



Volunteering in Sierra Leone

This guide is designed to help you think through the practicalities and realities of volunteering with EducAid in Sierra Leone.

Reality Check

Volunteering with EducAid can be an extremely rewarding experience, with benefits to both the volunteer and the charity. The students and staff are always keen to share their experience and to work with inquisitive and engaging individuals. There are some important factors that must be considered prior to making a commitment to volunteer with EducAid, which we have outlined below:

A place of learning

Staff that are working in our schools have knowledge, skills and experience that have been developed during their time in EducAid and demonstrate a high degree of dedication to their work. It is important that you are prepared to learn from them as much as you are ready to teach them - they will help you, but it would be wrong to volunteer thinking that you have all the answers to problems that you may have not considered.

Your behaviour and relationship with our staff and students is extremely important. It is vital that you are ready to accept the working practices of EducAid; everyone will try to help, but you must be willing to accept advice and to act upon it. After all, the teachers and students achieve excellent results, whilst the back office staff run a tight ship to keep things running – of course, you may be able to help EducAid be even better, but it is important to learn as well as to teach.

Basic, but adequate

The conditions in Sierra Leone can be difficult: little in the way of teaching and learning resources, poor internet and IT provisions, limited access to power, with only basic food and accommodation provided for volunteers. The weather can be hot, and this, together with the heavy rains during the rainy season, can make life more tiring than the same tasks in a more equable climate.

EducAid will provide you with food, but it will be very basic. Meals consist of rice and are seasoned with cassava leaves or spices. There is typically fish in the dishes but it is spread thin so it's unlikely that you'll get more than a few bones. The meals can be repetitive and not particularly filling, but they are adequate. You will be able to get hold of a piece of fried chicken and bread, boiled egg and mayonnaise or something similar within walking distance of most of our school sites.

We are committed to keeping our overhead costs low, and we don't see that those visiting should expect significantly more than our students, so we do not invest in additional comforts for volunteers. Privacy and security are our top priority when it comes to volunteers, but please do not expect comforts you might have at home.

How much?

It's important to recognise that EducAid takes a lot of time to organise and manage your volunteering experience; this comes at a cost. Whilst we do not want to be the kind of organisation that charges volunteers for their experience, we do insist that volunteers cover all of their costs. A rough guideline on costs can be found below:

-
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● Flights: ~£650 | ● Weekly Subsistence: ~£25 |
| ● Visa: ~£105 | ● SL Airport Transfers: ~£80 |
| ● Travel Insurance: ~£25 | ● Vaccinations & Malarials: ~£150 |
| | ● Av. 1 Month Trip Cost: ~£1,110 |
| | ● Av. 1 Term Trip Cost: ~£1,310 |

Be ready

Our intention is not to dissuade anyone from volunteering with EducAid. We want to ensure that all visitors are prepared for their trip so that they can fully engage and enjoy their experience. If you do volunteer with EducAid in Sierra Leone, you will find the work very rewarding and all the EducAidians friendly and helpful.

They may have little or nothing, but what they have they will willingly share.

What is expected

It is important at this stage to have an understanding of what EducAid will expect of you before, during, and after your visit to Sierra Leone.

Behaviour

We expect you to behave professionally, with compassion and respect to everyone you work with and encounter in Sierra Leone. You will be an ambassador for EducAid so please act accordingly.

Funding

We expect volunteers to completely cover the cost of their trip. Whilst it is impossible to fully cost the trip in advance, we expect it to be in the region of £1,200.

Spreading the word

We ask all volunteers to perform no fewer than 3 public speaking events within 6 months of your return to the UK to speak about your trip. This could be at your company or office, your child's school, your faith institution or at a fundraising dinner organised with your friends.

We want you to commit to spreading the word about EducAid, and we can support you with materials and information as required.

Administration

We need to protect our staff and students from a governance perspective. We will need you to go through a number of administrative steps, including:

- Purchasing volunteers travel insurance and providing us with the policy top sheet.
- Obtaining a DBS Check
- Applying for a Visa in Sierra Leone

Formalities

- Signing a Volunteer contract, stipulating minimum expectations during your trip
- Signing our Code of Conduct to ensure that you understand what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour

Transportation of goods

We sometimes ask volunteers to be prepared to help us take essential items to Sierra Leone in their luggage as we often have things that are needed in country such as printer cartridges and other materials. We will always show you the items we would like you to bring before you travel if we have things to go to Sierra Leone.

What are the steps to becoming a volunteer?

There are a number of steps you need to take before applying to volunteer or booking your trip. Below we set out a step-by-step guide for you to follow.

1. Read these documents

You've already got in touch with us to signal your interest, and this document is one of following 5 documents that the coordinator has sent over to you:

- I. Volunteer Application Questionnaire
- II. Volunteer Eligibility Declaration
- III. Full description of the role that you are interested in (if applicable)
- IV. Our 'Volunteering in Sierra Leone' guide
- V. EducAid Code of Conduct

2. Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork

Once you have read through all of the documents, please complete and return the Volunteer Application Questionnaire and the Volunteer Eligibility Declaration.

If we have any questions at this stage, we may contact you by phone or by Skype.

3. Roles and responsibilities

After receiving your application and reviewing all necessary documents, we will think about specific tasks, which will best suit your interests. These documents will help us to decide on which role would fit you best.

After the department head reviews your application, they will be in contact with you to have a discussion about your role. It is vitally important that you are happy with your project and have a full understanding of what will be expected of you.

4. Assessment of application

Once your submission has been reviewed by our executive team, an agreement has been made between you and the departmental team on your role, and both teams' recommendations made, your application will need to be approved by a Board member. This is necessary both from a safeguarding and a governance standpoint, and a Board member has the final decision on your application.

5. Come for a visit

Next, we will invite you in for a meeting. This meeting will be conducted at our London office where we will put you through a DBS check and ask you to sign our Volunteer Contract and our Code of Conduct.

6. Get Booking!

Once we've received your successful DBS check, and you've received the letter of invitation that we will send you, you are ready to organise the final parts of your trip:

- I. Applying for your Visa
- II. Buying flights
- III. Purchasing insurance
- IV. General Info
- V. Vaccinations & prevention from bites and stings
- VI. Purchasing your flights and travel insurance

7. Pre-visit preparation

Now you're all booked up, it's important that you think through these essentials:

- I. Money
- II. What to pack
- III. Transporting items to Sierra Leone
- IV. Fundraising before your trip