



## International Organization for Women & Development, Inc.

# MEDICAL VOLUNTEER FACT SHEET

### **Who are medical volunteers?**

Health care providers who are licensed to deliver clinical care are designated medical volunteers by IOWD. Medical volunteers include both nurses and physicians.

### **How do I become a medical volunteer?**

Potential volunteers may begin by completing the contact page on our website to express interest. Our office will then contact you to initiate the credentialing process.

### **What does the selection process involve?**

Upon contacting our office, you will be asked to submit via email a current *curriculum vitae* (CV) or résumé. A senior IOWD member will then contact you to arrange a brief telephone or in-person conversation.

### **How do I know if I have been selected?**

Our office will contact you by email or telephone to inform you of the status of your application.

### **What credentials do medical volunteers require?**

Medical volunteers must possess an active medical license in good standing in their country of practice. A copy of the license, university diploma and passport information page will be required to process your credentials with local authorities. In addition, independent practitioners must certify that no judgments have been made against them.

### **Which medical specialties qualify for participation?**

We invite urologists, colorectal surgeons and fellowship-trained urogynecologists to participate in the obstetric fistula and pelvic floor reconstruction program. We also invite anesthesiologists, dermatologists, general obstetricians and gynecologists, general and intensive care pediatricians, maternal fetal medicine specialists, neonatologists, neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, pediatric surgeons. Perioperative nurses are especially encouraged to apply

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## **Can advanced practice nurses or physician assistants participate in IOWD missions?**

Nurse anesthetists (CRNA) and nurse midwives (CNM) play an essential role in our missions and are recognized in Rwanda, where we currently work. The nurse practitioner (NP), registered nurse first assist (RNFA) and physician assistant (PA) roles are not recognized in Rwanda. While NPs and RNFAs may qualify to participate, in Rwanda their scope of practice may be limited to the nursing role.

## **Do resident physicians and fellows qualify to participate?**

Resident physicians and fellows may qualify to participate provided a credentialed attending physician accompanies them and assumes responsibility to supervise them.

## **What if I am a student? Can I still participate?**

At this time, opportunities for unlicensed undergraduate or graduate students are considered on a case-by-case basis. Typically, unlicensed students who qualify for participation come highly recommended. We limit participation by students from high-income countries in order to prioritize teaching local resident physicians. We encourage you to consider other activities at home that are just as important in advancing our work, such as fundraising and raising awareness about obstetric fistula and other disorders affecting women and children in low-income countries. Please contact our office for additional details.

## **What if I have no medical background? How do I get involved?**

We invite non-medical volunteers willing to lend their diverse skills both at home and in our host country. Please contact our office for additional information.

## **When do the missions take place?**

Three missions are scheduled per year in February, April and October. Exact dates change from year to year. Please contact our office for specific dates.

## **Where do the missions take place?**

We are grateful to have been invited to work in Rwanda, a beautiful country located in east and central Africa. We are based at Kibagabaga District Hospital in the outskirts of the capital city, Kigali. On occasion, some senior team members will attend to specific cases in a different facility. You may be asked to accompany and assist the team member, but this is well arranged in advance. In the past, we have worked in Niger and Vietnam. Check out our website for additional information on past missions.

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### **How long do the missions last?**

The missions last for 10-12 days, not including the time it takes to travel to the host country. Volunteers can customize their stay based on availability. Although most volunteers stay for the entire duration of the mission, some arrive in time for the first day of work, but leave before the end of the mission. Others arrive later and stay to the end of the mission.

### **What is the cost of participating in a mission?**

All volunteers are responsible for the cost of participating in a mission. On average, charges for airfare plus room and board amount to approximately \$3,500, depending on where one is traveling from. In addition, volunteers are responsible for visa fees (purchased on arrival at the airport), obtaining recommended vaccinations, souvenirs and other incidentals.

### **Will I be responsible for making travel arrangements?**

All volunteers are responsible for purchasing their own airline tickets, but IOWD makes hotel reservations and all travel arrangements within the destination country (airport transfers and transport from the hotel to the hospital).

### **What about my meals?**

Breakfast is provided at the hotel and is included in the cost of the room. Volunteers are responsible for lunch and dinner. The team usually eats together.

### **What is a typical day in the life of an IOWD volunteer like?**

There is no such thing as a typical day. Each day differs from the next, but there are some routine activities that are consistent from day to day. After an early breakfast at 6:00am, the team departs the hotel for the hospital by chartered bus at 7:00am. The team leader coordinates the surgical schedule in collaboration with team members and local staff. Upon arriving at the hospital, the team splits up into 2 groups to perform interdisciplinary rounds and assist in setting up the operating suites. On days that lectures are scheduled for our local counterparts, IOWD volunteers will be staffed accordingly. Interdisciplinary rounds are also conducted in the afternoon or early evening after the surgical schedule is completed.

### **What if I have never traveled to or worked in a low-income country?**

Experience or prior travel outside the United States is not required to participate in a mission. IOWD volunteers adhere to globally accepted standards of medical or nursing practice. In addition, the medical advisory board has put together protocols

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specific to the local context within which we work, and will be provided prior to departure. Team leaders and senior members of the team are available for guidance should any queries arise. Respectful collaboration with our local counterparts is essential to the success of our work. IOWD requires volunteers to be sensitive to and cognizant of local customs, and to be aware of the social, economic and geopolitical climate. We are happy to suggest a list of relevant literature to help you prepare.

