



# Frequently Asked Questions

Here are the most frequently asked questions about Act4Africa, along with our answers. However, always feel free to email or phone us if you need to know anything more; we will email back very quickly - or we would be very pleased to speak to you.

## FAQ's – About the charity

### 1. How and when, was Act4Africa founded?

Act4Africa was founded in 2000 as a result of Cheshire school teacher Kathy Smedley's trip to Uganda with her church. Whilst there she was devastated to see how HIV & AIDS was tearing communities and families apart. She also noticed that performing arts had a great impact on the local people. On her return to England it took very little to persuade professional actor husband Martin to join her in setting up Act4Africa.

### 2. What are the charity's goals and objectives?

#### Our goal is .....

- a. To deliver interactive HIV & AIDS Prevention Education Programmes, primarily using performance arts and sports. Also, to challenge cultural behaviours, provide love and comfort to those impacted by AIDS and reduce the threat of HIV&AIDS in Africa.

#### Our four core objectives are.....

- b. To enable community leaders, teachers, army staff and church leaders to lead their own communities through the AIDS pandemic through AIDS prevention education and the delivery of "Train the Trainer" programmes.
- c. To train and fund local teams in Africa to enable them to continue to deliver the HIV prevention programmes in the absence of the UK teams.
- d. To offer comfort, support, and share the love of Christ with those for whom education has come too late, thereby helping to break down the stigma of HIV & AIDS.
- e. To train UK teams to deliver interactive HIV & AIDS education programmes to young people in Africa through the use of interactive workshops.

### 3. How many teams in Africa do you fund, and are they full time?

We currently fund and run three teams of Africans at present, two in Uganda (Kasese, near the Congo border and Jinja on Lake Victoria), and one in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Our work also takes us into communities in Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Burundi.

### 4. How do you recruit the full time African teams?

Primarily through African partner churches. Most of our team members have experienced the impact of HIV & AIDS first hand and are desperately keen to change the future of the communities in which they live and work.

## FAQ's - Before you go

These questions relate to the time before you go overseas as a volunteer.

### 1. Where can I go?

Expeditions are available to Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Burundi (and occasionally Zimbabwe).

### 2. What types of programmes are available?

You can get involved in Community Health work, Sports, Drama, and Medicine & Healthcare. Most of these programmes are related to HIV & AIDS prevention education. We can also offer individually tailored programmes for Medical Electives and Teaching English in northern Tanzania.

### 3. How long do expeditions last?

We offer a range of expedition times from 2 weeks to 3 months. You choose which programme fits your schedule. We can also arrange "tailor made" placements for individuals or groups and you can stay in most countries for up to 6 months. These limitations are due to visa and work-permit restrictions.

### 4. Can I combine placements?

Yes, you can combine expeditions across countries where dates allow.

### 5. When can I start? When should I apply?

We do generally need at least 2 months to comfortably process an application, but we like to receive your application form as far in advance as possible - so please apply as soon as you've decided what you want to do. The longer the notice, the more we can tailor a programme. If you decide last minute, do give us a call to see how quickly we can arrange it for you - we sometimes only need a few weeks notice.

### 6. What are the costs involved? Is the work paid?

Act4Africa programmes cost from £655. See the website [www.act4africa.org.uk](http://www.act4africa.org.uk) for up to date prices and details of the programme you are interested in. You will not be paid for your work, but you will gain unusual work experience and discover skills you never knew you had - and have a great time!

### 7. What do our charges include?

Our costs include all food, accommodation, comprehensive travel and medical insurance, and support from our expert staff at home and abroad. Unlike many commercial travel and gap year organizations we are a **Non Profit making** organization (ie we are a registered charity) so you can be sure that all the profits from our work go back into our project work in Africa, helping those most disadvantaged.

### 8. Are meals included in the cost?

With the exception of when you are traveling or socializing, all meals are provided.

### 9. Can I go with my friend/boyfriend/girlfriend?

Friends are most welcome and, we offer 1 free place for every 10 friends who make a confirmed booking.

### 10. Will I need injections?

This really depends on where you choose to go. As we are not medical experts, we cannot give out official advice - so talk to your GP, who will be happy to advice on what you may need. Don't let injections put you off - you'll be glad you had them once you are enjoying yourself abroad!

### **11. What age ranges take part in these projects?**

Volunteers are welcome between the ages of 16 and 75. Many of our volunteers are between 18 and 25 years old, but a rapidly increasing number of career breakers and retired people are now taking part too. This has led to a stimulating mix of people in all our destinations.

### **12. What qualifications do I need?**

No qualifications are necessary - just reasonable spoken English. We have taken people who are students, teachers, truck drivers, authors, vicars, nurses etc. and, whilst some of them have an interest in drama or sport, many of them have no experience at all. What really unites them is a desire to serve, a passion for adventure.

*Please note: No TEFL or teaching qualifications are needed for our teaching programmes (although you are very welcome if you do happen to have them).*

### **13. Do I need the local language?**

Few volunteers speak the local language before they go. It is an advantage to learn a few basic phrases but it is certainly not necessary to be at all fluent. All our projects have excellent translators who have good English ability. Teaching volunteers teach English in English as this is what schools want.

### **14. Do I need to be a British citizen?**

No. We accept volunteers from all over the world.

### **15. What is the selection procedure?**

When you apply we ask you for the name and address of a referee. We then get in touch with them and ask for a reference. This is usually enough to assure us that you are suitable for a placement. We occasionally invite prospective volunteers for an informal interview to iron out any concerns.

### **16. What do I gain from this programme?**

The programme is an excellent opportunity to combine adventurous foreign travel with a worthwhile job. As well as gaining experience that looks brilliant on your CV or résumé, you will improve your transferable skills such as team-working, presentation and communication and leadership skills. Above all, this is an unrivalled opportunity to gain an insight into a completely different culture and way of life.

### **17. Can I fundraise for this project?**

Of course you can, though we certainly don't say that you have to, however, most of our participants do and generally find this is easily achievable. Request a Fundraising Pack once you've applied to get some ideas.

### **18. Can I talk to people who have done it?**

Contact us and tell us where you would probably like to go and what project you would probably like to join. We will then give you the email addresses of people who have done your kind of programme or are doing it.

### **19. What if I have more questions?**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our programmes in more detail, please don't hesitate to contact us. If you would like to speak to us, call us on +44 (0)161 941 1435 or email us with your phone number and a convenient time to call and we will call you back.

## **20. What is the next step?**

The next step is either to contact us for more information or, if you've decided definitely what you want to do, apply now. Application forms are downloadable from [www.act4africa.org.uk](http://www.act4africa.org.uk).

## **FAQ's - While you're away**

These questions relate to the time you are overseas as a volunteer.

### **1. What is the support like overseas?**

All our expeditions are taken by experienced leaders and it is their job to check out your accommodation, meet you at the airport and provide you with any support you need should any problems occur. They won't try to nanny you - but they will always be there, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For tailor made projects we always have in country staff who can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **2. Are the countries safe?**

Before we go, countries must be politically stable and safe. If they are not, we don't go. We are in constant contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regarding stability and safety and, of course, we have the added security of our local overseas staff. We reserve the right to cancel any expedition if we feel that there are serious reservations about safety.

### **3. Will I be met at the airport?**

Volunteers are met at the airport. See Safety & Back-up page. There is no additional charge.

### **4. What if I am ill?**

If you are ill while overseas, the team leaders will know where the best medical care can be found. You receive information on this during your induction when you first arrive, and of course you can reach our staff by phone 24 hours a day if you fall ill. In the unlikely event that you are seriously ill, all volunteers are covered by a comprehensive insurance policy, which, if needed, includes flying you home and all your medical costs until you get home. Act4Africa staff will be on hand to liaise with your family, the insurance company, and the relevant medical people.

### **5. Will there be an opportunity to travel when I'm there and can I extend my stay while overseas?**

During our expeditions there is time off for rest and recreation. Yes you can extend your stay at the end of the trip, (depending on visa requirements and flight restrictions), although you will need to cover any additional costs. If you want to extend your trip, just talk to our office staff.

### **6. Will I be on my own or are there going to be other volunteers in the same area as me?**

You will generally be part of a team who will stay and work together and work. If you are on a "tailor made" placement, you will where possible, be located in pairs and be close to other volunteers so that, if you want to, you can meet, exchange ideas and stories, socialize and go on trips with others. Volunteers usually make good friends with each other and often decide to go traveling together after their placements. You will never be isolated. You may even be placed in the same accommodation or workplace as one or two other volunteers. Although we cannot guarantee to meet all requests, please let us know if you have a preference regarding this.

## **7. Where do I stay? Who do I stay with?**

Most volunteers stay in hostels or basic hotel accommodation. However, our Overland trips are all camping with most equipment provided. You must not expect western standards but the accommodation is good by local standards. You will not be in mud huts or shanty-towns (unless you specifically request this kind of experience). You may even be placed in the same accommodation or workplace as one or two other volunteers. This provides you with an insight into the local culture and helps with learning the local language. It also acts as an additional support network. Although we cannot guarantee to meet all requests, please let us know if you have a preference regarding this, or the type of area where you would like to stay.

## **8. What's the best way to keep in touch with home while I'm away?**

There is generally access to Internet cafes, though if you are placed in a rural area you may have to wait until you go into town to use them.

## **9. Do women encounter any special problems while traveling?**

In general, women do not experience any more problems than perhaps the odd curious stare. However, when travelling, regardless of the country, women always need to be more careful than men. Providing you are aware of the possible dangers and prepared for the differences a foreign country will present to you, you should not have any problems. The two most important pieces of advice for a female traveller are to be aware of cultural differences (in the way people act or dress - do your research before you go) and always trust your gut instincts.

## **FAQ's – Other frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Exactly how it works - do the UK volunteers teach local volunteers or do they [we] do the dramas themselves, or both?**

Generally the UK volunteer teams work alongside our teams of African staff. Your work will take you primarily into schools, colleges, village communities, AIDS hospices, orphanages and sometimes into churches, army, or police camps. You work alongside our staff but will be responsible for delivering our interactive HIV & AIDS Prevention, Stigma Reduction, Behavioural Change and Women's Empowerment, workshops in tandem with our local team. These will enable young people in particular to ask questions and express their feelings about a range of situations. We also fund VCT services (Voluntary Counselling and Testing) which run alongside the delivery of the education programmes.

### **2. Your website says, "After completion of this development programme, the Action Team [us?] will then share their skills with their African counterparts and take responsibility for mentoring their development and sharing the delivery of HIV/AIDS education in schools and communities". How long do we do this for? If one of the three weeks is spent in training, how much can one realistically teach in two weeks? Also, how do you recruit the 'African counterparts' and how are they funded?**

During the 2 – 3 weeks in which you are delivering the HIV& AIDS Education Programme, you could work with between 4,000 - 8,000 young people and up to 30,000 people on a 3-month trip. The mentoring of the African team is very much "on the job" training. We are adding new workshop materials, and ways of approaching the delivery of HIV & AIDS Prevention all the time and there will be plenty of time during the days in the field to discuss, facilitate and cement key learning's with your African counterparts. We recruit all of our African staff through partner churches and fund them through our UK supporters, trust applications and fundraising events.

### **3. Are the people / schools / villages you send volunteers to the same villages you visit each year, or do you visit different places/villages each year.**

We widen the net each year and deliver programmes in a range of communities. However, we do repeat visits to each community in which we operate because we have a range of key lessons to share including; HIV & AIDS knowledge, Stigma Reduction, Behavioural Change, Women's Empowerment - visits can focus on different areas, whilst ensuring the key lessons are cemented. We also like to break down the communities into small workshop groups (and separate men from women) to enable them to ask questions in a more intimate and confidential setting.

**4. How much do people know about HIV in those areas already? Are we going to be 'preaching to the converted'?**

The knowledge of those that we work with varies hugely....from very little (in some of the communities that we work with, people who are HIV+ can be found either dying of starvation or hypothermia in their mud huts because locals believe that the "slim" disease they are suffering can be caught like a common cold and are therefore afraid to go into the huts to care for them.....we also have many young men who believe that the condom can either give you cancer or that provision such birth control is a white man's way of stopping Africans from breeding). In other areas we are working in there is greater understanding of HIV with some access to ARVs (again, we recently worked with a young mother who had forgotten to take her ARVs for 1 day and was told by the local medicine man that if she took just one dose of it she would immediately die!). The difference between the programme offered by Act4Africa, and that offered by other education providers, is that it is highly interactive rather than "chalk and talk". We give locals the opportunities to learn new skills (negotiation, assertiveness, influencing) through interactive workshops and drama to act out a variety of every day scenarios and explore how they can increase the effectiveness of their communication and protect their sexual health.

**13. Do you expect volunteers to learn some local language? How much is in the local language and how much is in English? Can you assure me that enough people will be able to understand what is being said?**

Almost everyone that we work with in our teams speaks English (in those communities where they don't speak English our African teams or hosts will translate everything you do). We can absolutely assure you that you will be understood.

**14. After the teaching, drama etc do you follow this up with a call to ask them to take an HIV test there and then? If not, how do you know how successful your projects are? How do you collect data to prove how successful your projects/campaigns are?**

We fund and train our African teams in HIV testing and counselling and we use VCT in the communities in which we operate all year round. We use monitoring and evaluation processes to enable us to measure and assess what has been understood in the communities.

**15. Do you have medical nurses on hand to give local people medical advice / help people take the HIV test etc?**

We signpost people to the appropriate medical or support agencies where further advice is requested.

**16. How often does the 'weekend training and orientation programme run in the UK' and would it be possible to attend one or part of one before deciding?**

We only run these approximately a month before the expedition. All of those who come on training & orientation will have been accepted and signed up for their expedition.

**17. Are there any books or courses you would recommend either before doing the 3 week expedition or in general?**

You will learn all you need to know during the training and orientation weekend and during the on site training in Africa. You will also be given a comprehensive training pack full of relevant information. We would however recommend that you read Dr Patrick Dixon's book "AIDS and You" and check out the UNAIDS and the [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org) websites for further information.