Who Should Apply?

Medical students, professionals or those interested in pursuing the field of medicine in the future, who would like to assist in improving the standard of primary care and support provided in the rural communities of Malawi.

Project Highlights

⇒ Gain valuable experience while working with local volunteers and medical professionals to support in improving the standard of primary medical care in rural communities
⇒ Assist in improving awareness and education around epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria
⇒ Provide basic health care and education to disadvantaged children and communities
⇒ Be a part of a vital and sustainable community based home-based care initiative and assist in the training of local volunteers
⇒ Be welcomed into the community and support them in becoming more self-sufficient
Project Background

The governmental health care system in Malawi is organised into three levels. Local health care centres deal with the most common and easily treated problems and offer maternity services. More serious cases that cannot be dealt with at this level are referred to district community hospitals, which provide secondary health care, including some basic types of surgery. Tertiary care is then offered at one of the 3 central hospitals, situated in the North, Central and Southern regions.

Access to these health services and facilities is poor. The majority of Malawi’s population lives in rural areas and cannot afford or is unable to reach these centres easily. Over half the population lives below the poverty line, and Malawi faces constant food uncertainty, high levels of malnutrition and high birth and dependency rates. Malawi is one of the countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and has a high prevalence of malaria.

The Malawi Medical Volunteer Project aims to address some of these issues at a local level through education, awareness and improved access to primary and palliative health care.

Your Role As A Volunteer

The project is comprised of a number of community outreach, health care and medical initiatives. Involvement will be dependent on your experience, interests and the greatest need at the time. The areas included are:

**Home-Based Care** Following a government curriculum and supported by our experienced translators, you will plan and present training sessions to groups of local volunteers on home-based care topics, including HIV/AIDS, malaria prevention, personal hygiene, drug administration, recording information, first aid, wound care, bed bathing, infection prevention, sexual health awareness, nutrition and digestion, TB and rehabilitation. You will also carry out home visits to chronically ill patients, which forms a valuable part of the training for the local volunteers to become home-based care providers.

**Wound Care** Volunteers are involved in cleaning wounds, basic dressing and bandaging and making referrals to hospital for more serious wounds, or if further treatment or antibiotics are required. This is vitally important in areas where wounds would otherwise go unattended, often resulting in serious infections.
Volunteer Role cont.

HIV/AIDS Awareness Help to increase the awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS, in order to reduce the stigma associated with the disease and educate local communities about prevention and treatment. Provide support and counselling through community groups for those living with HIV/AIDS. This may also include nutritional advice and information about other related diseases. You may also encourage and assist with drama workshops and presentations by those living with HIV/AIDS to the communities in surrounding villages.

Rural Community Hospital This project work is suited to volunteers with previous medical experience, medical professionals, or medical students, as the centre provides primary medical care and treatment.

The centre has a number of departments in which volunteers with relevant experience may assist, including outpatients, female ward, male ward, maternity ward, nutrition unit, laboratory, pharmacy and basic dental treatment. Typically qualified volunteers will assist the local nurses and doctors in their everyday duties. This may include midwifery, ward rounds, cleaning and dressing wounds, minor medical procedures, etc.

There is also some lab technician experience available, carrying out vital tests, such as haemoglobin, malaria, syphilis and pregnancy. Less experienced medical students will have the opportunity to shadow local nurses or doctors and assist with more administrative duties, but will gain a valuable insight into medical care and treatment of tropical and infectious diseases in a developing country.

Malaria Prevention and Awareness The high material costs of this initiative means that this project is not ongoing and involvement is therefore occasional, as it is dependent on available funding. If you would like to raise funds or make a donation to this specific programme, it will be gratefully received. When the initiative is running volunteers have the opportunity to:

- Assist with malaria prevention techniques, education and awareness to help minimise the incidence rate
- Conduct valuable malaria project data collection and collation at various stages of the project.
- Distribute mosquito nets and spray homes.

Nurseries for Orphan & Vulnerable Children This project work takes place in the mornings and is for volunteers with little medical experience, or anyone with an interest in preschool education and child care. Volunteers will:

- Get involved with pre-school teaching to prepare the children for their education ahead.
- Promote the importance of health and nutrition, including assisting with our feeding scheme.
  - Help the local carers improve their English and teaching skills.
Volunteer Life

Accommodation & Meals

You will stay in a comfortable, shared house in a rural village in the Mangochi District. The house is located on the shores of the stunning Lake Malawi. The area in which volunteers are based (and Malawi in general) is very safe, but the house is fenced and gated for additional security and privacy.

The bedrooms in the volunteer house are large shared rooms, generally with single or bunk beds. Mosquito nets are provided and the rooms either have en-suite facilities, or an adjacent bathroom; all with western style flush toilets and showers.

The staff at the house includes a cook to prepare meals for you and a housekeeper to clean. Three meals a day are provided. Breakfast is on a self-service basis and usually consists of toast, or pancakes, and tea and coffee. Lunch usually consists of sandwiches, pasta, soups, salads, or similar; or a packed lunch can be provided if you are not returning to the house in the middle of the day. A hot dinner will be prepared for you in the evenings.

Orientation & Support

Your orientation will typically take place the day after arrival. This will include:

- An introduction to Malawian culture
- Basic local greetings
- Your health and safety whilst in Malawi
- An introduction to some of the project staff
- Money and transportation in Malawi
- An introduction and background to your project activities
- Workplace ethics
- Weekend excursions and free time

In the afternoon of the orientation day, you will be taken on a familiarisation tour of the local area and nearest town, including the local market there. This will provide an opportunity to buy cheaply priced local material for wrap-around skirts if you need to. Throughout your stay in Malawi you will have the support and guidance of your project coordinator, as well as the other project staff who you will be working alongside. They will provide competent assistance, advice and be able to answer any questions that you may have on a daily basis.
Program Fees & Dates

There are start dates every second Monday throughout the year.

See our website under the rates and dates tab for current rates on this project.

What’s included in the program fee?
- Airport transfers upon arrival and departure (Monday arrivals only)
- Accommodation in shared volunteer house
- Three meals a day whilst on project
- All project related transport
- Support of our experienced on-site project co-ordinators
- On site orientation

What’s not included?
- Flights
- Snacks, drinks and meals outside of project
- Personal Insurance
- Extra excursions and trips

Getting There

Arrange your flights to arrive at Lilongwe Airport in Malawi prior to 2pm on the date specified. Upon arrival, you will be met by a project representative and will be transferred to the accommodation; about three and a half hours drive from the airport.

Booking Process

Contact us on info@volunteerafrica.co.za or +27 (0)43 738 5523. Our travel and bookings guru Karen will email an application form to you asap. This needs to be filled in and returned to us and upon receipt we will invoice you for a 35% deposit which is needed to confirm your placement on project. The remainder of the fee is due one month prior to arrival.