Volunteering as a Global Citizen:

Why Volunteer Abroad?

“Volunteering abroad is a life-changing experience. You share your enthusiasm, time, skills, and energy and give of yourself in a way that allows you to effect positive change.

If you have an interest in volunteering and learning about another culture, you can be of service. Making a difference can be as simple as sharing love and affection with orphans, playing team-building sports with at-risk youth, sharing stories and photos with the elderly in a community, or practicing conversational English with adults seeking new career opportunities. Making a difference can also mean sharing specific knowledge, skills, and experience you may have. But the experience extends far beyond hands-on service with many opportunities for cultural exchange and personal transformation. And the impact of your service can last a lifetime, for you and the community you served.

It takes guidance and support to live and work in another culture, and expert knowledge of local community challenges to know how to be of service without burdening the community. Many people utilize the support of an organization that is established in the community and experienced in working with international volunteers.”

-Cross-Cultural Solutions

Campus Resources:
Office of Volunteer Programs (http://union.illinois.edu/ovp/) (www.cuvolunteer.org)

Study Abroad Office (www.studyabroad.uiuc.edu)

Career Center (www.careercenter.uiuc.edu)  http://careercenter.illinois.edu/jobs/volunteering

UIUC Library: How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas
A Volunteer Abroad Guide by: Joseph Collins, Stefano DeZerega, Zahara Heckscher
Illinois International (http://ilint.illinois.edu/)

UIUC Cultural Houses
La Casa Cultural Latina
Asian Pacific American Coalition
African American Cultural Program
Office Of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA)

U of I Registered Student Organizations (or student-run):

International Illini (www.international illini.com)
The International Illini is a student run organization that works with the Study Abroad Office to provide opportunities for returned study abroad and international students to meet, socialize, and help make the campus a more international place.

**Childreach International USA** (www.childreachusa.org)
Join a Challenge Event or Futurebuilding Project with Childreach International USA and help work to improve healthcare, education, and child protection rights for children in the developing world. This life-changing opportunity is the chance you’ve been waiting for to travel abroad, step out of your comfort zone, (see the world), and make a real difference in the lives of children who need it most... And all for very little out of your own pocket!

**Model United Nations at the University of Illinois** (http://www.uiucmodelun.org/index.html)
Model UN is an opportunity for students to learn about the purpose, structure, history and works of the United Nations. It is an organization that brings students together in an open forum to discuss issues pertaining to real world scenarios and will help to broaden global perspective on a variety of subjects. MUN is a forum to increase knowledge of the world in which we live in today!

**Engineers Without Borders** (http://www.ewb-uiuc.org/)
Engineers Without Borders is an international nonprofit organization committed to advancing the quality of life in impoverished countries via socioeconomically and ecologically sustainable engineering projects.

**AIESEC** (http://www.aiesec.org/)
Explore the world through a cultural or professional international internship, gain a network across more than 100 countries, and contribute to a positive impact in your society and around the world.

**UNICEF** (http://www.unicef.org/)

**Champaign-Urbana Local Organizations:**

**Intensive English Institute: ConvoPartners** (http://www.iei.uiuc.edu/involvement/)
1-hour weekly English conversations with international students

**East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center** (www.ecirmac.org)
Aid in the resettlement of refugees and immigrants, regardless of country or origin, in the East-Central Illinois area and to aid in the exchange and preservation of their respective cultures.

**Outside Volunteer Abroad Organizations: low or no program fee:**

**Learning Enterprises** (www.learningenterprises.org)
An easygoing education-focused nonprofit that has recruited hundreds of college-age volunteers to spend their summers teaching conversation-based English language in rural villages and developing areas around the world.

**Service Civil International** (www.sci-ivs.org)
International Work Camps
Teach English at a youth center in Poland - Mark hiking trails in Nepal - Work with the poor in India - Teach organic farming in Kenya - Many other opportunities in over 60 countries

**Volunteers for Peace** (www.vfp.org)
Volunteers for Peace participants work with volunteers from at least four other countries on grassroots-identified projects to improve local communities.

**Brethren Volunteer Service**
(http://www.brethren.org/site/PageServer?pagename=serve_brethren_volunteer_service_VolunteerOpportunitiesCategory)
“Volunteers receive travel to and from the project, room, board, monthly stipend, limited medical coverage, life insurance, and an annual retreat. (In most cases, educational loans may be deferred.)”

**World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms** (www.woof.org)
WWOOF is an exchange - In return for volunteer help, WWOOF hosts offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles. WWOOF organisations link people who want to volunteer on organic farms or smallholdings with people who are looking for volunteer help.

**United Nations Online Volunteering** (www.onlinevolunteering.org)
Change the world by volunteering over the internet. Everyone can make a difference. Share your skills, knowledge and ideas from a computer anywhere in the world.

**Other Volunteer Organizations to Look Into:**

**Foundation for Sustainable Development** (www.fsdinternational.org)
Internships, service-learning trips (Argentina, Nicaragua)

**Alliance for Conflict Transformation** (www.conflicttransformation.org)
ACT works with educators, youth, community and religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies to transform social conflicts into opportunities for peaceful change.

**Global Youth Partnership for Africa** (www.gypafrica.org)
Student Immersions and Trips to Africa

**FORGE Program** (forgenow.org)
FORGE is a US-based nonprofit organization that works with displaced communities in Africa. Run a Book Drive or start a Giving Group!

**Institute for International Cooperation and Development** (www.iicd-volunteer.org)
“Since 1987, IICD has trained over 1,200 volunteers, who have taken part in development and community work with projects in Africa, Central America and Brazil.”

**Restless Development** (http://www.restlessdevelopment.org/)
“Our mission is to place young people at the forefront of development. We focus all of our work in three strategic areas in which young people are well positioned to contribute their skills and expertise: Young people taking up significant roles as partners in the policy-making processes which affect their lives.”
Young people making responsible decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Young people acquiring the skills needed to pursue meaningful livelihood opportunities.

**Rotary International** (www.rotary.org)
Members of Rotary clubs, known as Rotarians, provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world.

**Women in Progress** (www.womeninprogress.org)
Our international volunteer programs focus on assisting women in Africa to grow their micro enterprises and become self sufficient through business and IT consulting and training.

**World Teach** (www.worldteach.org)
To volunteer with our organization, you are not required to have previous teaching or foreign language experience. However, volunteers should be flexible and have the capacity to handle the excitement of living and working abroad.

**Government Internships:**

**USA Jobs/ Students Jobs** (http://www.usajobs.gov/studentjobs/)
**Students.gov** (http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/Public?topicID=78&operation=topic)
**Presidential Management Intern Program** (www.pmi.opm.gov)
**White House Internship Program** (www.whitehouse.gov/government/wh-intern.html)
**USAID** (www.usaid.gov/careers/studentprograms.html) – Paid Student Intern Program
**Peace Corps** (www.peacecorps.gov)
**US Department of State** (http://careers.state.gov/students/programs.html)

**Want to start your OWN project?**

**Youth Venture: mtvU Grants - up to $1,000** (www.youthventure.org)
Every week throughout the school year, mtvU in partnership with Youth Venture will help fund a new student-run community service organization, or a new project being undertaken by an existing organization. If you've got an original idea about how to make the world--or your campus--a better place, mtvU Grants can help you make it happen.

**Do Something Grants - $500** (http://www.dosomething.org/)

**Reebok Human Rights Award- $50,000** (www.reebok.com/Static/global/initiatives/rights/awards)

**Echoing Green** (www.echoinggreen.org)

**Web Resources:**

http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/
www.cuvolunteer.org (local volunteer opportunities)
www.idealista.org
www.transitionsabroad.com
www.internabroad.com
Finding a Job in International Development:

www.conflicstransformation.org
www.developmentex.com
www.interaction.org
www.internationaljobs.org
www.opportunitynocs.org
www.reliefweb.int
www.chemonics.com/career/EntryLevelJobs/Welcome.aspx
www.careerswithoutborders.com

Why Pay to Volunteer Abroad?

Most short-term international volunteer programs have a program fee that covers the expenses of operating the program. Most not-for-profit organizations that operate international volunteer programs are financed by volunteer contributions.

Below is an excerpt from a book on international volunteering that helps to explain the necessity of this fee.

_How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas_  

Prospective volunteers are surprised to learn that many programs charge their volunteers a fee to participate. At first, this can seem ridiculous — Why should you pay money to work for free? Aren’t you already forgoing income you could be making? Here are a few things to keep in mind while trying to understand why the vast majority of programs charge international volunteers a fee:

- The local organizations and projects with which you volunteer overseas have limited resources and are seldom able to subsidize your trip or cover the costs of hosting you. (These costs include housing, feeding and transporting you, among numerous other things.) […]
- Identifying appropriate host organizations overseas and working with them is time-consuming, takes resources, and requires an experienced and professional staff.
- The process of preparing, training, transporting, housing, feeding, and supervising volunteers is not cheap. Additional services such as health care, re-entry assistance, travel medical insurance, and more, all add to the expenses of a program.
- The costs of recruiting volunteers, producing literature, answering the phones, sending mailings, developing a website, and interviewing potential volunteers are significant.
Questions to Consider:

Planning Your Volunteer Abroad Experience

When you start planning for your international volunteer experience and choosing where and when you’ll be volunteering abroad, carefully consider your goals and what you expect to achieve during your stay. If you choose to travel with an organization to support you and facilitate the logistics, always ask to speak with the organization’s staff and former volunteers. When you are volunteering in-country, you are also representing the organization in the community; likewise, their name and reputation precedes you.

You may use this worksheet to help guide yourself through the process of choosing an international volunteer program.

University or Organization

Who is the sponsor? Is it recognized in the US? If they are a legally-established entity in the US, they will need to live up to US regulations, which can create some safety nets for the volunteer.

What’s their address? Is it only a PO box? Can they be reached? You want to be confident that anytime you have a problem, you can talk to an actual human being that will help you get it resolved.

Publicity

How much print and how many pictures are there? How much blitz? What’s in the pictures? Are there any academic ones? Any web page or brochure that leads you to believe the experience will just be a big party will probably be just that. A serious organization will present a serious image.

How aggressive is the marketing strategy? In most volunteer organizations, spaces don't fill up. An organization claiming that spaces are limited and therefore you have to pay a sum of money right away is likely to be scaring you into making a commitment so they get your money. An organization that really cares about the volunteer experience and the local community is going to spend time evaluating you while you spend time evaluating the volunteer experience before they ask you to make a commitment.

Orientation and Learning

What does the orientation consist of? A good orientation will last several days, preparing you for language and cultural differences, teaching you where to and not to go, how to get around, how to protect yourself from crime and environmental concerns, how to find the hospital, post office and other important places, and what is expected of you in your living environment and elsewhere. There should be rigorous training for your volunteer placement - any organization that will drop you in to sink or swim has potential for doing great harm both to you and to the host community.

What kind of oversight exists for the volunteer placement? If you are not volunteering directly with the organization that placed you, you should at least expect they have a good working relationship with
continual flow of conversation. Your placement organization should know exactly what you will be doing as a volunteer and should continuously follow up to ensure that.

What are the eligibility requirements for participation? Are they appropriate for the work expected?

Program Design

To what extent does this program provide immersion into the local community? How important is that for you?

Who are the other volunteers on the program? Any contact with local residents?

How much does the program cost? **What program costs are covered? What’s not included? How is the program fee allocated?** Administering a volunteer program is similar to running a school. All the responsibilities mentioned in this worksheet cost money. To ensure yourself a valuable volunteer experience (instead of going with the luck of the draw), you should expect to pay administrative fees as well as any housing, orientation, excursion, and additional relevant fees. The program information should clearly state the cost of the program and everything it includes, as well as give an indication of what is not included that you can be expected to pay for.

Health and Safety

What is the health and safety record of the program? What are their emergency/contingency plans? Is there a 24-hour emergency contact? **What measures has the organization put in place to ensure my safety? Who will I be able to turn to in case of an emergency? How will I be able to keep in touch with friends and family?** You should ask these questions and expect quick answers. If they can't provide answers in a timely fashion, you don't want to be in their hands if an emergency comes up.

After Volunteering

How does this experience volunteering apply to my career? Is the organization well-known to future employers or schools? Does the organization offer any support after the program?