

*Developed in partnership by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW)*

**SPW believes that young volunteers can be a powerful catalyst for positive change.**

**As international development organizations, SPW and VSO have a:**

- **Proven commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and a long term commitment and track record of working within the field of international development.**
- **Firm belief that young people have a meaningful leadership role in addressing development issues.**
- **Passionate belief that as young people gain skills and experience they can become powerful global citizen ‘champions’, able to influence their peers and communities.**

Volunteering is a mechanism through which development objectives can be met. Our programs are developed with a commitment to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals – internationally agreed clearly targeted development goals with measurable outcomes. Programs are developed in recognition of the importance of human development in sustaining a country’s social and economic progress.



We are facing the largest youth generation in history, with young people most acutely affected by issues such as HIV and AIDS, yet young people are an under-utilized resource in development. Our programs demonstrate that young people have a meaningful leadership role in addressing development issues at a community and national level. Young people bring tangible skills and experience - in addition they can bring high levels of flexibility, adaptability, energy, enthusiasm, motivation and commitment, which, host partners say, brings added value to their placements.

We support young people to become ‘active global citizens’. We define this as individuals who learn from the experience of others around the world, have an awareness of issues facing low and high income countries, and who put that learning into action.

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## **Our Principles:**

### **Defined Role and Purpose**

Volunteers are given a defined role and purpose. Roles are designed to meet the organization's aims, and ensure that they make a valuable contribution within the host partner's organization and local community. Establishing defined roles for volunteers also ensures that they have realistic expectations, and are aware of their role, responsibilities and restrictions.



### **Sustainability**

Volunteer placements are part of a longer term commitment to development during which time the capacity of the communities where volunteers are placed can be built, supporting those communities to bring about change.

- Volunteer placements are designed after a thorough needs assessment and feasibility study with involvement from potential stakeholders.
- Volunteer placements are part of a wider strategy that enables gains made by the presence of international volunteers to continue long after volunteers have left their communities.

### **Partnership and Community Development**

Our partnerships are with local organizations and are responsive to locally defined priorities.



- Programs and volunteer placements are shaped by the partner communities rather than by others with very limited contextual understanding.
- Close relationships with partner organizations and volunteer support and monitoring ensures that the volunteer placement continues to be relevant and appropriate even though circumstances may change.

Only within this context can young volunteers make a meaningful impact in their placements.

### **Personal Development & Accreditation**

We aim to ensure that young people are stimulated, informed and supported to reflect on their experiences in a wider context. In all our programs we develop learning opportunities and support volunteers in seeking accreditation for their volunteer experience.

Placements for youth volunteers within the context of international development are always accompanied by a focus on global citizenship, learning and personal development.

This focus provides a route through to optional accreditation opportunities.

The focus on learning and personal development ensures that volunteers are able to demonstrate a good understanding of global citizenship and to articulate the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they have learned and developed over the course of their volunteering program.



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## Emphasis on Quality Training and Learning Opportunities

Our organizations place great emphasis on the training and development of our volunteers. As valued stakeholders, efforts are made to meet the personal and professional needs of volunteers.

- Every volunteer is selected, briefed and trained in line with program and partnership objectives.
- High quality training ensures that volunteers are fully prepared for their work overseas; that they have realistic expectations, an understanding of the culture and wider development context, and that they have a positive and realistic commitment to the organization with which they will be working.



## Promoting Diversity

We believe that young volunteers from diverse communities have unique perspectives to share with partner communities and on their return home. We put a concerted effort into making our programs accessible to young people from all backgrounds.

## A Gateway into Long Term Development Awareness

Development awareness is about fighting the root causes of poverty by increasing understanding of global issues, promoting changes in the attitudes and behavior that perpetuate the problems faced by the world's poorest people, and inspiring others to take positive action against poverty.



- Placements overseas inspire and equip volunteers to make a long term commitment to international development and promoting development awareness.
- Through their placements volunteers gain first-hand experience of working in international development, alongside local partner staff, other volunteers, communities and stakeholders.
- Volunteers gain valuable, transferable skills as well as an understanding of key issues and the local culture and context.
- Volunteers demonstrate that positive change is possible and that young people have a key role to play in tackling global inequalities. This positive impact continues on their return to their home communities.
- Our organizations provide ongoing contact and support to returned volunteers, and opportunities for long term engagement in promoting development awareness.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Our organizations meet with key local partners and stakeholders to plan and agree outcomes. We monitor progress towards outcomes and gather feedback from local stakeholders. Our monitoring and evaluation enables us to continually review and improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of our programs.