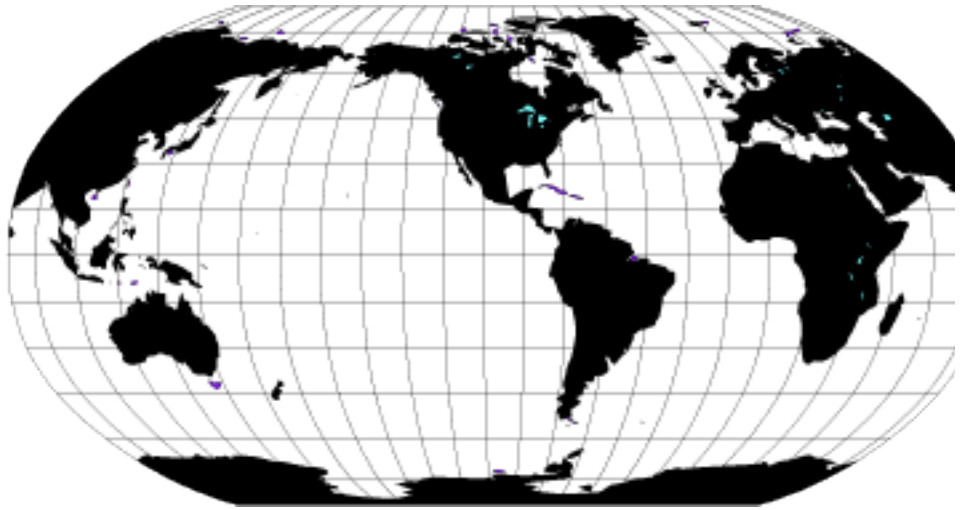


# Alternatives to the Peace Corps



- ◇ Excerpts from Joseph Collins, Stefano Dezerega, and Zahara J. Heckscher, authors of “How To Live Your Dream While Volunteering Overseas”
- ◇ Several Popular Volunteer Placement Organizations
- ◇ Key Printed Resources & Web Articles
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## Excerpted from Joseph Collins, Stefano DeZerega, and Zahara J. Heckscher, authors of *How to Live Your Dream While Volunteering Overseas*

The first benefit of volunteering is that most volunteer programs provide training and coordinate logistics and paperwork for you, from finding a school to arranging visas. In addition, volunteer programs frequently offer more challenging and more rewarding assignments. As a volunteer, you are more likely to teach low-income children in rural areas, adolescents in youth programs, or adults in grassroots organizations. Paid teachers often work for businesspeople or their children.

All volunteer programs are not equal, however. There are vast differences in expenses, training provided, types of placements, and quality of services. Before you compare programs, take time to explore your own needs and interests. The following tips will help you heed their advice and make an informed decision about which international volunteer program is right for you.

- 1. Assess your interests.** Before you start exploring different volunteer options, take the time to explore your own interests. Consider the major issues in choosing a program such as where you want to go and for how long, the type of work you want to do, your living situation, and whether you want a rural or urban placement.
- 2. Think about your special needs and aspirations.** Consider the various components of your identity—including age, ability, race, and sexual orientation—and identify the factors that are most important to you. Also think about your vision of volunteering. How much staff support do you need? What are you looking for in your daily work environment? Do you want to volunteer alone or in a group?
- 3. Create a vision.** List the characteristics you are looking for in an organization. Include logistics such as costs and length of volunteer stay as well as more philosophical issues such as the organization's approach to development. Since you probably won't find an organization that matches your vision perfectly, circle the qualities that are most important to you.
- 4. Refer to the listing of organizations.** For example, if your goal is to work in Africa for a year or more in the educational field, create your own list of groups that have all at your specified characteristics. See [www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org) for a searchable database of programs. You may wish to start with [www.volunteerabroad.com](http://www.volunteerabroad.com), Search by country and city for options. Also, provides excellent articles and links.
- 5. Begin your research.** Conduct preliminary research by visiting the organizations' web sites. Also try a general web search to find "unofficial" information.
- 6. Narrow your list.** Figure out the top two to four organizations. If you don't find any groups that meet your specifications, you may want to broaden your search by focusing on one or two primary factors to judge organizations.
- 7. Create a list of questions.** Based on any concerns you have from the web sites, your personal values, and any special needs, create a list of questions for staff and or alumni.
- 8. Contact the organization to ask your questions.** These days, email may be the best way to communicate. Ask your questions and request contact information for program alumni as well as information regarding the application process. Verify that the organizations still operate in the country where you want to go, and note any changes in fees or programs.
- 9. Contact alumni.** Ask them hard questions about their experiences and try to get contact information for people who they volunteered with who might be more critical of the program than they are.
- 10. Choose.** Select the organization that matches your interests and aspirations most closely and begin the application process.
- 11. Get it in writing.** No matter how nice the people you talk to are, get a written document explaining fees, benefits, insurance issues, and refund policies.



## SEVERAL POPULAR VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

### Cross-Cultural Solutions

[www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)

Offers the opportunity to volunteer with local community organizations such as a school for children with disabilities in India, a women's group in Ghana, or a health clinic in Peru. Emphasis is usually more on culturally sensitive support for local development efforts than on intensive teaching. The careful matching process, top-notch local staff, and comfortable but modest group living quarters create a positive experience for most CCS volunteers. We recommend CCS for people who want to learn about local people's efforts to promote development in their own communities.

### i-to-I Travel Experiences

[www.meaningfultravel.com](http://www.meaningfultravel.com)

Offers 500 volunteer placements in 23 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Australasia. Program also offers teaching English overseas options.

### VIA/Volunteers in Asia

[www.viaprograms.org](http://www.viaprograms.org)

VIA, formerly known as Volunteers in Asia, places volunteers in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Laos, mostly as teachers at colleges and universities or workers with nongovernmental organizations. All training takes place in the San Francisco Bay area and includes cultural issues. Applicants must have prior teaching experience or take classes in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Participants in VIA programs generally report a high level of satisfaction, praising the "tight-knit" organization for its training, support, and alumni program

## KEY PRINTED RESOURCES & WEB ARTICLES

**Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Global Volunteer Opportunities** by Paul Backhurst. 2005 (11th ed.) 144 pp. \$11.95 from Food First Books: [foodfirst@foodfirst.org](mailto:foodfirst@foodfirst.org), [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org). Thoroughly researched guide to voluntary service, study, and alternative travel overseas and in the U.S. that "addresses the political and economic causes of poverty."

**How to Live Your Dream While Volunteering Overseas** Joseph Collins, by Stefano DeZerega, and Zahara J. Heckscher. Order paperback at [www.volunteeroverseas.com](http://www.volunteeroverseas.com), or [peacepeace@cs.com](mailto:peacepeace@cs.com).

## BEST VOLUNTEER ABROAD WEB SITES

Selected and Reviewed by William Nolting

### Directory on International Voluntary Service,

[www.avso.org](http://www.avso.org)

Site provides extensive links to volunteer organizations worldwide; hosted by the Association of Voluntary Service Organizations (based in Belgium).

### Idealist.org: Action Without Borders

[www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org)

Web site's database serves as a clearinghouse for over 46,000 nonprofit organizations worldwide. Outstanding search provisions. Includes listings for internships, volunteering, and jobs, as well as resources for people who work for nonprofits. Organization also sponsors nonprofit career fairs.

### International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA),

[www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org)

Web site of this U.S.-based nonprofit association features a searchable database of volunteer-abroad programs. IVPA's members are encouraged to follow IVPA's principles (listed on the web site) for good practice in volunteer-abroad programs.

### International Workcamp Directory (SCI-IVS).

[www.sci-ivs.org](http://www.sci-ivs.org)

Describes low-cost short-term volunteer options available through SCI-IVS in over 50 countries. Their website has links to many other volunteer organizations.

### Making a Difference: College Volunteers Abroad, and Making a Difference: American Volunteers Abroad

These outstanding videos, made onsite by an award-winning filmmaker, provide first-hand insight into the rewards and realities of volunteering abroad through programs offered by established U.S.-based organizations. College Volunteers Abroad looks at programs intended for college students, while American Volunteers Abroad is about programs for adult volunteers. Each hour-long video profiles several different programs in Africa, South America, and Europe. Bob Gilner Productions, P.O. Box 596, Boulder Creek, CA 95006; fax 831-338-7381; [bgilner@hotmail.com](mailto:bgilner@hotmail.com), [www.docmakeronline.com/VolunteersAbroad.html](http://www.docmakeronline.com/VolunteersAbroad.html).

### The Peace Corps:

800-424-8580, [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov).

Peace Corps seeks individuals to serve as volunteers in overseas communities in the areas of education, small business development, the environment, health, youth development, and agriculture. Tour is 27 months with \$6,075 readjustment allowance upon completion of service. Must be U.S. citizen, over 18, in good health, and have education and/or experience relevant to programs.



**Quaker Information Center,**  
*[www.afsc.org/volunteering/default.htm](http://www.afsc.org/volunteering/default.htm)*

This very comprehensive website includes links to hundreds of organizations sponsoring overseas volunteer, internship, and study programs with a focus on social justice, relief, and development.

**Response**

*[www.cnvs.org](http://www.cnvs.org)*

Response, a comprehensive directory to Catholic and other Christian overseas volunteer organizations (most focus on areas such as social justice, relief and development), is online and searchable.

**South American Explorers Volunteer Opportunities.**

*[www.saexplorers.org](http://www.saexplorers.org)*

Database available to members of this nonprofit organization. Directory of volunteer possibilities with local and U.S.-based non-governmental organizations.

**University of California-Irvine  
International Opportunities Program**

*[www.cie.uci.edu/iop/voluntee.html](http://www.cie.uci.edu/iop/voluntee.html)*

Extensive directories for volunteering programs.

**Univ. of Michigan**

**International Center's Overseas Opportunities Office**

*[www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/index.html](http://www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/index.html)*

Comprehensive collection of articles along with hundreds of selected annotated web sites and books for study, internships, volunteering, teaching, and working abroad; plus international careers.

**Volunteers for Peace**

*[www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org)*

Over 3,000 low-cost short-term voluntary service placements in over 100 countries available through VFP.

