



UGANDA

Dental Outreach Relief Foundation

Volunteer Handbook



**DENTAL OUTREACH
RELIEF FOUNDATION**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Pre-trip Checklist.....	4
Program Overview.....	6
Program Cost.....	12
Program Itinerary.....	13
Required Documents.....	14
Travel Insurance and Vaccinations.....	14
Getting to know Uganda.....	15
Volunteer Safety.....	23
Volunteer Health.....	24
Getting the most out of your experience.....	26
Optional Safari.....	28
Packing List.....	29

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to make a difference while expanding your horizons and seeing new corners of the world? This is your opportunity!

This handbook outlines all you need to know as a Dental Outreach Relief Foundation volunteer. It's perfect for those who have already committed and will provide valuable information if you are considering becoming a participant. This handbook will review all the necessary information needed to help you decide if volunteering in Uganda is right for you AND provide you with all the necessary information to help you plan and prepare for this amazing and rewarding adventure.

Read on to find:

- ✓ *Timeline and preparation for the 2023 volunteer trip*
- ✓ *Trip itinerary*
- ✓ *Information regarding local customs in Uganda*
- ✓ *Basic safety tips*
- ✓ *Travel information*
- ✓ *Packing list and items to bring*
- ✓ *Estimated cost breakdown*
- ✓ *Other useful information*

For any questions about this booklet or the humanitarian trip in general, please email: contact.dorf@gmail.com

We hope you'll decide to join us on this life changing experience!



Pre-Trip Volunteer Checklist

Thank you for being a **DORF** (**D**ental **O**utreach **R**elief **F**oundation) volunteer! Here are the things you need to do before you depart for Uganda.

- ✓ **READ THIS HANDBOOK.** If you have any questions that are not covered in this handbook, please ask us.
- ✓ **EACH VOLUNTEER MUST SUBMIT AN APPLICATION.** Our mission coordinator will review your application and notify you if you are accepted for this mission. There is limited space for participants, so **APPLY EARLY!**

Online Application: <https://dentaloutreachrelieffoundation.com/uganda-application/>

- ✓ **PRINT OR SAVE THIS HANDBOOK.** One way or another, take this handbook with you to Uganda and have it as a reference.
- ✓ **OBTAIN A TRAVEL INSURANCE.** You have the choice to seek your own travel insurance or purchase it from our preferred insurance agency. It is easier and faster when you do it with us. However, the choice is yours.
- ✓ **GET YOUR PASSPORT.** *Get a passport as soon as possible.* You should apply for passport **NO LATER** than 3 months before our departure date, and if possible, have the process expedited. If you already have one, check the expiration date; your passport must be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry into Uganda.
- ✓ **OBTAIN A UGANDAN eVisa AND TRAVEL HEALTH CERTIFICATE.** Uganda does not issue US citizens with a visa on arrival. Therefore, you will need to apply for a visa before you depart for the mission. Interestingly, this is a fairly easy process. You can apply for a visa at the Ugandan Embassy located at 5911 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011. You can also apply for an eVisa at <https://visas.immigration.go.ug/>. Once you have obtained your eVisa, please make a copy and email to DORF: info.dorf@gmail.com
- ✓ **OBTAIN TRAVEL VACCINATIONS.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following vaccinations for travelers visiting Uganda:
 - **Yellow Fever:** Yellow fever is a risk in Uganda, and a yellow fever vaccine is required for entry into the country.
 - **Malaria:** Malaria is a risk in most parts of Uganda. Northern Uganda, and Gulu in particular, is infested with mosquitoes, and travelers should take preventive measures such as using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and using bed nets. Consult your doctor for the most appropriate preventive medicine.

- **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A is a viral liver disease that is spread through contaminated food or water.
- **Typhoid:** Typhoid is a bacterial infection that is spread through contaminated food or water.
- **Hepatitis B:** Hepatitis B is a viral liver disease that is spread through blood or body fluids.
- **Rabies:** Rabies is a viral disease that is spread through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. You will occasionally see stray dogs in Uganda. But while cases of dog bites aren't so common, considering rabies vaccination will make a big difference in case of an accident.

In addition, travelers should make sure their routine vaccinations, such as measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP), are up-to-date.

We strongly recommend you review other CDC guidelines and recommendations for vaccinations when traveling to Uganda, these can be found at:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/uganda>

BOTTOM LINE: We recommend that you visit a travel medicine specialist or a healthcare provider at least 4-6 weeks before traveling to Uganda to discuss the appropriate vaccines and preventive measures for your trip.

- ✓ **PACK APPROPRIATELY.** There is a suggested packing list in this booklet.
- ✓ **PAY YOUR PROGRAM FEES.** The breakdown of costs for your trip to Uganda is outlined in a later section of this handbook. Please note the deadlines for payments!
- ✓ **COMPLETE TEMPORARY LICENSING APPLICATION AND SUBMIT ALL ITEMS REQUIRED FOR LICENSING DIRECTLY TO DORF.** This is required for ALL dentists. *Please do not procrastinate preparing your application and gathering the required documents.* The application for a temporary license is included in your Mission Trip application. Please note the additional items need for the application. Submit your completed application along with all supporting documentation to DORF. DORF will provide the letter summary as well as the Ugandan Host letter that your application requires.

Program Overview

Uganda Mission Overview

Dental Outreach Relief Foundation's mission is two-fold:

- 1. Relieve pain and suffering caused by untreated dental conditions by providing compassionate, high-quality care to individuals in remote and underserved communities where access to dental services is limited or nonexistent.***
- 2. Empowering communities through education and prevention by training individuals in essential oral health practices, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to reduce disease and create lasting, sustainable impact.***

Accordingly, you will be volunteering in temporary dental clinics where you will provide pain relief from both acute and chronic dental conditions. Treatment will mainly consist of extractions and providing RX's for pain relief and infection management. As a reminder, DORF is a grassroots organization. Part of your responsibilities will include clinic site set-up and equipment management.

Furthermore, you may also choose to spend some of your time in the local schools providing basic hygiene and oral healthcare practices to pupils or students and give out basic hygiene products, i.e. toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, hand sanitizer, etc.

As such, you will be expected to adhere to DORF's Code of conduct, as stated in the Volunteer application.

Who Can Volunteer?

1) Dentists:

- Must have a valid Dental license in any of the 50 United States
- Must have current malpractice coverage

2) Dental Assistants and Support Staff:

- 18 years of age or older (*If younger than 18, must be accompanied by parent or legal guardian, who must all meet these criteria*)

Code of Conduct

As a volunteer, you must agree to abide by the code of conduct (as presented in your volunteer application and as outlined below) at all times and in all places throughout the entire period of your volunteer experience.

No alcohol*

No illegal drugs*

No tobacco*

No profanity*

No marijuana*.

No pornography*

No prescription drugs without a prescription*

No vulgar language

* If you violate any of these details of the volunteer code of conduct, you will be removed from the volunteer program and asked to immediately leave the volunteer sites, and you will bear the financial burden associated with such removal, including, but not limited to, hotel costs, transportation costs, and itinerary change fees.

Furthermore, DORF volunteers are to remember that we are guests in a foreign country. As such we are to represent ourselves and DORF with kindness, respect and responsibility at any time in the temporary clinics or in the schools.

Temporary Dental Clinic

The Uganda mission trip is a “grassroots” project. This means that we will be setting up and supplying our own temporary dental clinic. The clinics will be in local rural communities in community centers and/or schools. In addition, we will also visit a South Sudanese refugee camp to offer similar services. Volunteers will assist in setting up of this clinic at the start of the trip and help take it down at the end of the trip.

The clinic will consist of pop-up canopy tents, tables, and chairs. We will partner with Oral Health Uganda for the mission, and they will provide a very limited number of equipment items (i.e., autoclave, etc.). DORF will provide most equipment and supplies needed to provide the care that will be offered at the temporary clinic.

Features of the temporary dental clinic:

- **Reclining Camp-Style Treatment Chairs**
Lightweight, foldable reclining chairs that provide patient comfort and proper positioning for exams and extractions while remaining easy to transport and set up in remote environments.
- **Dedicated Extraction & Procedure Seating**
Sturdy chairs designed for dental extractions and basic procedures, offering stability for both patient and provider during treatment.

- **Portable Dental Units (2–4 Units)**
Self-contained units equipped with high-speed and low-speed handpieces, suction, and water systems, allowing for comprehensive dental care without permanent infrastructure.
- **Portable Digital X-Ray System**
Compact handheld X-ray device paired with a laptop and digital sensor for immediate imaging, diagnosis, and treatment planning in the field.
- **Propane-Powered Autoclave Sterilization**
Pressure-based, propane-fueled autoclave enabling proper sterilization of instruments, ensuring safe and hygienic clinical operations in areas without reliable electricity.
- **Portable Generator Power Supply**
Reliable generator system used to power dental units, X-ray equipment, and essential devices, ensuring consistent operation in remote areas without access to electricity.

Dental treatment provided will consist mainly of extraction and pain relief procedures. All necessary extraction and surgical equipment will be available. In some cases, there may be opportunities for ART (Atraumatic Restorative Treatment) procedures. More details will be given onsite once the temporary clinic has been established.

Working in the Rural Schools

DORF seeks to address the deficiencies and disparities that school children in Uganda face when it comes to basic hygiene and oral healthcare. If you choose, you may participate in excursions to local schools as part of your mission trip experience. You will teach and demonstrate proper oral hygiene and other personal cleanliness practices. These may include toothbrushing, handwashing, proper diet, etc. A rewarding and exciting part of these school visits will be to present school children with their own hygiene products, i.e., toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, etc. One of the major goals at DORF is to prevent oral disease through proper homecare practices.

It is very important, that you remember the previously outlined code of conduct when you are a guest in the local schools. A few rules **MUST** be adhered to when visiting the schools:

- Stay with the group and do not wander around alone in the schools or on school grounds.
- **NEVER** be alone with a child at any time, always have a school official or fellow team member with you.
- Show respect to the teachers and wait for their introduction and instructions when in the classroom

Accommodations

Accommodation will be at one of several vetted Properties. These properties are safe, gated facilities. Each room can house up to two team members. Please indicate on the application form if you would like to share a room with another volunteer (You can also indicate who you would like your roommate to be). **Please note, that based on availability if you do not choose a roommate, one maybe assigned to you.** Each room comes with either a queen bed or two twin beds and its own bathroom with shower with hot water. WIFI is available throughout the property.

Although our accommodations will be safe, ***it is NOT recommended for westerners to leave the facility without a local Ugandan guide, especially at night.***

Meals

Each Hotel/Guest house provides “Full Board” accommodations, which means they will provide three meals per day. Each morning, breakfast will be available at the property before departing for the volunteer sites. Furthermore, they will serve dinner upon return to the property each evening. Lunch will be provided by the lodge in the form of Box lunches and will be delivered to the volunteer site each day. You can read more about Ugandan, “matoke” cuisine and food staples in the “Getting to know Uganda” section of this manual.

We strongly suggest that you bring an ample amount of snacks from Home (Protein/granola bars, trail-mix, jerky, dried fruit, candy, etc.) The options for purchasing or shopping for food or snacks are extremely limited.

Travel to Uganda and local transportation

All Volunteers will be responsible for booking their own airfare. The airport is Entebbe International Airport (EBB). Once in Uganda, all transfers to and from the housing facilities and temporary clinic site will be by a team bus. It is important that you arrive the day before the mission trip begins, as travel to the clinic sites are greater than six hours from the airport- as they say-“Don’t miss the bus!”

Electricity and Voltage in Uganda

The power outlets in Uganda use Type G or the British 3-pin plugs, which have three rectangular pins arranged in a triangular pattern. The standard voltage in Uganda is 240V, with a frequency of 50Hz. This means that travelers from countries with a lower voltage and frequency, such as the United States (120V, 60Hz), may need a voltage converter and/or plug adapter in order to use their electronic devices in Uganda.

It is always a good idea to check the specifications of your electronic devices before traveling to ensure that they are compatible with the voltage and plug types used in the country you will be visiting. In some cases, it may also be necessary to purchase a plug adapter or voltage converter, depending on your specific needs. Besides, bring a voltage/power adapter with you for your personal devices.



Getting Recognized for Your Work

Making the decision to travel abroad and volunteer is never easy. Many people think of volunteering abroad as an option at some point during their lives but often are not able to follow through with this. By letting others know of the trip you are embarking on, you can highlight the work you will be doing and inspire others to get involved as well. We encourage you to contact your local newspapers and media sources to let them know of your pending adventure. Our experience is that most newspapers find the stories very interesting and will give some recognition and coverage.

Program Dates and Cost

DORF's program fees will be all-inclusive (with the exception of passport fees, licensing fees, vaccination fees and spending money). DORF has the ability to obtain special prices for airfare and accommodations due to our humanitarian efforts and size of our group. Cost listed below is approximate.

Dates:

30 September-11 October

Uganda Program Costs

Uganda Program Participation Cost: \$1,997 per person

- Accommodation
- Local transportation within Uganda
- All meals
- Supplies and equipment
- Cultural and entertainment night

Additional Costs, not included above

Airfare from Uganda Tourist Visa:	\$1,000-\$1,500
Uganda Visa	\$40
Vaccinations:	\$350-\$450
Total Estimated Additional Costs:	\$400-\$500

Optional Costs

2-Day Optional Safari:	\$595* (all-inclusive)
Recommended Spending Money:	\$200-\$400

Payment Schedule

Time of application:	\$500
August 1 st :	\$1,497 or balance*
<i>(Optional Safari due at time of final payment)</i>	

Your Volunteer Costs are Tax Deductible! DORF is a 501(c)(3) organization, and your travel costs and program fees are tax deductible. The IRS says it this way:

Do you plan to travel while doing charity work this summer? Some travel expenses may help lower your taxes if you itemize deductions when you file next year. Here are five tax tips the IRS wants you to know about travel while serving a charity.

- 1. You must volunteer to work for a qualified organization. Ask the charity about its tax-exempt status. [GMAD is a tax-exempt organization]*
- 2. You may be able to deduct unreimbursed travel expenses you pay while serving as a volunteer. You can't deduct the value of your time or services.*
- 3. The deduction qualifies only if there is no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation or vacation in the travel. However, the deduction will qualify even if you enjoy the trip.*
- 4. You can deduct your travel expenses if your work is real and substantial throughout the trip. You can't deduct expenses if you only have nominal duties or do not have any duties for significant parts of the trip.*
- 5. Deductible travel expenses may include:*
 - 1. Air, rail and bus transportation*
 - 2. Car expenses*
 - 3. Lodging costs*
 - 4. The cost of meals*
 - 5. Taxi fares or other transportation costs between the airport or station and your hotel*

To learn more see Publication 526, Charitable Contributions. The booklet is available at IRS.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

Program Itinerary

ITINERARY 30 Sept-11 October

Day 1 (Wednesday) Depart USA

Day 2 (Thursday): Arrival – Entebbe/Kampala

- Arrive in Uganda (EBB) and transfer to hotel near the airport for overnight stay and rest.

Day 3 (Friday): Travel to Gulu

- Morning: Breakfast at hotel, depart for Gulu (6–7 hour drive)
- Afternoon/Evening: Arrival at accommodations, dinner, and rest

Day 4 (Saturday): Dental Outreach Clinic *(times are approx.)*

- 7:00 AM – Breakfast and preparation
- 8:00 AM – Depart for clinic site
- 9:00 AM – Clinic setup and begin seeing patients
- 12:00–1:00 PM – Lunch break
- 1:00–4:00 PM – Continue patient care
- 4:00 PM – Clean up clinic and return to hotel
- Evening: Dinner, relaxation, and overnight stay

Day 5 (Sunday): Church & Transfer

- Attend local church service followed by transfer to next outreach location

Days 6-8 (Monday–Wednesday): Dental Outreach Clinics

- Full days of dental outreach and patient care
- Wednesday Evening: Cultural event and celebration

Day 9 (Thursday): Half-Day Clinic & Safari Departure

- Morning: Half-day dental outreach clinic
- Afternoon: Depart for optional safari experience

Days 9-11 (Thursday–Saturday): Optional Safari (All-Inclusive)

- Safari experience with accommodations, meals, and activities included

Day 11 (Saturday): Departure

- Evening: Return to Entebbe/Kampala for departure flight to the United States

Day 12 (Sunday): Arrival in the United States

Required Documents for Travel and Volunteering in Uganda

- 1) **Valid Passport.** You should apply for a passport NO LATER than 3 months before our departure date. If possible, have it expedited. And if you already have one, check the expiration date; your passport must be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry into Uganda.
- 2) **Temporary Dental License (Dentists only).** All dental professionals who will be volunteering in a dental capacity in Uganda need to obtain a temporary dental license from the Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Council (UMDPC). Please see the requirements listed below. The registration fees mentioned in the application are paid by DORF and are included in your program costs. You will complete an application (Included at the end of this manual), gather the required documents, and email everything to DORF. DORF will then submit your application and secure your temporary license for you. All applications and required documents should be sent to:

matt@dentaloutreachrelieffoundation.com

PLEASE DO NOT PROCRASTINATE YOUR APPLICATION AND THE GATHERING OF REQUIRED ITEMS. Processing times in Uganda can be very slow and we need to allow plenty of time for processing the temporary licenses.

Documents needed for your temporary dental license:

- A) **Application of Temporary License for Foreign Doctors.** This application form is included as part of the program application. Complete the application-write neatly and legibly to avoid confusion by the Ugandan officials.
 - B) **Attach 2 current passport size photographs.** Do not wear light clothing for this photo. Attach it to the indicated spot on the application form.
 - C) **Make a COLOR copy of your passport.** This photocopy should be clear and not blurry. All the writing on your passport should be readable.
 - D) **Transcripts of University Degree or Dental School Diploma**
 - E) **Copy of Current Dental license.**
 - F) **Certificate of Good Standing/Professional Status from Medical Council/Board**
 - G) **Copy of Dental School Diploma.**
 - H) **Current Curriculum Vitae.** This does not need to be fancy, just a simple history of your education and employment with dates and locations.
 - I) **Testimonial Letters.** You need to ask three professional associates or colleagues to submit letters of recommendation for you. These letters should attest to your good character and legitimacy as a dentist
- 3) **Uganda eVisa (All volunteers).** All individuals age 16 and over are required to obtain a Ugandan eVisa to enter Uganda. This process is very quick and simple. The turnaround time is only a few days. But you must apply NO EARLIER than 2 months

prior to your trip, as the eVisa is only valid for 3 months from issue. Please NOTE: you will be asked for the following documents during application: 1) a square, passport style digital photo of yourself, 2) a photo of the info page of your passport, and 3) Proof of your accommodations or hotel reservation. These photos must be free of glare and shadow, please follow the instructions on the application so that you can avoid a delay during processing. DORF will provide you with the document for proof of hotel stay.

- 4) COVID19 Vaccination certificate or proof of a negative Covid-19 test.** The COVID19 pandemic is not completely gone. Therefore, we strongly recommend all volunteers obtain the Covid-19 vaccination. While mandatory requirement on your entry to Uganda, you will need to show a negative result of a Covid-19 test within 72 hours prior to arrival if you are not vaccinated*.

Besides, you stand the following risks:

- 1) Uganda can change their vaccination requirements at any time. If you enter Uganda unvaccinated you could encounter delays returning to the US.
- 2) If you rely on a negative test result prior to entering Uganda, *you may test positive!* You will then not be able to participate on the volunteer trip. Think of all the cost, preparation and sacrifice it took for you to plan your trip, to suddenly have your dream of volunteering in Africa dashed!
- 3) Finally, you may delay the processing of your travel insurance if you have not received all vaccinations and medicines as recommended by the CDC.

**NOTE: Vaccination and testing requirements/recommendations by the Republic of Uganda are accurate at time of printing of this manual, Government requirements and guidelines could change at any moment.*

Travel Insurance and Vaccinations

Travel Insurance. All DORF volunteers are required to purchase and have a Travel insurance. If you get sick or have an emergency at home, the cost of medical care and repatriation can be extremely costly. For this purpose, and to make for a “worry-free” experience, you are required to have the following coverage with your travel insurance:

- A) Medical Coverage
- B) Accidental Death and Dismemberment
- C) Re-patriation

Vaccinations: Although not required by the Country of Uganda, your travel insurance will most likely require vaccinations. In addition to routine childhood vaccinations, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following vaccinations for travelers visiting Uganda:

- **Yellow Fever:** Yellow fever is a risk in Uganda, and a yellow fever vaccine is required for entry into the country.
- **Malaria:** Malaria is a risk in most parts of Uganda. Northern Uganda, and Gulu in particular, is infested with mosquitoes, and travelers should take preventive measures such as using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and using bed nets. Consult your doctor for the most appropriate preventive medicine.
- **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A is a viral liver disease that is spread through contaminated food or water.
- **Typhoid:** Typhoid is a bacterial infection that is spread through contaminated food or water.
- **Hepatitis B:** Hepatitis B is a viral liver disease that is spread through blood or body fluids.
- **Rabies:** Rabies is a viral disease that is spread through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. You will occasionally see stray dogs in Uganda. But while cases of dog bites aren't so common, considering rabies vaccination will make a big difference in case of an accident.

In addition, travelers should make sure their routine vaccinations, such as measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP), are up-to-date. We strongly recommend you review other CDC guidelines and recommendations for vaccinations when traveling to Uganda, these can be found at:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/uganda>

**NOTE: Vaccination and testing requirements/recommendations by the Republic of Uuganda are accurate at time of printing of this manual, Government requirements and guidelines could change at any moment.*

Getting to know Uganda

Ethnic Groups and Languages Spoken. The official languages of Uganda are English and Baganda. There are several other local dialects. Although most people speak English the accent is very different. Apart from interacting with Ugandans in English, a little effort at learning some basic local phrases can go a long way in forming relationships and trust with the people.

Uganda is a country with a diverse population, made up of many different ethnic groups and tribes. According to official data, there are over 56 tribes in Uganda. Some of the largest and most well-known tribes in Uganda include the Bantu-speaking tribes such as the Baganda, Banyankole, Basoga, Bakiga, and Bafumbira, as well as the Nilotic tribes such as the Acholi, Langi, and Alur. Other tribes in Uganda include the Iteso, Lugbara, Karamojong, and Kumam, among others.

Our mission will be in Northern Uganda, specifically in and around Gulu. Gulu is a city in Northern Uganda and is home to a diverse mix of ethnic groups and tribes. Some of the major tribes found in Gulu include:

- Acholi: The Acholi tribe is one of the largest ethnic groups in Gulu and the surrounding areas. They have a rich cultural heritage and are known for their traditional dances, music, and storytelling.
- Langi: The Langi tribe is another large ethnic group in Gulu and is known for their agriculture and trade.
- Alur: The Alur are a Nilotic ethnic group that live in the area around Gulu. They are known for their rich cultural traditions and their practice of subsistence agriculture.
- Padhola: The Padhola are a Bantu-speaking tribe that is found in Gulu and the surrounding areas. They are known for their rich cultural traditions and for their involvement in agriculture and trade.
- Jie: The Jie are a Nilotic ethnic group that is found in Gulu and the surrounding areas. They are known for their nomadic way of life and for their involvement in trade and agriculture.

These are some of the major tribes found in Gulu, but there are many other ethnic groups and tribes present in the area as well.

Family Life. Family in Uganda is not just the nuclear family but extended to grandparents, cousins, uncles, and aunts. In Ugandan culture, family is considered a major factor when it comes to identity, a sense of belonging, and security. The upbringing of a child in Uganda means cousins, aunts, and uncles play a large



role in their day-to-day life and may make visits without prior notice and expect a helping hand when in need.

Dinner is an important meal as it brings together all family members.

The religious background of the local Gulu inhabitants is quite diverse. Christianity is the dominant religion in the area, with a significant number of the population being Roman Catholic or Protestant. There are also a significant number of Muslims in Gulu, as well as followers of traditional African religions. The religious composition of Gulu reflects the diversity of the larger population of Uganda, which is home to a wide variety of religious communities.

In Gulu, household chores are traditionally done by women. The man is the head of the family, and women grow up to respect their husbands. In many instances, you will notice a level of submissiveness from women to their husbands that is beyond ordinary. Traditionally, women and children will handle most household chores.

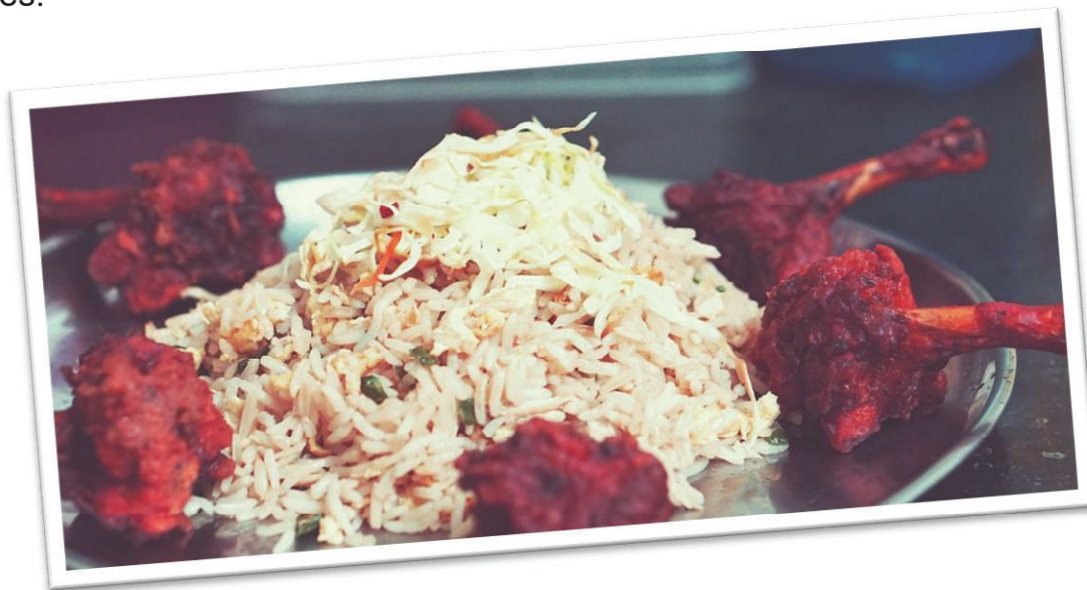
The Ugandan culture is very communal in nature. Ugandans share everything from clothes, food, and even space! At home, personal items are often shared with every member of the family. In most families, they don't understand the concept of private time and it's uncommon to stay alone in one's room for long periods of time except to sleep. (www.afsusa.com)

Food. Food in Uganda is rich in different types of breads, fried potatoes, eggs, rice, meat, fish, and vegetables. The most common foods in Gulu, Uganda, are traditional African dishes that are made with locally available ingredients. Some of the popular dishes in Gulu include:

1. **Matoke:** This is a staple food in Uganda and is made from green bananas that are peeled, mashed and then steamed in banana leaves. It is often served with a sauce or stew made from vegetables, beans, or meat.



2. **Groundnut stew:** This is a popular dish made from peanuts and is often served with rice or matoke.
3. **Posho:** This is a type of maize flour that is boiled into a dough-like consistency and is often served with soup or stew.
4. **Ugali:** This is a type of maize or millet bread that is commonly consumed in East Africa and is often served with stews and sauces.
5. **Roast chicken:** Roasted chicken is a popular dish in Gulu and is often served with rice or potatoes.



6. **Millet porridge:** This is a type of porridge made from millet flour and is often served for breakfast.
7. **Irish and sweet potatoes:** These are a staple food in Uganda and are often boiled, fried, or roasted and served with sauces or stews.

These are just a few examples of the popular foods in Gulu, Uganda. The cuisine in the region is influenced by both traditional African dishes and more contemporary recipes, reflecting the cultural diversity of the area. Of course, you will find fish, beef, beans, and a lot others. Meals are a family time, so Ugandan families often sit down together talk about their day during meals. Most people eat with their right hand.

Cultural Do's and Don'ts. As with all cultures there are basic behaviors that are considered acceptable and encouraged and those that are not. Here are some cultural norms and customs in Gulu, Uganda that should be respected as a visitor:

Do's

- **Greet people warmly and take your time**
Handshakes are common, and greetings matter. A simple "Hello, how are you?" goes a long way before jumping into business.
- **Dress modestly, especially in rural areas**
Lightweight but conservative clothing (covered shoulders, longer shorts/skirts) is appreciated, particularly around clinics, churches, and villages.

- **Show respect to elders and community leaders**
If introduced to local leaders or elders, greet them first and with intention—it’s a sign of respect in Ugandan culture.
- **Ask before taking photos**
Most people are friendly and open, but always ask—especially with children or in clinical settings.
- **Be flexible with time and plans**
Schedules may shift, and that’s normal. Patience and adaptability will make your experience much more enjoyable.
- **Engage with curiosity and humility**
Ask questions, listen to stories, and show genuine interest in people’s lives and culture—it’s deeply appreciated.

Don’ts

- **Don’t rush interactions or appear impatient**
Relationships come before tasks. Being overly direct or rushed can come across as disrespectful.
- **Don’t dress too casually or revealingly**
Avoid short shorts, tank tops, or overly tight clothing—especially outside of major cities.
- **Don’t give money or gifts directly to children**
This can unintentionally create dependency or community issues. If you want to give, do so through organized channels like your team.
- **Don’t openly criticize or compare cultures**
Even casual comments about “how things are done back home” can be taken the wrong way.
- **Don’t assume Western norms apply**
Things like personal space, time, and communication styles can be different—observe and adapt.
- **Don’t be overly forceful with help or opinions**
Collaboration and respect for local knowledge is key—you’re there to support, not take over.

Geographical Information. Uganda is a landlocked country located in East Africa. It is bordered by Kenya to the east, South Sudan to the north, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, Rwanda to the south, and Tanzania to the southeast. The coordinates of Uganda are 1.3733° N, 32.2903° E. Uganda is located in the equatorial region of Africa and has a diverse geography that includes forests, mountains, lakes, and savannas.



Weather. Gulu, Uganda has a tropical climate with two distinct rainy seasons: the long rains from March to May and the short rains from October to November. The rest of the year is relatively dry. Temperatures in Gulu are relatively consistent throughout the year, averaging around 27°C (80°F) during the day and 20°C (68°F) at night. However, it can feel much hotter due to the high humidity levels.

During the rainy season, heavy downpours are common, so it's important to be prepared for wet weather if you are visiting at that time. The dry season can also have hot and humid weather, so it's a good idea to stay hydrated and seek shelter from the sun during the hottest times of the day.

Currency. The Ugandan Schilling is the official currency of Uganda. However, the American Dollar is used at times at certain tourist destinations. It is a good idea to bring some US cash with you to exchange in Uganda, but the best exchange rates are usually when you withdraw Ugandan currency at ATM's. Be sure to contact your bank before leaving to discuss exchange rates and their policies of withdrawing foreign currency.

Volunteer Safety

There are many risks associated with traveling abroad. To make sure you understand these risks, you are required to read *Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers* published by the Peace Corps. The website for this resource is located in the application section.

Here are some general safety tips:

- Do not wear much jewelry on the streets. Especially do not wear gold neck chains or items that would be appealing to would-be thieves.
- Handbags are always a temptation. However, if you must carry one, keep it in front of you. A backpack is better.
- Be alert.
- Be cautious of street kids, beggars or crowds. Incidents of theft often occur when there are crowds and confusion to distract you.
- Always try to know where you are going before you attempt long journeys. Be especially careful at night.
- Use taxi drivers you know or those who are connected to your volunteer organization or to places you have already been. Keep the cell phone number of trusted taxi drivers handy.
- Do not go on excursions alone. Go with other volunteers, day or night. Even when in groups, don't stray far away, and don't walk alone along dark or empty streets. If possible, after dark use door-to-door transportation.
- Tourist areas can be high risk areas for pickpockets and thieves. Leave your valuables in a secure place at the children's home.
- For traffic safety, stop, look and listen A LOT. The traffic rules in Uganda are very different from the rules in your home country.
- Do not accept drinks from strangers, and always keep an eye on your drinks when you are out socializing.

Uganda is a relatively safe country (see the attached *Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteer* published by the Peace Corps). Nevertheless, keep your valuables safe in the housing accommodations or on your person where you can feel them at all times. Always remember that while Ugandans are generally a very friendly people, you are far richer than most, making you a tempting target for pickpockets, thieves and generally honest people who may be in a desperate position. Most tourists in Uganda never experience any trouble, and as long as you stay alert and use common sense, you should not have any problems.

Volunteer Health

There are many health and disease risks associated with traveling to Uganda. To make sure you understand these risks, you are required to read “Health Information for Travelers to Uganda” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The website address for this document is listed in the application section.

Malaria is very common in Africa. Humans get malaria from the bite of a malaria-infected mosquito. Symptoms of malaria include fever and other flu-like symptoms including shaking chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. If not promptly treated, malaria has the potential to cause kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma, and death. Malaria can be cured with prescription drugs. The type of drugs and length of treatment depend on which kind of malaria is diagnosed, where the patient was infected, the age of the patient, and how severely ill the patient was at the start of treatment.

As noted in the referenced “Health Information for Travelers to Uganda” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (website located in the application section of this manual), other diseases carried by insects in West Africa include Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis (river blindness). Protecting yourself against insect bites will help to prevent these diseases.

Consult a travel medicine doctor/nurse You should see a nurse/physician 2-3 months before traveling to Uganda for any necessary vaccinations and a prescription for an antimalarial drug. Although not required by the Country of Uganda, *your travel insurance will most likely require vaccinations*. There are several antimalarial drugs on the market, and some affect people quite differently, and each has its own benefits and drawbacks. Whichever medication you choose, it is essential that you use it correctly.

In addition to routine childhood vaccinations, the CDC recommends you obtain the following vaccinations and medications:

- **COVID-19 vaccination is not legally required, *but strongly recommended*.** Although not required by the Country of Uganda, your travel insurance will most likely require vaccinations. In addition to routine childhood vaccinations, the CDC recommends you obtain the following vaccinations:
 - **Yellow Fever** (Good for lifetime)
 - **Typhoid** (good for 2 years)
 - **Obtain RX for malaria** (Most of these medications need to be started before your trip, so consult with your doctor early and follow the administration recommendations before and after your trip)
 - **Traveler’s diarrhea RX** We recommend that you consult with your travel doctor about a prescription for traveler’s diarrhea.

Other generally recommended immunizations include:

- Hepatitis A
- Diphtheria/Tetanus
- Typhoid
- Hepatitis B
- Tuberculosis (when epidemic)
- Cholera (when epidemic)

We strongly recommend you review other CDC guidelines and recommendations for vaccinations when traveling to Uganda, these can be found at:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/uganda>

Getting the most from your volunteer experience

There are different ways to look at volunteering abroad. We recommend that you view it as a win-win situation, a mutually rewarding and positive arrangement. Give yourself wholly to the work, but don't forget *that the people of Uganda have much to teach and give to you.*

Whether you are volunteering to take a break, to change directions, or to give something back, the more you give of yourself, the more you will enjoy your trip.

Volunteering is an extremely rewarding and challenging way to travel and see the world. Whether you are volunteering for 2 weeks or 3 months, you will experience elation, disappointment, sadness, helplessness, joy, satisfaction and love. Most of our past volunteers, both young and old, rate their volunteer experience in Ghana as a major highlight in their life.

You reap what you sow. Do what you can whenever you can. Do not weary in doing good, no matter how trivial your good actions may seem to be. Here are a few ideas from past volunteers from other humanitarian missions that will help you get the most out of your volunteer experience:

BEFORE

- Take time to prepare
- Clarify your motives
- Set goals
- Make commitments
- Don't procrastinate

DURING

- Work hard
- Take advantage of every day
- Don't complain
- Be flexible and open-minded
- Give and Teach
- Receive and learn
- Look for things to do
- Ponder and meditate
- Keep a journal
- Interact with others

AFTER

- Stay involved
- Stay connected
- Set Goals
- Make Commitments
- Read your Journal
- Ponder and Meditate

So, how are YOU going to get the most from YOUR volunteer experience?

The answer to this question is entirely up to you. One thing to remember before you go is that volunteering is never easy. You will have difficult moments and days that make you question your effectiveness. Making the most of the time you have is a key ingredient to being a good volunteer. To be an effective volunteer, you must have self-direction, be able to show initiative, have patience, and most importantly be self-motivated. While you may not *change the world* you can absolutely make a difference in the world.

As you work and serve each day, remember the story of the starfish:

Two men were walking toward each other on an otherwise deserted beach. One man was in his early 20s, the other obviously much older. The smooth damp sand was littered with starfish, washed onto the land during high tide. Thousands of starfish were doomed to die in the warm morning sun. The younger man watched the older man pick up starfish one at a time and toss them back into the ocean, giving them a chance to survive. The young man thought, "Why is he doing that? How foolish. He can't save all those starfish."

As they came near one another, the younger one felt compelled to point out to the older man the futility of his actions. "You know," he said, "you can't save all of these starfish. They're going to die here on the sand. What you are doing isn't really going to make a difference." The older man studied the young man for a moment. Then he bent down, picked up a starfish and tossed it into the water. He smiled at the young man and said, "It made a difference to that one." Then he walked on, picking up starfish and tossing them back into the sea.

Finally, the best way to memorialize your volunteer experience is to stay involved. Whether you sponsor a child's education, fundraise for a project you worked on, or create a local humanitarian club in your hometown, we hope you will choose to stay involved.

Optional One-day Safari

Uganda is home to some of the greatest wildlife in the world. It is home to numerous national parks, game reserves and conservancies. Any trip to Africa would be incomplete without the opportunity to see this exotic wildlife in their own awe-inspiring habitats. For an additional fee (see cost breakdown), DORF will arrange for interested volunteers to go on a two-day Safari to the Murchison Falls National Park. It is approximately 300 kilometers (186 miles) northwest of Gulu, along the Nile River and is one of the largest and most biodiverse national parks in the country. The estimated driving time is around 6 hours, but this can vary depending on road conditions and stops along the way.

The Safari will include all park/reserve fees, meals, transportation to and from the Bomah Hotel, Gulu and will include 2 nights accommodation at a luxury safari lodge. The excursion will consist of multiple game drives where you will see a large variety of game species in their beautiful African environments. Perhaps one of the highlights will be a photo opportunity of Africa's highest peak; Mount Kilimanjaro.



What to bring

Most airlines will allow you to check two 50-pound bags for no extra charge, in addition to your carry-on luggage. DORF requires all volunteers to transport supplies for the mission trip. We have many supplies that have already been donated for use in Uganda, and we just need your help to get them there. We will work with you to coordinate getting these supplies to you before you depart to Uganda.

Packing List

- Basic Medical/Care Kit: acetaminophen/ibuprofen, antihistamine for relief from allergies and bites, diarrhea medicine, band aids, sunscreen, lip balm and insect repellent
- Toiletries and personal medications
- Your cellphone and charger
- Voltage adapter
- Sandals (thick-soled such as Keens, Chacos or similar)
- Trainers / court shoes for working in the bush, for playing basketball or soccer, or for comfort and variety. Flip Flops for indoor use
- Clothing
 - Scrubs: You will be working in the temporary clinic for 8 days
 - Additional clothing. Bring enough clothing for evenings, travel days and the optional safari. It is always a good idea to bring extra underwear and socks- don't forget pajamas!
- Towel Set
- Music, e-books and other entertainment for long travel and downtime
- Photographs of your family and friends to share with the children and patients
- Photocopies or digital copies on your phone of important travel documents such as passport, immunization records, travel insurance, visa, plane tickets
- Hat and sunglasses
- Camera (most volunteers use their smartphone camera)
- A copy of this volunteer handbook
- Journal and pens
- Earplugs (between the roosters, the kids, and the kitchen staff, noises in the volunteer house start early)
- Dirty laundry bag (a clean plastic garbage bag will suffice) There are always opportunities for outside work. Packing a pair of work gloves is a good idea.
- Swimsuit
- Travel neck pillow. It can be a long flight to Uganda. Some volunteers recommend compression socks. It can get cold on the plane and in the airports. A sweatshirt or warm long-sleeved shirt might be nice.
- Hand sanitizer
- Dress clothes for Sunday if you plan on attending church
- ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS