



## Volunteer Teams

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Before you join:**

##### **Who can participate in a volunteer trip with The BIG FIX Uganda?**

We invite everyone with a sincere desire to help animals and people in Uganda to apply. There is a role for everyone - veterinary professionals and students seeking field experience, and animal lovers in general. The volunteer tasks offered to you will match your level of experience and comfort. Applicants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

##### **What would I do?**

Some examples of the work you may do:

- Assist at veterinary field clinics (surgical assistance for those with proper education/training) - surgical preparation, surgery, recovery, vaccination, record- keeping, grooming/washing of animals.
- Participate in the operations of our veterinary hospital - assisting with client consultations, examination of animals, surgical preparation, surgery, recovery, care of patients with cancer and complex cases, cleaning, feeding and playing with dogs.
- Attending school education programs and photographing/videotaping our work.
- Assisting with community mobilization for our activities.
- Helping to care for and comfort cats and dogs in our kennels and to socialize and walk dogs.
- Assisting in regular training sessions of The Comfort Dog Project dog-guardian teams.
- Participating in public education and awareness through school and village outreach, radio programs and community meetings.
- Participate in rabies surveillance and response activities.
- Participate and document dog welfare call responses.
- Program administrative and maintenance activities including sorting, packing, and inventorying supplies; cleaning; running errands; record keeping; photographing activities; any other assistance the field team requires.

While we will do our best to accomplish your volunteer goals. All volunteer activities are subject to limitations or decisions made by The BIG FIX Uganda team members. The health and well-being of the animals and people we serve must remain our foremost concern.

##### **How much does it cost to participate in a volunteer trip with The BIG FIX Uganda?**

Our volunteer fees are based on the number of volunteers being hosted and the accommodation and program requirements of the volunteer(s). Special programs, such as the World Animal Day team, have different fees, normally because many more services are offered as part of those programs (such as airport pick up, hotels in Entebbe, and private roundtrip transport between Entebbe and Gulu). For general volunteers or veterinary externs, our volunteer fee is **\$475.00 per week** which includes lodging in our guesthouse and full board (breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily).

For general volunteers (not on the World Animal Day team), the volunteer fee does ***not include*** airport transfers, lodging in Entebbe, or transportation to/from Gulu. We can help you make arrangements for those services and can quote prices to help in your planning.

**Which airport will I fly to in Uganda?**

Entebbe (EBB).

**Should I stay overnight in Entebbe upon arrival?**

If you arrive in the afternoon or evening, we recommend that you stay overnight in Entebbe. There are some very nice guesthouses we can recommend which are reasonably priced, will provide airport pick up, and will serve you breakfast as part of the room rate. The trip from Entebbe to Gulu takes about 5 – 5-1/2 hours so it's best to start off in the morning.

**Should I hire private transport from Entebbe to Gulu or take public means?**

If you have traveled in Africa before and have taken public transportation, it is fine to use this means. We recommend Homeland Bus Company from the main bus park in Kampala.

If you have the budget, it is recommended to hire private transport. Having a private driver will allow you the chance to stop and change money and to stop for lunch at a restaurant. Please let us recommend a driver we have worked with before. Presently, the rate to hire a car and driver is 670,000 to 750,000 Uganda shillings, depending on type of vehicle. Fuel is included in the car hire.

The other advantage of hiring private transport is that you do not have to worry about how you will get from Entebbe to the main bus park in Kampala by 7:30 a.m. to buy your ticket and get on the bus in time. Private transport from Entebbe to Kampala is about 100,000 shillings and can usually be arranged in advance through the guesthouse where you stay in Entebbe. The cost of a bus ticket from Kampala to Gulu is approximately 30,000 shillings.

**How is the road from Entebbe to Gulu?**

The road is very good. The highway from Entebbe now by-passes Kampala, saving a lot of time. The road is paved all the way to Gulu and the trip is much faster than it has been in the past.

**How do I apply to be part of a BIG FIX Uganda volunteer team?**

Complete our Volunteer Application. If you are a vet or a para-vet, please provide a copy of your credentials with your application materials.

**Do I need to be bilingual to participate?**

No. In the villages, many people do not speak English fluently, they speak the local language (Luo). However, our team members speak Luo and will provide translation where necessary. Throughout the country, most Ugandans do speak English.

**Do I need a passport in order to fill out an application?**

Yes. You will need a passport to travel to Uganda, unless you are a resident of Uganda or one of the East African Union countries.

**What is it like at The BIG FIX?**

The BIG FIX is located on a beautiful 4 acre fully-fenced compound in Koch Village, about 15 minutes drive from Gulu town. Our compound includes the dog hospital, the guesthouse, our kennels, a dog training yard, and a 2 acre garden where we grow much of our own food. We are *off grid* and everything is run on solar power. We have our own well and septic system, and hot water solar heaters on the roof of each building. It is possible that you may experience times when water or power are not

available, especially at night when it has been overcast during the day. When this happens, our staff will provide you with water for bathing with jerry cans.

Our solar system does not tolerate heat-generating devices such as hair dryers, electric kettles, or other similar appliances. Please do not use these at BIG FIX as they can cause significant problems for our system.

Our guesthouse has a sitting room, dining area, and 4 guest rooms for visitors. (Two rooms are occupied by BIG FIX staff members in residence.) We have comfortable bedrooms and bathrooms, western toilets, and open showers. (By *open shower*, we mean that there is no enclosed shower, but there is a shower basin.) Our Tam-Pira and Lakica rooms are triple rooms with their own private bathrooms. The Lok Oroma (double) and Lok Itam (triple) rooms have a Jack-and-Jill bathroom between them.

While you can flush small amounts of toilet paper as necessary, please do not flush anything else in the toilet and use the waste basket next to the toilet when possible.

We have Wi-Fi at BIG FIX, but the internet in Northern Uganda is not always as stable as in other parts of the world. You can definitely use your e-mail and upload a photo or two, but you should not plan on being able to upload or download large files or videos.

In the spirit of compassion toward all animals, the BIG FIX is vegetarian. We do not serve meat. We are happy to accommodate vegan and other dietary needs, we just request that you please notify us of such needs a minimum of two weeks prior to arrival so we can plan our menus well. Our Guesthouse Caretaker will serve a western-style breakfast with coffee or tea. Lunch and dinner are a combination of western and local meals including proteins (fresh tofu made at BIG FIX, beans, sesame, lentils, gnats, yogurt, and eggs), starches (Irish potatoes, posho (corn meal), rice, Kalo (made from millet-casava flour), cassava, sweet potatoes), vegetables (including a variety of greens unique to Uganda, carrots, French beans, eggplant, onion, tomatoes) and fruits in season (avocado, oranges, papaya, mango, pineapple, apples, bananas, passion fruit).

#### **Will I be able to do laundry at BIG FIX?**

You can purchase laundry soap and hand wash your own clothes, using one of our basins. Alternatively, you can pay one of our housekeepers who will do a great job doing your laundry for you. And your patronage will help support our staff. (Please note that since our laundry is dried outside, we are not able to wash your undergarments.)

#### **When can I volunteer?**

We are able to accommodate volunteers at most times throughout the year. Please contact us at [info@thebigfixuganda.org](mailto:info@thebigfixuganda.org) concerning scheduling.

#### **For how long can I volunteer?**

We are able to accommodate placements for up to 6 months.

#### **Can our group participate in a volunteer trip with The BIG FIX Uganda?**

Yes. We can accommodate families and groups. Our guesthouse will accommodate a maximum of 11 people in four triple rooms and one double room.

## **Pre-Trip Questions**

### **Do I need vaccinations to volunteer with The BIG FIX Uganda?**

You will be required to have a *Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate* in order to enter Uganda. Please check with your health care provider about other recommended vaccinations. We do have typhoid in Northern Uganda so the typhoid vaccine is worthwhile. Malaria preventative tablets (such as *Malarone*) are also *strongly* recommended.

Please note that even if you have had rabies pre-exposure vaccinations, if you are bitten by a dog in Uganda with an unknown vaccination history, we will require that you receive post-exposure anti-rabies injections at a private clinic in Gulu.

**Do I need a visa to travel to Uganda? How do I get one?**

East African citizens do not need a visa, but most visitors from Western countries do need a visa.

You can apply on line, pay your \$50 fee online, and take your approval letter with you. Apply at <https://visas.immigration.go.ug/> You need your passport, your yellow fever certificate, and a passport photo to scan and upload when you apply online. When you arrive at Immigration in Entebbe, they will provide the visa. If you forget to apply online, you can pay the \$50 and get your visa upon arrival.

**What about money?**

Bring only new or newer bills with no marks or tears. Money that is older or heavily worn, or has any marks or even slight tears is subject to being rejected at any currency exchange bureau. Bring bills in larger denominations (\$50 and \$100) as they receive MUCH better exchange rates than \$20 and smaller denominations.

There are a few ATM machines in Gulu but please do not rely on them. They can run out of money.

**Will I be able to call home often during my service trip?**

Yes. You can either bring a phone which is compatible with Uganda SIM cards, and buy a SIM card in Uganda (for about \$1), or purchase an inexpensive cell phone for about \$25 and add airtime to it as needed. Please note that some cell phones from the U.S.A. are not compatible with Uganda's SIM cards.

**What is the availability of Internet?**

We have wifi available at The BIG FIX house. However, you will not be able to upload and download large files unless you purchase data to do so. There are many internet cafes in Kampala and Gulu.

**What should I pack on my service trip?**

See our recommended packing list.

**How much money should I bring?**

We will be happy to help you set a personal budget for your costs. These costs will depend on your personal preferences and needs.

**Am I required to purchase health/travel insurance?**

Yes. You are required to have travel insurance including medical coverage and to provide proof of this prior to arrival in Uganda. Your travel insurance must cover veterinary service work.

## **Donations**

**What kind of donations should I bring with me on my service trip?**

We would greatly appreciate it if you would collect and bring donations to help support our program activities. A list of items needed is included in the volunteer package. Please also check with us about bringing supplies – we have many supplies waiting for someone to carry them to BIG FIX Uganda.

**I have too many donations to pack in my own luggage; can I ship them to The Big Fix?**

We have found that it is quite expensive to ship parcels to Uganda. Most of our supplies and equipment are carried to Uganda in checked airline baggage. When booking your flight, you can check on the cost of bringing extra pieces of baggage. It varies from about \$140 (Emirates) to over \$200 (KLM) per piece.

**Are donations tax-deductible?**

If you are a U.S. citizen, your volunteer expenses and donations may be tax deductible as The BIG FIX is an IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the U.S.A. Please photograph and provide an inventory of any donations you carry with you to Uganda so that we may comply with our inventory control procedures. Contact our Executive Committee if you would like a donation receipt for supplies you bring.