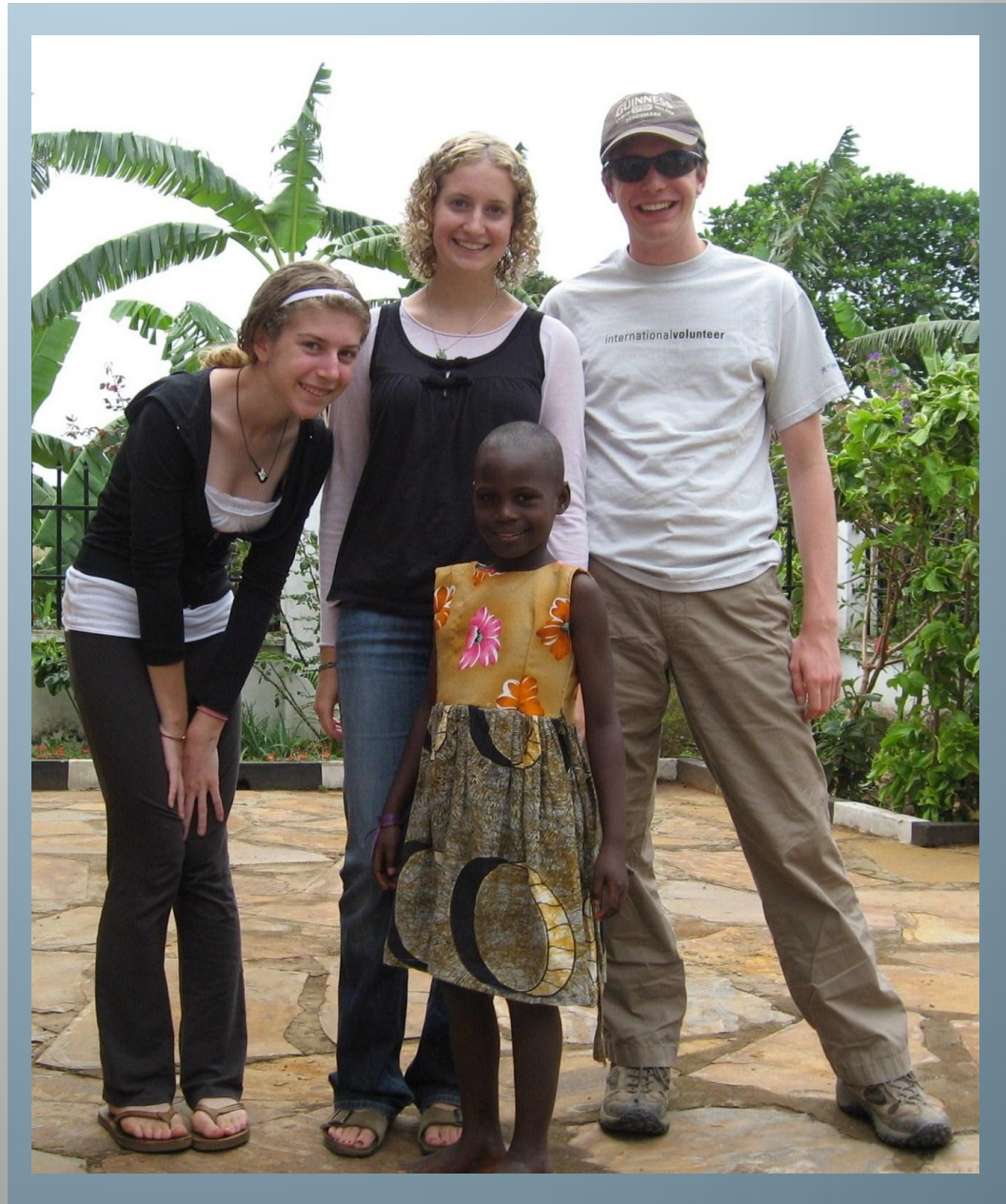
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“The most universal benefit of volunteering is the opportunity to learn. In some cases, the new knowledge is practical. In other cases, the learning is a process of self-discovery that may be less tangible but equally important. You may come to recognize your own emotional strength, uncover a talent you didn’t know you had, or even face your own limitations or prejudices.”



Steps to Going Abroad Again:

- Is volunteering for you?
- Things to Consider
- Find a Program





Is volunteering for you?

What is volunteering?

A person who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service.





Is volunteering for you?

✓ What is volunteering?

☐ **Common Characteristics**

- Rarely paid
- May or may not be related to your academic interests
- Generally do not require specific skills or previous experience
- Academic credit is not available (unless a volunteer experience is done as part of a directed study or research project)
- Will not be eligible for financial aid (unless done for academic credit)



Is Volunteering for you?

- ✓ What is volunteering?
- ✓ Common Characteristics
- ☐ Types of volunteer experiences



Volunteer

Skilled

Development

- Emergency & Relief
- Education & Training
- Business Administration & Office Work
- Building & Construction
- Health & Nutrition
- Agriculture & Farming

Unskilled

Development

- Working with Children
- Education & Training
- Building & Construction
- Community Development
- Staff Volunteering

Conservation

- Conservation
- Archaeology

Wildlife

- Wildlife Management
- Marine



Is volunteering for you?

- ✓ What is volunteering?
- ✓ Common Characteristics
- ✓ Types of volunteer experiences
- Benefits of volunteering**

- Develop intercultural communication skills
- Problem-solve professional situations in an intercultural context
- Ability to make decisions in uncertain situations
- Develop new skills and acquire more advanced knowledge in your field
- Explore a new field of work
- Improve language skills
- Network with professionals in your area of study
- Offer your time and energy to a community lacking resources
- Become more comfortable with ambiguity and playing the role of ambassador



Things to consider:

☐ Duration

- **Short term: 1-4 weeks**
 - Geared towards exposing volunteers to other cultures
 - Can foster solidarity with a community & introduce volunteers to issues of human rights & social change

- **Medium term: 4 weeks-6 months**

- Able to get more deeply involved with language, culture, community
- May be given more responsibility than short term

- **Long term: 6+ months**

- Opportunity for most responsibility & integration into host community
- Able to take things slowly, learn from the community & what is most helpful to them





Things to consider:

✓ Duration

☐ Cost

- Program fees can range from fifty to thousands of dollars.
- Some programs have no fee.
- Many smaller organizations rely heavily on program fees to support their work and the community they work in.
- Higher program fees might be used for administration, orientation, and on-site support.
- Fees may or may not include airfare, room/board, health insurance, in-country transportation, visa fees, etc.

You should always ask for a breakdown of how the fee money is spent and what it includes so you know which expenses are covered by the organization and which expenses are your responsibility.





Things to consider:

✓ Duration

✓ Cost

Volunteer Organization
Types

- **US-based organizations**
 - Often easy to contact and may be more capable of providing pre-departure information such as visa requirements and immunization and flight information.
- **Organizations located in-country**
 - Often smaller, less expensive, and may provide more opportunities to work directly with community members.
 - Volunteer organizations administered overseas may be more difficult to communicate with and may not be able to provide as much structure and assistance for incoming volunteers.
- **Combined organizations**
 - A US-based organization may act as a liaison between volunteers in the US and a locally administered volunteer organization.



Things to consider:

- ✓ Duration
- ✓ Cost
- ✓ Volunteer Organization Types
 - Co-workers



- **Collaborative**
 - Some volunteer programs involve working alongside other US volunteers while other programs might consist of groups of volunteers from around the world.
- **Independent**
 - More independent volunteers may want to work more with community members than with other volunteers, which may offer more opportunity for cultural and language immersion.

As you investigate volunteer options, be sure to ask who you will be working with.



Things to consider:

- ✓ Duration
- ✓ Cost
- ✓ Volunteer Organization Types
 - ✓ Co-workers
 - ☐ Affiliation

Students should check into any religious or political affiliations an organization might have and to what extent those affiliations influence the type of work it does. It also might be helpful to know where an organization receives its funding.





Things to consider:

- ✓ Duration
 - ✓ Cost
 - ✓ Volunteer Organization
- Types
- ✓ Co-workers
 - ✓ Affiliation
 - Ethical Concerns

Research the organization & its principles:

- What is the VSO and Host Community (HC) relationship? Does the VSO have guidelines for respectful interaction in HC?

Be aware of where your money is going:

- How is your program fee used through the VSO and in the Host Community?

Remember the economic realities of your currency:

- Spend your money in the community; try to use local services, rather than external tour companies and services. Make no promises to local people or to new friends that you cannot implement.

Bargain Fairly

- When shopping by bargaining, remember that the poorest merchant will give up a profit rather than give up her/his personal dignity. Bargain in the spirit of the situation, not as a means of competition.

Learn & Respect the traditions & taboos of your host country:

- Know the local dress codes and view of photo-taking. Learn about local customs; respect them.



Things to consider:

- ✓ Duration
 - ✓ Cost
 - ✓ Volunteer Organization
- Types
- ✓ Co-workers
 - ✓ Affiliation
 - Ethical Concerns

Cultivate your sense of humor & patience:

- Realize that other people may have concepts of time and thought patterns which are different from yours – not inferior, only different.

Arrive with a sense of the social, political & environmental issues:

- Question what the community gains from your visit. Overall, what impact has tourism had on this community? Always question establishments where children are working, consider whether they should be in school or not.

Protect the natural environment:

- Try and use local energy and water as efficiently as possible in line with local practices. Only purchase items made from sustainable and protected materials.

Learn to listen:

- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing rather than merely hearing and seeing or knowing all the answers.

Learn to speak:

- Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people. Take the time to learn basic courtesy phrases.

Leave your preconceptions about the world at home



Find a program:

Questions to ask providers



- How far in advance do I need to apply?
- When will I be notified of my placement or acceptance?
- What does the program fee cover?
- What additional expenses can I expect that are not included in the fee?
- Can I contact past participants?
- What is the daily and weekly work schedule?
- Who will be my coworkers and supervisor?
- What kind of supervision or guidance will I receive?
- Where will I live and with whom will I live?
- Will I receive pre-departure information?
- Is there an in-country orientation?
- Are my expectations realistic?
- Can this program provide the kind of experience I am looking for?



Find a program:

✓ Questions to ask providers

☐ Searching for programs

- Action without Borders
- AIDE
- Amigos de las Americas
- BUNAC
- Common Hope
- Cross-Cultural Solutions
- Earthwatch Institute
- Geo Visions
- Global Citizens Network
- Global Volunteers
- InterAction
- Interexchange
- Peace Corps
- Projects Abroad
- ProWorld
- Volunteers for Peace
- World Endeavors
- WorldTeach
- ETC.....



Find a program:

- ✓ Questions to ask providers
- ✓ Searching for programs
 - Online



- www.umabroad.umn.edu/programs/wiv/index.html
 - Search the work, intern, volunteer, teach database by location or keyword
- www.transitionsabroad.com
 - Read articles by people who have worked, taught, or volunteered abroad
- www.surveyourworld.com/articles/296/1/Why-Pay-to-Volunteer-Abroad
 - Articles explaining how volunteer program fees are used
- Idealist.org
 - Search job, volunteer & internship opportunities locally, nationally & globally
- ServiceLeader.org
 - Resources for volunteers & service leaders
- www.volunteerinternational.org
 - International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA)
- www.healthcarevolunteer.com
 - Search volunteer opportunities in the field of health care



Find a program:

- ✓ Questions to ask providers
- ✓ Searching for programs
 - ✓ Online
 - Printed

- *Green Volunteers: The World Guide to Voluntary Work in Nature Conservation, 6th ed.* edited by Fabio Ausenda.
- *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas* by Joseph Collines et al.
- *International Directory of Voluntary Work* by Victoria Pybus.
- *International Voluntary Work* by Victoria Pybus.
- *The Peace Corps and More: 120 Ways to Work, Study, and Travel in the Third World.*
- *Peace Corps: The Great Adventure—Volunteer Stories of Life Overseas* by Peace Corps.
- *Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others, 8th ed.* by Bill Mcmillon, et al.
- *Volunteer Work: The Complete Guide to Voluntary Service, 6th ed.* by Central Bureau for Educational Visits & Exchanges
- *World Volunteers: The World Guide to Humanitarian & Development Volunteering* edited by Fabio Ausenda and Erin McCloskey.



Find a program:

- ✓ Questions to ask providers
- ✓ Searching for programs
 - ✓ Online
 - ✓ Printed
- Look for Best Practices



- Is **honest** about expenses, activities, & challenges
- Provides past participants contact info
- **Screens** volunteers for maturity, skills, cultural sensitivity, mental & physical health
- Is **transparent** about where your program fee goes
- Provides **onsite orientation & training**, including language training if needed
- Has staff with **long-term connections and commitment** in the community
- Places volunteers with **indigenous/local organizations** rather than initiating its own projects
- Incorporates a **sustainable development** perspective into its work
- Engages volunteers in **critical reflection**
- Has **24 hour support network**

-adapted from IVPA's Principles & Practices and How to Live your Dream of Volunteering Overseas by Collins, DeZerega, Heckscher



Presentation Resources

- How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas by Joseph Collins, Zahara Heckscher, and Stefano DeZerega
- Volunteer: A traveller's guide to making a difference around the world published by Lonely Planet
- IVPA's Principles & Practices
 - www.volunteerinternational.org/index-principles2.htm

Photos courtesy of Global Citizen's Network