



SPW: Frequently Asked Questions

What is SPW?

SPW is a youth-led international development organization. Established in 1985, SPW implements community-level programs led by young adult volunteers that help tackle the underlying causes of poverty in disadvantaged rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

11 million young people are dying from HIV and AIDS worldwide. At the same time, in each African and Asian country affected by AIDS, there are millions of young people of working age who are unemployed, with few opportunities for a good education or career. SPW helps these young people become a part of the solution.

Each year, SPW trains over 1000 youth as volunteer peer educators. Placed in rural communities, these young leaders work full-time for SPW providing life-saving HIV prevention programs reaching youth most at risk. Uniquely, the majority of SPW peer educators are highly-motivated young African and Asian volunteers working for the development of their own countries. They are joined by young American and European volunteers who bring valuable complimentary skills and – in return – gain first-hand experience in development. Through their work, SPW peer educators have reduced teenage pregnancy and incidence of sexually-transmitted infections in target communities, improved school attendance, and built community capacity to respond to development challenges such as AIDS.

What does it take to be a SPW Volunteer?

We are looking for hard-working, open-minded volunteers ages 18-28 who are committed to making a difference. All applicants should have a high school diploma, although many volunteers join with Bachelors or Masters degrees.

Despite the straightforward eligibility requirements, being an SPW volunteer isn't easy. You are going to have to be able to adapt to a new environment and a completely different way of life. You'll have to face all sorts of frustrations, and will realize how hard it can be to bring about positive and sustainable change. This is not a vacation—you will be working full time. This will require determination and flexibility, a strong desire to be there, and a clear understanding of SPW's beliefs and methods as an organization.

Adele Paulsen, South African Volunteer:

“ Throughout life everyone is faced with uncertainties and it is up to the individual how they deal with them. Many let fear of the unknown stop them from exploring. On SPW programs you might discover something about yourself that encourages your growth in a direction you never knew existed. The opportunities are endless. Feel proud of yourself for embarking on this path – you never will regret being a volunteer. ”

What are the programs like?

Each SPW program is unique, but we have found it helpful to break them down into three main types of programs: Health Education Programs (HEP), Community Health Education Programs (CHEP), and Youth Empowerment Programs (YEP). Below is some general information about the programs. More complete information is available from the website, or through our monthly phone information sessions.

- 1. Health Education Program (HEP)** in: Tanzania & Zambia
Young people need accurate information to avoid contracting many diseases including HIV. But information by itself is not enough to alter behavior and eliminate risk. HEPs promote better health through knowledge transfer and behavior change. Volunteers communicate information in youth-friendly ways and work with local schools, health clinics, and civic society groups to coordinate a community wide response to HIV and AIDS and other key health concerns.
- 2. Community Health Education Program (CHEP)** in: India & Nepal
Successful health promotion can only be accomplished by addressing health issues holistically. In addition to providing training and information on general health and local environmental issues, volunteers also build the capacity of communities and schools to better support, empower and educate young people.
- 3. Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)** in: Uganda & South Africa
While health information and life skills are the foundations of success for young people, they also require marketable skills and development opportunities. Educators in the YEPs address all of these issues, including the transfer of job skills, whether those be in organic farming, computer literacy, entrepreneurship or other relevant fields.
- 4. International Internships:** SPW is piloting international internships this year for recent college graduates and graduate level students with background in certain areas of study and with certain work experience. Each position is outlined by the host Country Program office with a unique job description and position objectives. Some offices will provide a living stipend, but most expenses, including flights, visas and insurance, will be the responsibility of the intern. Please stay tuned to the website for updates on internships currently offered.

When are the programs for 2008, 2009, and 2010?

Country	Departure Date	Duration (months)	Application Deadline
South Africa	January 2009	11	October 12, 2008
Uganda	January 2009	6.5	October 12, 2008
India	September 2009	5	June 2009
Nepal	November 2009	8	July 2009

Tanzania and Zambia programs are full for 08/09 and availability for 09/10 is currently unknown. **There are only 5 places left on the South Africa program for this year, and only 2 for Uganda, so applications need to be received ASAP!**

How much will the program cost?

Volunteers do not pay a fee to join a program. Instead we ask that you become a fundraiser for the charity, raising a minimum donation before you go overseas. Volunteers are essential to the work we do in two ways: not only do you give your time and service overseas, but you also raise vital unrestricted funds to help us continue our work.

We ask each international volunteer to make a commitment to raise a minimum of \$6,500 USD. *Programs beginning in fall 2009 or January 2010 may have an adjusted minimum donation – please check back later this year.*

There will be costs to keep in mind when budgeting to volunteer with SPW, such as your round trip flight from the US to the UK, immunizations and medical supplies, any short term entry visa fees (generally no more than \$100 USD), and any extra spending for travel or special purchases in preparation for or while on placement. Some volunteers also choose to purchase language cds or to enroll in language courses to prepare for volunteering abroad.

How do I raise the money?

Ideally, SPW would subsidize overseas volunteers' costs, but in the present fundraising climate this is simply not feasible. For this reason and because SPW needs to concentrate its resources on the communities it works with in Africa and Asia, regrettably, we must ask you to cover your own costs.

However, don't let this put you off! As well as fundraising being an excellent addition to your resume, this is also a great opportunity to raise awareness in North America about issues facing young people in developing countries. Many people in North America and Europe can't truly comprehend the absolute poverty facing youth in rural Africa and Asia. By joining an SPW program and talking about the issues you will be tackling, you will make those issues more real to your friends and neighbors, give them an opportunity to help, and ultimately increase international support for action.

Once SPW offers you a place on a program, you will receive a copy of our 30-page "Complete Guide to Fundraising". This booklet will help you brainstorm fundraising ideas you've never dreamed of, has book lists and websites to help you research grant opportunities, and has examples of letters that previous volunteers have written for you to use as a template. We also hold frequent fundraising support sessions where you can talk with other volunteers to brainstorm ideas. So whether you hold a yard sale, get your friends to do a sponsored skydive with you, or hold a quiz night in your local bar (all very successful fundraising ideas), you will be able to raise the money.

World Bank, Source Book of HIV & AIDS Prevention Programs:

“ “A creation of SPW working with education ministries, the programs are: affirmative and help youth celebrate good health; non-controversial, high profile and enjoy the support of national figures, highly participatory, involving stakeholders ranging from government to schoolchildren; locally and community owned; holistic, and integrated with health services outside schools; built around a core component focused on addressing threats to youth's health; and clearly targeted, with measurable outcomes” ”

Does SPW help with visas, flights or insurance?

YES! Volunteers are asked to arrange their own flight to a gateway city in the US (usually DC, New York or LA) and any short term or entry visas. However, SPW completely covers your flight from the gateway city to placement, comprehensive health care insurance, room and board, and a minimal monthly stipend to cover transportation and living expenses in placement. SPW also arranges and pays for any long term visas such as work visas if required by the host country.

Is it safe?

SPW has over 25 years of experience sending volunteers abroad, and their health and safety is our absolute priority.

Each SPW office keeps informed of changing political situations that may impact the volunteers through regular communication with the relevant British embassy, other international government agencies (USAID, the British Department for International Development etc.) and international non-governmental organizations (Peace Corps, VSO etc.) as appropriate. The National Embassy for each volunteer (i.e. Australian, Canadian, American etc.) is also informed of where their volunteers are placed. Importantly, we also work with partner NGOs closest to our placements to assess changing risks on the ground.

During the placement period, SPW staff visit volunteers at least once a month, and more if volunteers need assistance or if a changing political situation requires it. Each office has both a comprehensive risk assessment plan and an evacuation plan for volunteers, should that be deemed necessary.

However, the biggest risk volunteers face is petty crime (especially in larger towns and cities), and precautions all volunteers should take are reviewed thoroughly as part of our in-country training. Please keep in mind that volunteers are well-known within their communities, and the national volunteers and community members will be concerned with your safety and well-being.

Ajambo Lillian, Ugandan Volunteer:

“ I have learned self-motivation and direction and know that I will be able to motivate and direct others. I must say it has widened my perspective of the development world by training and empowering me not only to become a better Ugandan, but an active woman in a changing world. ”

How do I apply?

The application and selection process consists of four steps:

1. Complete the enclosed application form and send it with the \$40 application fee. Also, please send an electronic copy of the application form to volunteers@spw-usa.org.
2. SPW will contact two references and will then arrange a telephone interview with you (approximately one hour).
3. If you are selected, you will be sent a letter offering you a place on an SPW program; you will then need to send a \$200.00 deposit to confirm your acceptance of this place.
4. SPW USA will then help you prepare for your program through selection and pre-departure packs, monthly volunteer update emails, and pre-departure training via conference call.

We also offer frequent opportunities to talk with SPW staff and returned volunteers:

- ❑ *Information Sessions:* These are conducted via free conference calls with staff and returned volunteers. They are typically scheduled on weekday evenings and last around one hour. These calls are designed to help you learn about SPW's philosophy and work, and to give us the chance to get to know you and answer any questions or concerns you may have about applying to SPW.
- ❑ *Office Contact:* Please call or email the Volunteer Coordinator anytime (202.289.0914 or info@spw-usa.org). We will do our best to answer any questions, and are happy to put you in touch with volunteers who have participated in the program that interests you.

Check out our Facebook group: SPW USA

For more information on SPW USA, visit our website at www.spwusa.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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