



## Ghana Make A Difference

# Youth Trip Volunteer Handbook

If you are contemplating traveling to Ghana as a volunteer for Ghana Make A Difference, ***read this handbook.***

If you have already decided to travel to Ghana as a volunteer for Ghana Make A Difference, ***read this handbook.***

This handbook has been assembled to help you decide whether you should work as a volunteer in Ghana, and if so, to help you prepare for your volunteer trip to Ghana with Ghana Make A Difference (GMAD). This booklet provides you with some basic information regarding local customs in Ghana, basic safety tips, your arrival in Ghana, the GMAD volunteer program, what to take with you, and other information regarding your trip.

If there is anything you want to know that is not answered in this handbook or on our website, contact GMAD at [geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org) at any time.

Get ready for one of the most amazing experiences of your life.

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## THINGS TO DO BEFORE TRAVELING TO GHANA

Thank you for considering and/or committing to be a Ghana Make A Difference volunteer in Ghana.

Listed below, in chronological order, are the things you need to do before you become a GMAD volunteer and depart for Ghana.

1. READ THIS HANDBOOK. And if you have any questions that are not covered in this handbook, please ask us.
2. SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION.
3. SIGN AND SUBMIT THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS. *The Terms and Conditions* associated with GMAD's volunteer program are included at pages 27-29 of this handbook. Read the document carefully, and if you agree to the terms and conditions, sign and submit the document to GMAD.
4. BUY TRAVEL INSURANCE AND SUBMIT PROOF OF YOUR PURCHASE TO GMAD. Buying travel insurance with emergency medical transportation (including medical evacuation) and medical expense coverage is mandatory when volunteering abroad with GMAD. Send proof of your purchase to GMAD at [volunteer@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:volunteer@ghanamakeadifference.org) or by fax at 800-851-2793. There are many insurance options, but (1) if you are not yet 30 years old, or (2) if you are a student, or (3) if you are a teacher, then we think a great choice is the ISIC **premium** insurance plan that comes with [a premium ISIC card](#). There are three types of ISIC cards:
  - a. ISIC Premium is for full time students, any age
  - b. ITIC Premium is for teachers and faculty, any age
  - c. IYTC Premium is for anyone under age 30

Here are a few other companies we are aware of that offer travel insurance.

- a. Travel Guard at [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com)
  - b. World Nomads at [www.worldnomads.com](http://www.worldnomads.com)
  - c. Travel Safe Insurance at [www.travelsafe.com](http://www.travelsafe.com)
7. GET YOUR PASSPORT AND VISA. You must acquire your visa **before** you go to Ghana. There are more details on how to do this later in this booklet, but be sure to get a **tourist visa**.
  8. GET VACCINATED. In this booklet we give you a list of standard vaccinations, however, you need to **see a travel medicine doctor/nurse a couple of months prior to your departure** and follow his/her professional recommendations.
  9. PAY YOUR PROGRAM FEES.
  10. STUDY UP. The better prepared you are for this experience the easier it will make things.
  11. PACK APPROPRIATELY. There is a suggested packing list in this booklet.
  12. QUESTIONS. Contact Geanie Rodgers at [geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org) at any time with any questions.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

GMAD is dedicated to making a sustainable difference, and if you volunteer to help us, you are volunteering to work.

GMAD's mission is to preserve families, protect children, and provide refuge, and most of our efforts revolve around the operation of a children's home in Dabanyin, Ghana. Accordingly, you are volunteering to work at a children's home, and to protect the children and the integrity of the home, it is expected that you will honor GMAD's code of conduct (as presented in your application and in this handbook) at all times and in all places throughout the duration of your volunteer experience.

### Who Can Volunteer

You must be age 16-18 at the time of the trip.

### Accommodations

You will live onsite at the children's home. Volunteers live together in their own private section of the children's home, and you will share a room with other volunteers. There are separate bedrooms and bathrooms for male and female volunteers, but all volunteers share a common living room.

Bedding is provided, but some volunteers appreciate having their own travel pillow, a compact camping pad, and even their own sheet.

A mosquito net is on the packing list, but if you forget one, please note that there are often mosquito nets available at the Ghana home because many volunteers leave their nets behind when they return home. Furthermore, you can purchase mosquito nets in Ghana.

The home does have electricity and running water, but interruptions in these services are common, and you will have to be willing to make the best of the situation. There is no air conditioning in the volunteer house.

### Food

In accordance with the wide range of tribes, ethnicities and cultures in Ghana, the food is very diverse. Ghanaians eat three meals a day, and the orphanage personnel will cook you three meals a day. Although the cooks will prepare special meals for the volunteers, and while volunteers can eat together in the volunteer living quarters, volunteers are always invited to eat with the children and staff in the dining hall.

Breakfasts may consist of oatmeal or eggs, with toast and fruit, or even crepes or french toast. A typical lunch can include meat and vegetables with rice or noodles, while dinner may be more traditional and include fufu, banku or jollof rice. Ghanaian food is traditionally quite spicy. **Volunteers should not drink, brush their teeth with, nor wash their food with the tap water.** Safe drinking water will be provided for you at the home in Ghana, and bottled drinking water and small plastic bags of drinking water are readily available throughout Ghana at a nominal cost.

You should not expect to eat as you normally do at home. Be appreciative and kind, but try to be upfront with the GMAD cooks regarding which entrees you like, if you need larger portions, or if the food is too spicy for you. The GMAD kitchen is not a restaurant that takes custom orders, but they welcome helpful feedback. In the past, some volunteers, not wanting to be offensive, have simply kept quiet about the food, saying *the food is fine* or *I'm just not hungry* today. AND THEN they turn around and text or call home saying *I'm starving!* or *the food is terrible*.

If you have special dietary needs, we will do our best to help you find what you need, but you must be able to make your own accommodations based on your own unique needs.

## Program Cost

Giving up not only your time but also your money to volunteer is a huge commitment for anybody. A lot of people struggle to understand the concept of paying to volunteer abroad, and although GMAD does its best to ensure it provides the most affordable fees possible, it is important you understand where your fees are going. 100% of your volunteer fees go to the GMAD children's home in Ghana. These fees cover (1) your room and board while you are in Ghana, (2) your transportation while you are in Ghana, and (3) your activities while you are in Ghana.

The programs costs you will pay to GMAD are the total of (1) \$1,200 and (2) airfare, which is typically between \$1,300 and \$1,700.

1. You must pay a non-refundable deposit of \$500 at the time of your application. This fee is non-refundable, but it goes towards your program costs.
2. You must pay an additional \$1,500 on or before March 1, 2018.
3. You must pay the final balance on or before April 1, 2018.

There is only one way to pay your program fees: [pay online at GMAD](#).

The following is a list of other typical costs associated with being a volunteer in Ghana.

- Passport = \$110
- Ghana Tourist Visa = \$60 (plus shipping)
- Immunizations = depends on what you need, but yellow fever varies around \$120
- Malaria medicine
- Mandatory travel insurance
- Money for food and drink while traveling to and from Ghana

## Your Volunteer Costs are Tax Deductible

GMAD 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:*
  - a. *Air, rail and bus transportation*
  - b. *Car expenses*
  - c. *Lodging costs*
  - d. *The cost of meals*
  - e. *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).*

## Code of Conduct

As a GMAD 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 profanity
- No tobacco\*
- No pornography\*
- No vulgar language
- No marijuana\*
- No prescription drugs without a prescription\*

\* 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 children's home in Ghana, and you will bear the financial burden associated with such removal, including but not limited to hotel costs, transportation costs, and itinerary change fees.

## Working with Vulnerable Children

GMAD seeks to address the numerous problems that many children without proper education, healthcare, food, love and attention face as a result of being parentless or alone. You will teach, love and care for vulnerable children.

## 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 social media sources to let them know of your pending adventure.

## GMAD CONTACTS

### **GMAD USA**

Geanie Rodgers  
Youth Trip Leader  
[geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org)

### **GMAD Ghana**

Prince Djanku  
Assistant Director of GMAD Children's Home  
027-023-8457  
[prince@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:prince@ghanamakeadifference.org)

Fort Acolatse  
Assistant Director of GMAD Children's Home  
057-800-5288  
[fort@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:fort@ghanamakeadifference.org)

Kelvin Rogers  
Administrative Assistant of GMAD Children's Home  
055-323-4495  
[kelvin@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:kelvin@ghanamakeadifference.org)

Isaac Nartey  
Driver of GMAD Children's Home  
024-597-7256

## GETTING TO GHANA

### Airplane Tickets

GMAD will purchase your airline ticket for you.

### Getting A Tourist Visa

**Before you leave to Ghana**, you must get a tourist visa from the Ghanaian embassy in Washington DC. There are different types of visas; you need a *tourist visa*. There are also two different visa entry classes: *single entry* (if you only intend to enter Ghana once) or *multiple entry* (if you intend to enter and reenter Ghana multiple times). A single entry visa must be used within 90 days. A multiple entry visa must be used within a year.

You may contact an agency that can help you obtain a visa, or you may apply for a visa on your own directly with the Ghana Embassy. Past volunteers have used both methods, but the vast majority have obtained their visa on their own by applying directly to the Ghana Embassy.

If you get a visa through an agency, the cost to obtain your visa (including embassy and agency service fees) will likely range from \$120 to \$165. Past volunteers have successfully used VisaHQ at [www.visahq.com](http://www.visahq.com) on multiple occasions.

Past volunteers have also had good success obtaining visas directly through the Ghana Embassy (i.e., without an agency) by applying at [www.ghanaembassy.org](http://www.ghanaembassy.org). The website steps you through the application process, and you will save the fees you would pay to an agency; the cost to obtain your visa directly through the Ghana Embassy ranges from \$60 to \$100, plus postage. You should **allow at least 3-5 weeks** for processing.

Use the following two visa references on your visa application form.

**First reference**

Prince Djanku  
PO Box AB 12  
Awutu - Bereku / Kasoa  
C/R Ghana  
+233 27 023 8457  
prince@ghanamakeadifference.org

**Second reference**

Fortunatus Acolatse  
Accra Cape Coast Road - GMAD #3B  
Gomoa Dabanyin  
C/R Ghana  
+233 57 800 5288  
fort@ghanamakeadifference.org

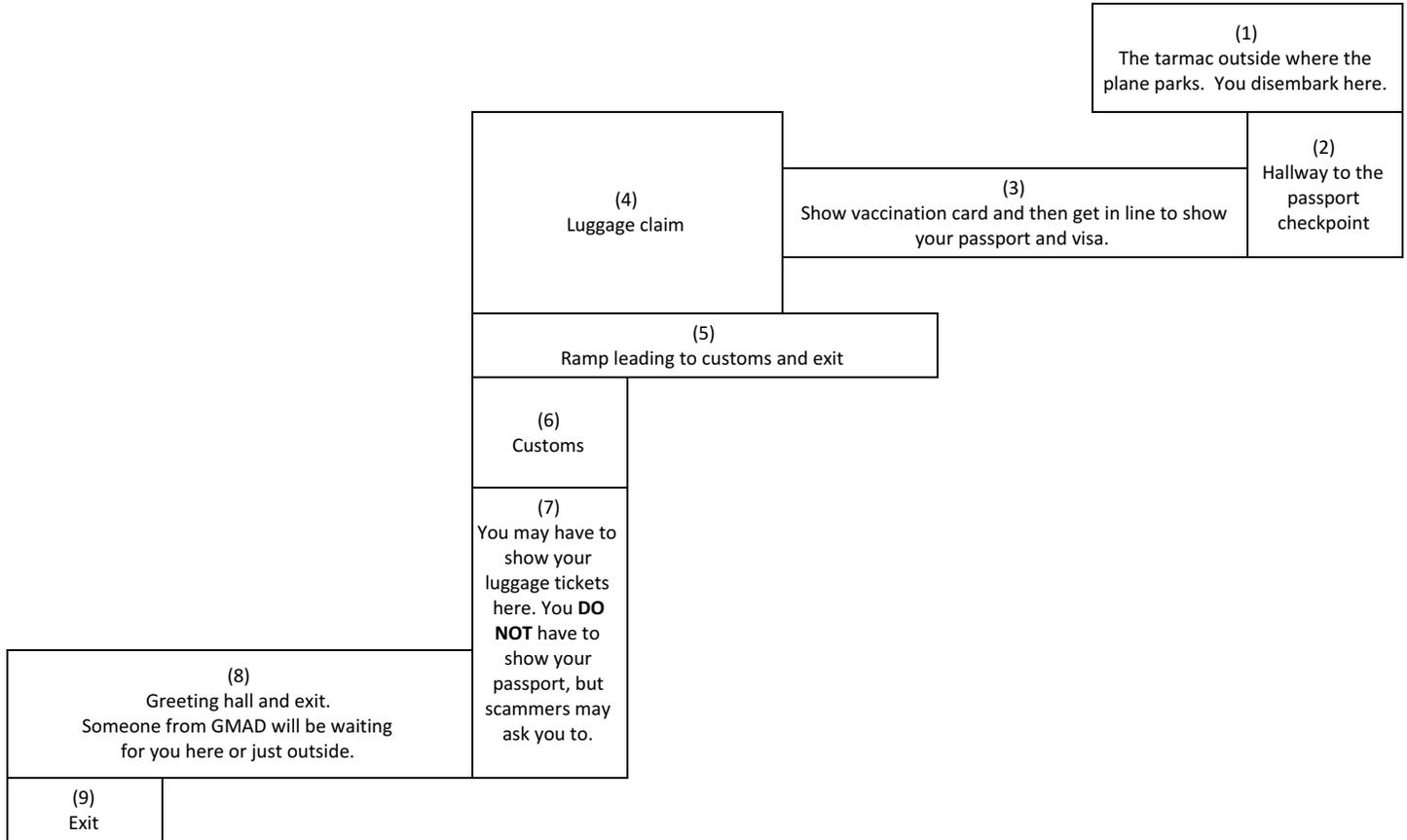
Once again, GMAD volunteers travel to Ghana on *tourist visas*. So as you enter Ghana, we recommend that you record *tourism* or *vacation* on your immigration form (GMAD trips fall under the category of volunteer tourism). If you write down *work* or *volunteer work* as your purpose, immigration workers may demand you pay extra fees and that you acquire a work/employment visa, which is not necessary for the volunteer work you will be doing.

**The address you MUST HAVE when you get off the plane in Ghana (and again when you depart) to use on your immigration forms is:**

Ghana Make A Difference  
Gomoa Dabanyin on the Accra-Winneba Road  
PO Box AB 12  
Awutu - Bereku / Kasoa  
C/R Ghana  
Phone: 057-800-5288

## Arriving In Ghana

The following is a layout of the Accra airport and outlines the steps you will take from landing to exit.



A GMAD Ghana representative will greet you at the Accra airport (Kotoka International Airport), whereupon you will be driven to the GMAD home in Dabanyin. Depending on traffic, it will take 1-2 hours to drive from the airport to the children's home.

## 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. We hope that you will be willing to use at least one of your allowed pieces of checked luggage to transport supplies for our GMAD Ghana operations. We have many supplies that have already been donated for use in Ghana, and we just need your help to get them there. If you agree to transport GMAD supplies to Ghana, we will pack a 50-pound piece of luggage with supplies for you, and we will work with you to coordinate getting that luggage to you before you depart to Ghana.

### Packing List

- Basic Medical/Care Kit: acetaminophen/ibuprofen, antihistamine for relief from allergy or bites, diarrhea medicine, band aids, sunscreen, lip balm and insect repellent
- All personal medication
- Toiletries
- Your cellphone and charger
- 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. Also, some volunteers appreciate having socks.
- Flip Flops for indoor use
- Clothing. Pack enough clothing for one week. Keep in mind the temperature and environment you will be working in. It will be very hot, so light clothing that covers your whole body is ideal for sun and insect bites. Furthermore, please keep in mind that you will likely participate in work projects that could damage your clothing (e.g., painting, digging, construction). Please note that tank tops and short shorts are not appropriate at the children's home and are not culturally welcomed in Ghana. You may have opportunity to attend community events or other activities that warrant dressy casual attire.
- Towel set (i.e., full size, hand, and dish towel)
- Bedding is provided, but some volunteers appreciate having their own small pillow, a compact camping pad, and even their own sheet, especially for use when traveling and sleeping outside the children's home.
- Music, e-books and other entertainment for long travel and downtime
- Photographs of your family and friends
- Copies of important travel documents such as passport, immunization records, travel insurance, visa, plane tickets
- Day pack
- Hat and sunglasses
- Camera (most volunteers use their smartphone camera)
- Headlamp
- Travel guidebook (volunteers find guidebooks such as Lonely Planet to be helpful)
- This volunteer handbook
- Journal and pens
- Earplugs (between the roosters, the kids and the kitchen staff, noises in the volunteer house start early)
- Paper products: wipes, napkins, facial tissues
- Ziploc bags (a few of various sizes)

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHILE YOU ARE IN GHANA

## General Travel Documents

It is highly recommended that you make two copies of all your important travel documents (passport, visa, immunizations, flight tickets, and travel insurance) before you leave home. Leave one copy with a friend or family member and take the spare copy with you to Ghana. While it is unlikely that you will have a need for them while you are in Ghana, it is further recommended that you carry the second set of copies with you as you travel in Ghana, leaving your originals securely in the volunteer house at the GMAD home.

## Money

The Ghanaian currency is the Ghana Cedi (Ghc). The exchange rate varies daily, but recently \$1.00 (US) has been equivalent to approximately 4.50 Ghc. One cedi is divided into one hundred pesewas (equivalent of cents).

The present cedi (New Cedi) was introduced on July 3, 2007, and was set to equal 10,000 old cedi as the redenomination dropped four zeros off the value of the old cedi.

The word "cedi" is derived from the Akan word for cowry shell; cowry shells were used in Ghana as a form of currency.

It is easy to exchange money at the airport when you arrive in Ghana. But if the exchange bureau (*forex*) at the airport is closed, the GMAD staff can take you to a *forex* to exchange money as necessary. You can check the current exchange rate by searching Google for *dollar cedi exchange rate*. The actual exchange rate you get in Ghana should be about 10 pesewas per dollar less than the rate that is published online (e.g., 4.40 cedi per dollar instead of 4.50 cedi per dollar).

If you want to take personal spending money, be sure to only take new edition \$100 bills as shown below. You will get an inferior exchange rate if you try to exchange smaller or older bills, and some *forex* will not even exchange older bills or bills under \$100.



As a backup, you can take a debit/ATM card so that you can withdraw money from ATMs as needed. This is an easy and cost effective way of withdrawing money, and it is much safer than carrying around a large amount of cash. ATMs are widely available throughout Ghana.

## Cell Phones

Most of Ghana is connected to a cellular network, and you will be able use a cell phone (your own phone or a GMAD phone) to call locally and internationally and to send and receive text messages locally and internationally. It is easy and inexpensive to buy cellular phone credit to call locally and internationally. To call or text the USA from Ghana using a Ghana phone you dial 001 + area code + number.

## Internet

There is limited cellular-based wifi internet at the GMAD home. Internet is not unlimited. The cellular wifi modem must be loaded with credits that are purchased via coded scratch cards at the market. The staff will help with this, but suffice it to say that it is a process, and the credits do not last long when used with typical USA-manners. Don't stream music, don't download videos and photos, and only upload a limited amount of photos to social media (upload the bulk of your photos and videos when you return home). If you take your own smartphone to Ghana (most volunteers do), be sure to disable all automatic backup, all automatic upload / download services, and all automatic syncing services, otherwise the home's internet credit will magically be exhausted as your phone stays hard as work while you sleep! In short, internet is very limited.

## Transportation

GMAD has its own bus that is used exclusively for the home, and our driver will use the bus drive you around Ghana.

## Ghanaian Art / Souvenir Markets

In most stalls virtually all prices are negotiable. The first asking price given will be much higher than you are expected to pay, often two to three times higher than what the final price might end up being. You in turn make a low offer. Through a little friendly bargaining, you arrive at a price suitable to both parties. It may feel like the vendor is trying to take advantage of you, but this is not the case. It is simply the process of determining the price that you are willing to pay and that the vendor is willing to accept. Do not act offended in words, tones or facial expressions. Participate in the process and enjoy the process. While you don't need to (and you should not) pay above-market prices, you should not be overly concerned about whether you got the best deal possible. Some vendors at some markets use aggressive sales tactics and continue to push even when you have no interest in buying the items they are selling. These tactics can be annoying, but if you can take a deep breath and remember that many of these people are simply fighting for their daily survival, it will be easier for you to remain polite as you continue to reject their offers. Once again, enjoy the process, and never be condescending or rude.

## Laundry

There is no washing machine or dryer at the GMAD home. You will wash your clothes by hand, and you will hang them to dry on lines. You should bring some plastic bags for your dirty clothes. You can certainly pack your own travel-sized laundry detergent, but you can also buy detergent in Ghana.

## Jewelry

Keep your jewelry simple and conservative. Do not take any jewelry that you would not want to lose. The work is often not conducive to wearing jewelry. Furthermore, the number one crime volunteers fall victim to is theft. Do not flaunt wealth, perceived or real.

## Time

A watch is a good idea, but you will learn that in Ghana, *African Time* is very prevalent. African time means *when something happens, it happens*. A bus scheduled to leave at 10am may leave at 10am, or it may leave at 2pm for no apparent reason other than the driver was late. Ghanaians do not generally allow time to control their lives. Socializing and personal relationships are much more important.

*I am coming* is a common expression in Ghana. As you might expect, this expression might mean that the person is actually en route from his or her place to yours. However, as you might not expect, this expression might also mean that regardless of whether the person is en route or not, he or she will make it to you eventually, and that you should relax and not worry about the exact timing of his or her arrival.

## Electricity: Ghana Wall Plugs and Adapters

The power outlets at the GMAD home are known as a British 3-pin rectangular blade plug (WA-7), and this is also by far the most common outlet throughout Ghana.



The standard electrical outlet in Ghana is 220-240 volts. The standard electrical outlet in the US is 110-120 volts. Before plugging anything in a Ghana outlet, be sure that whatever it is you are plugging in can handle up to 220-240 volts. If not, you may need a converter/transformer to step down the voltage. You should not need a converter/transformer for your phone and computer. The GMAD home has power strips that have built-in adapters (not converters) that look like the adapter below. However, you may want to pack and carry one of these with you so you can charge your phone during your travels outside the GMAD home.



## Malaria

Take your anti-malarial drug exactly on schedule without missing doses. Take measures to prevent mosquito bites: use insect repellent on exposed skin, use flying insect spray in the room where you sleep, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and sleep under a mosquito net.

## Children and Smartphones

Make a lasting and sustainable impact by interacting with the children using **their resources**. In other words, teach, work and play with the children using the resources, tools and toys that they will have after you leave Ghana. In particular, **do not** entertain the children by letting them play with your smartphone, your tablet or your computer.

## Teaching

You do not need to be a certified or experienced teacher to make a difference.

GMAD has an established education / tutoring program for the children and staff at the home. Our education staff can guide and assist you in your teaching and tutoring efforts.

Although Ghana is an English speaking country, many people cannot communicate effectively in English. This is a common phenomenon in both rural and urban areas of Ghana, hence there is always a need for formal and informal tutoring. You can stimulate the children's and staff's interest to study and speak proper English by teaching them with workbooks and worksheets, by reading with them, and simply by playing and socializing with them.

Sports and games are great ways for you to teach the English (learning and following rules), mental discipline, alertness and coordination, teamwork and sportsmanship.

## Don't Give Money or Gifts

Our GMAD staff members in Ghana are amazing. They will become your friends, and you will love them like family. Naturally, therefore, you will want to share with them, and they will want to share with you. And with these feelings, you may be tempted to give them gifts or financial assistance. Don't do it. It is not assistance. By Ghanaian standards, our GMAD workers are paid more than a fair wage, with benefits that most people in Ghana do not enjoy. When you give them gifts or money, you distort expectations, you pervert fairness, and you encourage an attitude of entitlement. Furthermore, there is a very large cultural gap; what you may define to be trivial may be of great worth to them. This can create unexpected feelings and damage the relationship between you and the person, as well as among other workers. Also, please note that it is expressly against GMAD's employment policy for our staff to (a) solicit gifts and money from volunteers and (b) to even accept unsolicited gifts and money from volunteers. When you offer gifts and money to the staff, you encourage them to compromise their integrity.

These same principles apply to the GMAD children and the Ghana community.

## Culture and Etiquette

You are a guest in Ghana and it is important to keep in mind that the people, traditions, culture and general way of life are all different from your home country. Do not try to force your way of life upon the people you will be working and living with. Be open minded and embrace the Ghanaian culture and way of living. You may also be exposed to other cultures as you meet volunteers from different parts of the world; you should be ready to learn and respect these differences as well.

What follows are 26 basic guidelines of social conduct in Ghana. Ghanaians are very tolerant and forgiving, especially with foreigners, and will often not point out cultural mistakes. However, repeated errors and offenses will create an uncomfortable atmosphere with negative results. A little effort by you to understand and respect Ghanaian culture will be greatly appreciated.

1. When you eating and someone comes, offer them some food and ask them to join you by saying *you are invited*. When someone likewise invites you, you may decline respectfully or join as you wish. When served food, never refuse. Eat at least some. Make only favorable comments about food outside the home, and be careful of facial expressions.
2. Be appreciative and kind, but try to be upfront with the GMAD cooks regarding which entrees you like, if you need larger portions, or if the food is too spicy for you. The GMAD kitchen is not a restaurant that takes custom orders, but they welcome helpful feedback. In the past, some volunteers, not wanting to be offensive, have simply kept quiet about the food, saying *the food is fine* or *I'm just not hungry* today. AND THEN they turn around and text or call home saying *I'm starving!* or *the food is terrible*.
3. Greetings are important. Always greet and respond to greetings properly. When you pass a group of people, especially elderly, give them a greeting. Failing to greet is considered an insult, and it is not easily overlooked. Greetings are not seen as an interference or waste of time.
4. Don't use your left hand when interacting with others. Don't waive with your left hand, don't pay for purchases with your left hand, don't receive change with your left hand, don't shake with your left hand, don't waive for a taxi with your left hand, and don't eat with your left hand. Your left hand is considered to be your *potty hand* (i.e., the hand you use to wipe with).
5. Be careful with humor and teasing. Ghanaians love to laugh and have fun, but humor does not always cross cultural boundaries. What is funny in one language may be insulting in another. Teasing can especially be misunderstood.
6. Do not compare people to animals (cute as a monkey, dirty as a pig, etc.).
7. What you may consider to be private matters may not be so private in Ghana. For example, your physical size or marital status may prove to be enticing topics of conversation. Be open and don't be overly sensitive to personal remarks made about you. Welcome such comments as an intimate expression of sincere interest in you.
8. Comments from Ghanaians like *you're so fat* are not meant to be an insult. This comment is simply an observation and even a compliment. Ghanaians see fatness as a sign of good living.
9. Be careful when taking photos. Ask permission and do not let your zeal for photos become a distraction or disturbance.
10. Be soft-spoken and careful in your choice of words. Avoid judgment words such as stupid and crazy. These words are particularly insulting because most Ghanaian interpret these words literally. Also, many words have varying degrees of meaning across different English speaking countries. Likewise, remember this same truth and don't be offended when certain unexpected terms are spoken to you.
11. The thumbs-up gesture is actually an an insult in Ghana.
12. Do not shout or display loud, boisterous behavior. Shouting is frowned upon. When you are in public, go out of your way to exhibit a quiet and friendly attitude. To get a vendor's attention, people will *hiss* at each other instead of shouting. Do not hiss at your elders.
13. Dress modestly and neatly, and pay attention to grooming and neatness. Body piercings and tattoos are considered your personal markings and should be covered, both at the home and in public. Your grooming, modesty and neatness in dress is a strong reflection on your character and the character of GMAD. Men should not go without a shirt.
14. When in doubt, ask the director or assistant director what the most appropriate attire to wear is for an activity or event.
15. It is not polite to put your feet on furniture or sit in a way that shows the bottoms of your shoes or feet, especially when socializing with your superiors (e.g., the elderly, village chiefs and officials, government officials).
16. If someone washes your clothing, voluntarily or by hire, do not include your underwear; this is considered to be your own responsibility.
17. Religion and spirituality plays a major role in the life of most Ghanaians. Much of life is seen through a grid of spiritual values and realities. Most people enjoy discussing and sharing religious and spiritual beliefs.
18. Never make derogatory remarks about any religious, political or ethnic group or behavior.
19. While Americans may openly criticize their country, Ghanaians take criticisms of their country very personal.
20. Holding hands is a common expression of friendship, guidance and protection, and it is not necessarily an expression of intimacy: men with men, women with women, adults with children, men with women, and older men with younger women.
21. When handing someone something, actually hand it to them, don't toss it to them. Throwing something to someone is disrespectful.
22. Greet people from your right to your left, regardless of the age or gender or status of the people you are greeting. And always greet with your right hand.
23. When you are meeting with the chief or elders, remove your hat and keep your hands out of your pockets.
24. *Mah-mee*, *Pah-pah* and *Nah-nah* are terms of respect. Males over the age of 30 may be addressed as *pah-pah* while women of the same age may be called *mah-mee*. People over the age of 50 may be referred to as *nah-nah*.
25. Ghanaians call white people *obruni*, which literally means *someone from beyond the horizon*. This is not an insult.
26. Ghanaian culture is very hierarchical. Age, wealth, experience and position are very important.

### Your Visitor Permit In Ghana

With a *tourist visa*, the Ghana government will grant you a 60-day *visitor permit* upon your arrival at the airport.

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## VOLUNTEER SAFETY

There are many risks associated with travelling abroad. To make sure you understand these risks, you are required to read the attached *Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers* published by the Peace Corps.

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 home 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 that the GMAD home.
- For traffic safety, stop, look and listen A LOT. Most likely, the traffic rules in Ghana 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.

Ghana 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 GMAD home or on your person where you can feel them at all times. Always remember that while Ghanaians 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 Ghana never experience any trouble, and as long as you stay alert and use common sense, you should not have any problems.

## 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 Ghanaians have much to teach and give to you.

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. 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 investment ideas from past volunteers that will help you get the most out of your volunteer experience.

### BEFORE

- Take time to prepare
- Clarify your motives
- Set goals
- Make commitments

### DURING

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

### AFTER

- Stay involved
- Stay connected
- Set goals
- Make commitments
- Read your diary / journal
- Ponder and meditate

How are you *Ghana Make A Difference*?

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 fundraise for a GMAD project you worked on while you were in Ghana or create a local GMAD club in your hometown, we hope you will choose to stay involved.

## HEALTH

There are many health and disease risks associated with traveling to Ghana. To make sure you understand these risks, you are required to read the attached “Health Information for Travelers to Ghana” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. GMAD is not able to cater to your specific health needs.

Visit with a travel medicine doctor/nurse 4-6 weeks before traveling to Ghana for any necessary vaccinations and a prescription for an antimalarial drug. 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.

We recommend that you consult with your travel doctor about a prescription for travelers diarrhea.

Yellow Fever immunization is **legally required**. You must have proof of this immunization to enter Ghana.

Other generally recommended immunizations include:

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

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 start of treatment.

As noted in the attached “Health Information for Travelers to Ghana” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 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.

Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, can be contracted in fresh water in West Africa. You should not swim in fresh water.

## GETTING TO KNOW GHANA

The Republic of Ghana is a West African country lying on the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana was formed from the merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the Togoland trust territory, and in 1957 it became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. Ghana is named after the medieval West African kingdom of the same name, but whose location was actually further north than the modern country.

Ethnically, Ghana is divided into small groups speaking more than 50 languages and dialects. Among the more significant linguistic groups are

- the Akans, which include the Fantis along the coast and the Ashantis in the forest region north of the coast,
- the Guans, on the plains of the Volta River,
- the Ga- and Ewe-speaking peoples of the south and southeast, and
- the Mossi-Dagomba-speaking tribes of the northern and upper regions.

English is the official language of Ghana, but it is still a second language for most Ghanaians.

Nana Akufo-Addo is the current president of Ghana (elected December 2016). The next presidential election will be held in 2020.

Ghana is 238,533 square kilometers (92,098 square miles) with a total border of 2,959 kilometers (1,839 miles), 539 kilometers (335 miles) of which is coastline along the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana is similar in size to Oregon and the United Kingdom.

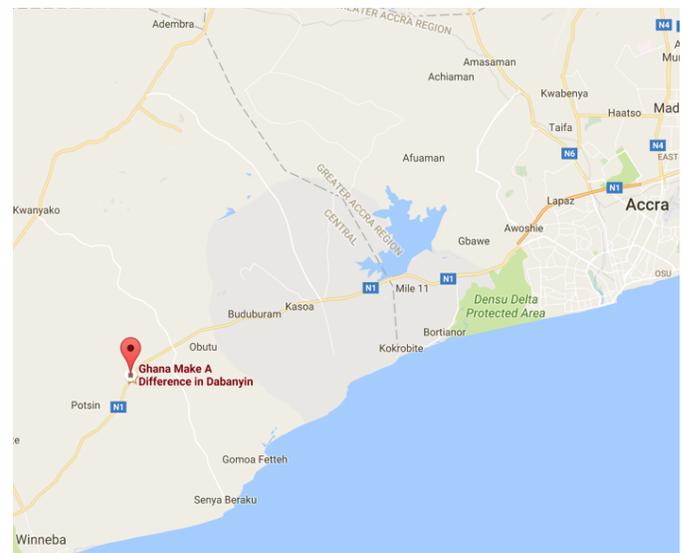
Ghana is bordered by Burkina Faso to the north, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to the west, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south.

At 8,503 square kilometers (3,283 square miles), Lake Volta is the world's largest man-made lake (by surface area) and represents 3.6% of Ghana's surface area.

Ghana's highest point is Mount Afadjato at 885 meters (2,903 feet).

Ghana consists of 10 political states called *regions*: Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta, and Western.

The GMAD children's home (★) is located in the Central Region, 50 kilometers (31 miles) west of Accra. Depending on traffic, it takes 1-2 hours to drive from the airport to the children's home.



Ghana's natural resources include gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver, salt, and limestone.

Agricultural land represents 69% of Ghana and forest land covers 21%.

Agriculture products include cocoa, rice, cassava, peanuts, corn, shea nuts, bananas and timber.

Industries include mining, lumbering, light manufacturing, aluminum smelting, food processing, cement, small commercial ship building and petroleum.

Accra is the capital of Ghana with a population of approximately 2.5 million (approximately 4 million in the Greater Accra metropolitan area).

The population of Ghana is approximately 27 million.

71% of the population is Christian and 18% are Muslim.

57% of the population is under the age of 25.

25% of the total population (50% of the rural population) is without electricity.

Ghana has a tropical climate. It is warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast, hot and humid in southwest, and hot and dry in north.

Although temperatures do vary with season and elevation, as the following chart shows, the temperature remains relatively steady all year round. May and June represent the peak of rainy season, and July and August are the coolest months of the year.

Climate data for Ghana												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Record high °C (°F)</b>	31 (88)	32 (90)	32 (90)	32 (90)	32 (90)	29 (84)	27 (81)	27 (81)	29 (84)	30 (86)	31 (88)	31 (88)
<b>Average high °C (°F)</b>	27.5 (81.5)	27.5 (81.5)	28 (82)	28 (82)	27 (81)	26 (79)	25 (77)	24 (75)	26 (79)	26 (79)	27 (81)	27 (81)
<b>Average low °C (°F)</b>	23 (73)	23 (73)	24 (75)	24 (75)	23 (73)	23 (73)	22 (72)	21 (70)	22 (72)	22 (72)	23 (73)	23 (73)
<b>Record low °C (°F)</b>	15 (59)	17 (63)	20 (68)	19 (66)	21 (70)	20 (68)	19 (66)	18 (64)	20 (68)	19 (66)	21 (70)	17 (63)
<b>Average rainfall mm (inches)</b>	16 (0.63)	37 (1.46)	73 (2.87)	82 (3.23)	145 (5.71)	193 (7.6)	49 (1.93)	16 (0.63)	40 (1.57)	80 (3.15)	38 (1.5)	18 (0.71)
<b>Average rainy days</b>	2	2	5	7	11	14	7	6	8	9	4	2
<b>Average relative humidity (%)</b>	79	77	77	80	82	85	85	83	82	83	80	79
<b>Mean monthly sunshine hours</b>	214	204	223	213	211	144	142	155	171	220	240	235

The *Harmattan*, a dry and dusty desert wind, blows from the Sahara Desert over Ghana and into the Gulf of Guinea between December and March, lowering the humidity.

Public Holidays

- New Year's Day = Jan 1
- Independence Day = Mar 6
- Good Friday = varies
- Easter Monday = varies
- Labour Day = May 1
- Africa Day = May 25
- Republic Day = Jul 1
- Eid al Fitr (End of Ramadan) = Sep 20-21
- National Farmers' Day = Dec 4
- Eid al Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice) = Nov 27-28
- Christmas = Dec 25-26
- Revolution Day = Dec 31

Time Zone

Ghana uses Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) all year. Ghana does not observe Daylight Savings. Ghana is

- 7-8 hours ahead of Pacific Time
- 6-7 hours ahead of Mountain Time
- 5-6 hours ahead of Central Time
- 4-5 hours ahead of Eastern Time

## EXTRA LEARNING

### Books to Read about Ghana:

- Road to Ghana - Alfred Hutchinson
- Ghana: Understanding the People and Their Culture - John Kuada and Yao Chachah
- Greetings from Ghana: An Englishman's Adventure's from the City of Accra - M.J. Poynter
- This History of Ghana - Roger S Gocking
- Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana - Gwendolyn Mikell
- The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence - Martin Meredith
- People of the Zongo: The Transformation of Ethnic Identities in Ghana - Enid Schildkrout
- Lonely Planet Ghana

### Internet Sites about Ghana

- Ghana Tourism Website - [www.touringghana.com](http://www.touringghana.com)
- United Nations Ghana Site - [www.un.int/ghana](http://www.un.int/ghana)
- Ghana Website Directory - [www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)
- Ghana Radio Stations Online - [radiostationworld.com/locations/Ghana/radio\\_websites.asp](http://radiostationworld.com/locations/Ghana/radio_websites.asp)
- Ghana Modern News Page - [www.modernghana.com/ghanahome](http://www.modernghana.com/ghanahome)
- Ghana Social Lounge - [www.ghanalounge.com](http://www.ghanalounge.com)
- Lonely Planet - [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)

## TWI LANGUAGE

The official language of Ghana is English, but the truth is, English is a second language there. There are 9 native languages *sponsored* by the government, with the main one being Akan. Akan has two major dialects: Twi and Fante. These two dialects are so widely spoken that they are often given the status of separate languages. As the country's official language, English is the language used in government and business affairs. It is also the standard language used for educational instruction.

English is very common and you will very rarely (even in the remotest parts of Ghana) not be able to find someone who can speak English, however the local people appreciate it if you make an attempt to speak the local language. While there are many languages and dialects in Ghana, Twi is commonly spoken and understood. A great website to visit and use as a resource for learning Twi before you leave is <http://www.twimadeeasy.com/>

### Common Twi Words and Phrases

Meh daasay = Thanks

Akwaaba = Welcome!

Ete sen = How are you?

Eh ye = I'm fine.

Na wo so eh = And you, how are you?

Wo din day sen = What is your name?

Meh din day John = My name is John

Meh re ko Legon = I'm going to Legon

Wo bay jay sen = What is the fare (for the taxi)?

Meh paa cho, te so = Please, reduce it (the fare)

te so bio kakra = reduce it again a little

Yoo, Yenko = Alright, let's go.

Way sen = This is how much?

Meh pay ankaa = I would like an orange

Obruni = Foreigner



## GHANA MAKE A DIFFERENCE GHANA VOLUNTEER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Carefully read and then send your signed copy of these terms and conditions (along with proof of your travel insurance) to GMAD

by email: [geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org](mailto:geanie@ghanamakeadifference.org)

By signing this document below, you acknowledge that you agree to the following terms and conditions.

### Costs

You (the volunteer) are responsible for paying for the following program costs to GMAD: the total of (1) \$1,200 and (2) airfare, which is typically between \$1,300 and \$1,700.

You must pay a non-refundable deposit of \$500 at the time of your application. This fee is non-refundable, but it goes towards your program costs.

You must pay an additional \$1,500 on or before March 1, 2018.

You must pay the final balance on or before April 1, 2018.

There is only one way to pay your program fees: [pay online at GMAD](#).

### Insurance

GMAD does not provide you with insurance of any kind. Travel insurance is **mandatory**, and you must purchase this prior to departing on your trip. You are solely responsible for evaluating and determining the type, extent and levels of any insurance coverage you need or desire for your planned volunteer travel period. However, any travel insurance you select **must cover** your entire travel period and **must include** health and emergency medical evacuation coverage.

### Refund Policy

All fees paid to GMAD as a part of the Ghana volunteer program are deemed to be charitable contributions, and GMAD is, therefore, unable to provide a refund of any fees.

Registration fees and program fees are not transferable to other persons.

## Personal Risks

Personal risks are numerous and include such things as disease, sickness, sexual assault, physical assault, threats, property crimes, and death. To understand the risks you are assuming as a GMAD volunteer in Ghana, **you agree to read** the following two attached publications: (1) “Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers” published by the Peace Corps and (2) “Health Information for Travelers to Ghana” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Furthermore, **you acknowledge and accept the responsibilities and risks** associated with your agreement to travel to, temporarily live in, and provide volunteer services in Ghana. Once again, this travel and volunteer work can be hazardous and involves a certain degree of risk, and includes inherently dangerous activities and personal perils to you, both foreseen and unforeseen, all of which are fully accepted by and solely assumed by you, the volunteer. Therefore, Ghana Make A Difference, Inc. (GMAD), including any and all of GMAD’s officers and directors, as well as GMAD’s host country partner organizations and individuals are not liable, to the maximum extent of the law, for any loss or harm you may suffer, including but not limited to loss caused directly or indirectly by:

- Sexual Assault
- Physical Assault
- Threats
- Property Crimes
- Personal injury
- Emotional injury
- Death
- Illness or disease
- Damage to or loss of property
- Hostage situations
- War or terrorism.

## Indemnity

You agree to indemnify GMAD against any and all liability which GMAD incurs arising directly or indirectly out of, or in connection (in any way) with, your travel to, living in and providing services in Ghana.

## Code of Conduct

As a GMAD volunteer, you 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 profanity
- No tobacco\*
- No pornography\*
- No vulgar language
- No marijuana\*
- No prescription drugs without a prescription\*

\* You understand that 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 children’s home in Ghana, and that you will bear the financial burden associated with such removal, including but not limited to hotel costs, transportation costs, and itinerary change fees.

## Volunteer Work Schedule

Volunteers are expected to work, and you agree to do so.

## GMAD Ghana Staff

As already indicated in your application, you understand and agree to the following:

- You understand that GMAD staff members are not allowed to accept gifts and money from volunteers.
- You will not give gifts or money to GMAD staff, GMAD children and the Ghana community.
- If you want to help with a specific need at GMAD or in the community, you agree to provide such help via GMAD by contacting GMAD directly.
- You understand that as a volunteer, you are not expected to give any token gifts to the Ghana staff, BUT if you choose to give a gift of appreciation: (a) you will limit your gift to a small token, (b) whenever possible you will give equally to all staff members and coordinate this gift giving with the director of the children's home, and (c) if you do not give equally to all staff members, you will be sensitive to the situation and you will be discreet in your giving.

Photos, Emails and Social Media Posts

For promotional / marketing purposes, do you grant GMAD the right to use your communication (e.g., emails, texts messages and social media posts) and your images (e.g., photos and videos) relating to your experience as a GMAD volunteer?

Yes  No

Luggage and GMAD Supplies

When traveling to Ghana, airlines typically allow you to travel with two 50-pound pieces of checked luggage in addition to your carry-on luggage. Are you willing to use at least one of your allowed pieces of checked luggage to transport supplies for our GMAD Ghana operations?

Yes  No

If yes, GMAD will pack a 50-pound piece of luggage with supplies and work with you to coordinate getting that luggage to you before you depart to Ghana.

Miscellaneous

To the full extent permissible at law, all representations, terms, warranties, guarantees, or conditions whether implied by statute, common law or custom of the trade or otherwise, including, but not limited to, implied warranties and guarantees, are excluded. Notwithstanding anything else contained in any agreement, the liability of GMAD to you, the volunteer, shall not in aggregate exceed the amount of the registration fee paid by the volunteer.

GMAD reserves the right to remove you as a volunteer from the program.

Force Majeure

GMAD has no liability for any lack of performance, unavailability or failure of the services, or for any failure of GMAD to comply with these terms and conditions, where the same arises from any cause reasonably beyond the control of GMAD.

Governing Law

These terms are governed by the laws of Idaho in the United States of America.

Emergency Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I acknowledge that **I have read** the “Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers” published by the Peace Corps, that **I have read** the “Health Information for Travelers to Ghana” published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and that **I understand and accept the significant risks** associated with being a GMAD volunteer in Ghana. By signing below, I further acknowledge that I agree to the *Ghana Make A Difference Ghana Volunteer Terms and Conditions* as outlined in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer’s name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s name if volunteer is under 18 (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s signature (if volunteer is under 18)