



UnitingWorld Experience Explained

Volunteering Overseas through UnitingWorld

Thank you for your interest in joining our team as a UnitingWorld volunteer. We are delighted to be able to share with you about this program and placements available with our overseas partners. We look forward to working with you in the future!

This document is designed to provide you with background information that will assist in your decision making. Please also feel free to contact us at any time should you wish to discuss the Experience Program or the work of UnitingWorld.

Who is UnitingWorld?

UnitingWorld is the agency of the Uniting Church in Australia responsible for relationships with overseas partners. Within UnitingWorld, there are two Units. The Church Connections Unit stands alongside and supports our partner churches in their life and witness and helps Australians see the world through our partners' eyes. The Relief and Development Unit supports our overseas partners as they enable marginalised communities to overcome poverty. Experience volunteers may work across these Units.



UnitingWorld connects people and church communities in Australia, the Pacific, Asia and Africa to partner in God's mission: overcoming poverty and enabling discipleship and faith-filled action. Many of our partners have been in relationship with the UCA (or its predecessors) for a long time – over 100 years.

Who are our overseas partners?

We work alongside 36 overseas partner churches and their agencies throughout Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, building links and changing lives. Much of our work focusses on those on the margins of society and that means that majority of our volunteers are self-funded, giving their time, energy, and resources to serve on behalf of the UnitingChurch in Australia.



Please contact UnitingWorld

Ph +61 2 8267 4267
www.unitingworld.org.au



So what is the Experience program about?

The UnitingWorld Experience program provides opportunities for ordinary people to do extraordinary things by actively participating in God's mission, sharing and serving with overseas partner churches. Volunteers stand in solidarity with our partners, building relationships and serving one another.



All placements are at the request of our overseas partners. They nominate projects in which they would like to have an Experience volunteer. Then we begin the process of shared dialogue as we develop possible roles and find suitable people to place within their community.

UnitingWorld believes that volunteers do not really stand in their overseas placements as individuals. Many of our church partners talk about a concept of the "plural I". This refers to the idea that when 'I' stand in the midst of our overseas church partners as a volunteer, 'I' am actually standing in front of many others who stand with me (e.g. local church congregations, prayer supporters, financial supporters, volunteers who have served there before). So for every volunteer who takes up an international placement, there are a host of supporters whom they represent.

As one of our partners recently told us: "Above all, our personal experiences with our volunteers show their genuine love and concern, not only with the work we have been doing, but also with us as persons and partners in mission. The mere fact that they decided to come over and help us in our context was already an expression of commitment on their part, which inspires us knowing that we are not alone."

Who can apply?

Do you have a passion for mission and development? Are you looking for a deeper connection with an overseas church community? Are you looking for ways to challenge and stretch yourself while giving something back to an overseas partner community? The Experience Program is a fantastic opportunity to see what you're capable of. It's also an amazing way to live and work overseas and see how your skills and knowledge can help others – and how the skills and knowledge of others can shape you.

Volunteers may include young adults wanting a GAP placement, retirees, students completing tertiary studies and commencing work, people with Long Service Leave, people offering professional skills in a cross cultural context, or students linking a placement with a tertiary course.

Volunteer applicants must be:

- between 18 and 85 years of age (families with children are welcome to apply)
- willing to work within the ethos of the UCA and our overseas partner church
- willing to abide by the UnitingWorld Code of Conduct, including Child Protection
- have medical, police and working with children clearance
- open to the challenges and joys of living simply in another culture
- patient, flexible and adaptable (or at least willing to try!)
- prepared to learn new things about themselves, God and others
- willing to share their Experience story and the work of the partner church on return to Australia.



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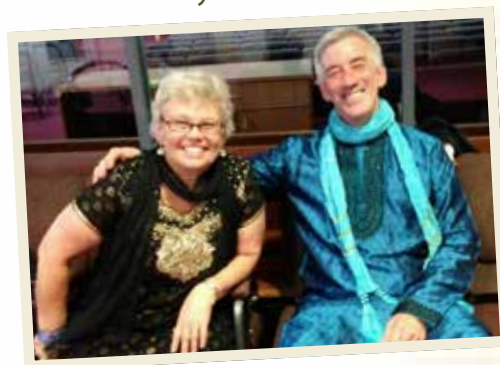
How long can I go and when can I start?

There are a wide range of potential placements available for all types of volunteer. UnitingWorld Experience places volunteers for anywhere between 3 months and 3 years, and occasionally shorter-term placements of several weeks are available.

We usually recommend people expect that the process of preparing for a placement will take approximately 3 months from the time of acceptance into the Experience program.. This can sometimes be shorter, depending on the specific details of individual placements.

From librarians to strategic planners, doctors to music teachers, IT gurus to youth workers, UnitingWorld Experience volunteers are do fantastic work together with our overseas church partners and strengthen these partnerships in real and lasting ways. Placement areas may include...

- Theological Education
- Pastoral Care and Children's/Youth Ministry
- Community health
- Education and Library
- Finance
- Administration, Communication, and IT
- Trades



What placements are available?

You can find specific placements on our website: <http://www.unitingworld.org.au/experience>

What are the costs?

Most UnitingWorld Experience placements are self-funded or funded through local support and fundraising. The amount required depends upon the nature of the placement, the host country and its living costs, and the duration of the placement. If you would like to discuss a more specific estimate, please contact us as costing can vary greatly. All volunteers must ensure they have adequate financial support for the duration of the placement. UnitingWorld is able to assist volunteers with their fundraising by establishing designated accounts for these donations.

What costs do volunteers need to cover?

- Pre service training costs
- Travel costs to and from placement;
- Any fees associated with moving belongings;
- Passport and visa costs;
- Vaccinations prior to travel;
- Local living expenses in placement.



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What does UnitingWorld provide?

- Facilitation of all arrangements leading up to the placement including liaison with host church partner, government agencies, sending church and Synod, support group; designation of and pre-service support for in-country supervisor; risk management prior to placement; provision of supportive policies and procedures; sending out liturgy/commissioning; all administration of the placement;
- Online and/or face to face Pre-Service training;
- In situ pastoral support – regular contact with volunteer (email, text, telephone, possible visits), regular Volunteer Newsletter;
- A designated account into which donations can be made;
- Insurance cover (full travel including medical and emergency evacuation) for the volunteer and any accompanying dependents;
- Critical incident/trauma support – membership of International SOS, telephone crisis counselling available; assistance towards the management of personal issues that may emerge; return to Australia facilitated as necessary through Insurance provider;
 - Accommodation costs;
 - Debriefing; return support information for sending church, Synod and support group;
 - Alumni opportunities for ongoing engagement.



How do I apply for the Program?

1. Prayerfully consider this decision and discuss it with trusted others, especially people you know who have had cross-cultural experience
2. Complete the UnitingWorld Experience application form. This can be done online, sent by email or printed and posted to UnitingWorld Experience. Each application requires a deposit (\$250 for an individual and \$350 per couple) in order for it to proceed. Please read the application for payment details. The deposit is fully refundable should you not be offered a placement.

3. When the form is received, an interview will be arranged in the home state of the applicant with a small panel of people with cross-cultural experience. This is designed to be an opportunity for you to ask a lot of questions as well as for us to get a better sense of what you are hoping for.
4. The interview panel makes a recommendation to UnitingWorld who then contact your referees and make the final decision relating to your suitability to participate in this program. Our aim is to support you towards this end.
5. After you have been accepted as a volunteer, we will then negotiate with you a suitable placement in conjunction with our overseas church partners.
6. Once your placement is finalised, you will receive your placement documentations to sign and then the organisation towards your placement will begin in earnest!

Please note: All people taking up a UnitingWorld placement must be prepared to participate in pre-service training.



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What happens when I am away?

UnitingWorld is deeply committed to providing supportive pastoral care for volunteers. You can expect contact at least once a fortnight from someone in our Experience team and have 24/7 contact in case of emergencies. As far as possible, any UnitingWorld staff or representatives travelling to the area of your placement will contact you for a face-to-face visit.

Volunteers receive a regular Newsletter updating them on what is happening for all current volunteers, providing news from UnitingWorld, and some pastoral and devotional resources. You will be given a local in-country support person, who is working in a similar area to you, who can be of assistance 'on-the-ground'.

International SOS is a major logistics organisation and as a part of UnitingWorld, you will have membership of this. They provide in situ updates of any medical or security concerns and provide emergency medical and security evacuations for all volunteers if needed. They also provide access 24/7 to medical personnel via telephone.

UnitingWorld also recognises that for many people, returning home can be even more complex than going away! We offer organisational and personal debriefing by trained staff and resources for debriefing for individual volunteers and their supporters. All volunteers are offered a session with a counsellor of their choice on return, should they wish to take this up. We encourage this for all volunteers as a way of having an 'emotional health checkup'.

Who can I contact?

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We have all sorts of people: school leavers, Uni students, families, single people, retirees, people looking for a change of direction, people with some long service leave. People just like **YOU!**



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