

Peacelinks International Volunteer Program

Objectives

Peacelinks, a youth-led non-denominational and not-for-profit community-based organization in Sierra Leone, West Africa, heartily welcomes applications from international volunteers for an unpaid learning, sharing and life-changing experience. The program intends to provide opportunities for volunteers to work with children/youths to develop conflict resolution skills, project development, management and evaluation, creative arts, or undertake research projects that promote the cause of young people in one of the world's poorest countries. All levels of skills and talents are welcome and appreciated. The successful applicant will get the opportunity to learn about the people and culture of Sierra Leone and to make a lasting difference in the lives of young people, many of who have gone through traumatic experiences. It also offers the young people the opportunity to learn from other cultures, develop appreciation for global diversity and gain life-skills. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old.

Time and schedule

The program runs all year around. Schedules are tailored according to the specific needs of the volunteer. Applicants are encouraged to apply at least three months in advance of their intended start date so as to give the organization enough time to sort out the paper work and logistics. A minimum of one month's commitment is strongly recommended, though not required.

Work Environment

Volunteers will be based in the Capital, Freetown, and will work from the organization's headquarters at 14A Williams Street in downtown Freetown. The office is a walking distance from nice restaurants and main shopping centers. All volunteers will have access to office space, telephone and computer. Volunteers with laptop computers are strongly advised to bring it along.

The volunteer will report directly to the Executive Director. An orientation will be carried out in the first two days of arrival to familiarize the volunteer with the work environment and to meet with the staff and local volunteers. A formal meeting will take place once a week (or as and when necessary) to review activities, answer queries and concerns, and plan for the following week. In addition, the staff will always be available to the volunteers for any questions or comments. All the staff members speak English. Most of the children understand English but do not necessarily speak it. A staff member or local volunteer will provide translation, if deemed necessary.

Common tasks of Volunteers

Volunteers have undertaken varying types of tasks over the years. Some of these include:

- Help staff design conflict resolution programs to be taught to children and youths in various institutions of learning in the city and at the Peacelinks youth center.
- Help staff develop project design, management and evaluation skills with the aim of helping the organization develop institutional capacity building.
- Work with children and youths of varying age groups to develop and improve their life skills in creative and performing arts such as music, dance, painting etc.
- Teach English/ French (or whatever your native language happens to be) to the children
- Teach the young people basic computer or other fun skills

This list is merely indicative and by no means exhaustive. The organization believes that with a big heart and a big smile, every volunteer has something empowering to contribute. All it takes is patience, good listening skills, respect for local culture and traditions and the enthusiasm and energy to work with young people. The various skills provided by volunteers over the years have played a tremendous role in enriching the experiences of the young people as well as improving the delivery capacity of the organization.

Arrival

All volunteers will be met at the airport by a staff member (His/ her name and telephone number will be provided prior to arrival). Please bring your letter of invitation and any other relevant document. All of the immigration officials speak English—with an accent of course! At the airport you can change some money into the local currency—the Leone (see currency converter website below). The staff member can help you with this and other customs related issues that may arise. Traveler's cheques are safer and are accepted at the banks. Depending on the traffic/ the hour of the day and the location of your housing, it may take at least two hours to get from the airport, which is on a peninsular outside of the city, to your apartment. The journey usually involves a 20 minute cab ride to the ferry; 30 minute ferry ride to the city, and another short cab ride to your apartment.

Housing and Meals

Peacelinks will assist volunteers find cheap, clean and safe housing within walking distance of the office. Volunteers will have their own room and keys. There are several restaurants that serve local and international cuisine in Freetown. Most of these are very reasonably priced.

Security and personal safety

Freetown is a relatively safe city. It is home to thousands of international staff from all over the world. Incidences of physical attacks on foreigners or blatant daylight robbery are almost unheard of. Like every other big city however, especially one emerging from a ten-year civil war, it has its own social problems. Poverty is rife and unemployment, especially among the youths, is high. Commonsense precaution is all it takes to remain safe and enjoy your stay. Here are some tips:

- Notify your local embassy as soon as you arrive. The organization will help you through this process
- Do not take photos of people without their expressed permission.
- Do not display (large amount of) money in public
- Avoid expensive jewelry such as gold chains and rings at all cost
- Dress modestly. For guys a simple t-shirt and jeans will do just fine. For girls cover as much of the skin as possible.
- Have the telephone number of the Executive Director and Program Officer of the organization with you at all times.
- Keep a photocopy of the face page of your passport and visas with you at all times and leave a copy with friends or family at home.
- At nightfall, remain in well-lit areas where there are people

A security escort to and from places is not necessary. Should a volunteer need to be accompanied to places during and off work however, a local volunteer will gladly help.

Healthcare

Volunteers are strongly advised to take out a health insurance and to take all the necessary medical advice prior to arrival. A first-aid kit will also come in handy. A list of hospitals, clinics and individual doctors will be provided upon arrival. Please note however that the medical facilities are modest. In case of any medical emergency please call the Executive Director and or Program Manager first. Your embassy will also provide useful health-related information.

How to apply:

A complete application consists of the following documents:

- A completed application form (see below)
- A letter of recommendation
- A resume/ curriculum vitae

We recognize that this type of volunteer experience may raise questions. We are more than happy to discuss the program in more detail with you. Should you therefore have further questions please do not hesitate to contact us by fax, email or phone. We look forward to receiving your application.

Some useful websites about Sierra Leone

<http://www.visitsierraleone.org/sneedtoknow.asp> (general information)

<http://www.embassyofsierraleone.org/Consular.htm> (useful visa info for US applicants)

<http://wpp.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/africa/sierra-leone/currency.htm>

(currency converter)

PEACELINKS INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM APPLICATION

NAME (As it appears on your passport):-----

Nationality:-----

Place and Date of Birth:-----

Gender (Please circle one): M F

Mailing Address:-----

City:-----State:-----Zip Code:-----

Phone: Home----- Work----- Cell-----

Occupation:-----

Languages spoken:-----

In case of an emergency, who do we contact?: Name:-----

Phone:----- Relationship to you:-----

Previous volunteer experiences (if any)-----

How did you hear about Peacelinks?-----

Why do you want to volunteer with Peacelinks?-----

For how long are you available?: From:----- To: -----

What do you consider as your strengths?-----

What do you hope to gain from this endeavor?-----

Is there anything else we need to know about you?-----

Please include with this application at least **one letter of recommendation** from someone who knows you professionally (Teacher, supervisor etc.)

Please use additional pages where necessary. The more information the better.

Email all documents to: info@peace-links.org