

NDIV VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Purpose

The purpose of the Notre Dame International Volunteer (NDIV) mission experience is to provide women with an opportunity to join with the Sisters of Notre Dame in proclaiming God's goodness and provident care among people in another culture

Benefits

The NDIV mission experience, will provide you an opportunity to:

- Broaden your vision of the world and your place in it
- Learn new things about yourself and others
- Concretize your commitment to justice and peace
- Strengthen your faith and deepen your spirituality
- Experience church in a new way
- Quite frankly, change your life

Who Should Apply?

Healthy women at least 21 years of age who desire to spend time giving and learning in a developing country are invited to apply. You will have the opportunity for living simply, often without conveniences such as hot water and electricity. Being immersed in an unfamiliar culture will draw on your ability to be flexible, to accept what is not really understood, to be patient. While two or three other volunteers (some of whom may be from the MAZ program in Germany) will be participating alongside you, at times you will likely experience loneliness, uncertainty and confusion. You must be independent enough to weather these difficulties.

Brief Description of the Mission

The original site of the SND mission and the main site where volunteers would be based is in Buseesa, Uganda. Buseesa is a rural village located in the uplands of the country. The Sisters of Notre Dame have had a presence there since 1995. In addition to St. Julie Convent, a nursery school and a primary boarding school for both girls and boys, a secondary boarding school for girls and a large farm are maintained on the property. The primary focus of the mission is education, but because of the presence of so many students, teachers, and workers, numerous other activities are always in progress. St.

Julie's, despite its isolation, is a busy place. There is ample opportunity to manifest God's goodness and provident care to people in a multitude of ways.

The people in the Kibaale district where St. Julie is located are largely subsistence farmers with minimal income. The mission, therefore, needs to be heavily subsidized. This has been possible through the California and Covington provinces of the Sisters of Notre Dame and through the support of donors in the United States and Germany.

In 2009, a second site was established in Lyamutundwe which is located between Entebbe (site of the airport) and Kampala (the capital city). At present, a house of studies for young Ugandan sisters and a formation house operate there. Eventually, this will also serve as a base for other outreach activities.

Background Information on Uganda

Anyone who intends to volunteer for a year's stay in Buseesa, Uganda, will want to learn something about the country, its history and its way of life. The following sources (in English) of information are recommended:

1. Uganda ABC (<http://ug.china-embassy.org/eng/wgdjj/t168250.htm>).
 - a. The information includes a concise history of Uganda prior to the posting date of October 2004.
 - b. the history is useful, but it does not appear that the information is regularly updated.
2. U.S. State Department Background Information (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2963.htm>).
 - a. This site provides a short description of Uganda and its history. There are also links to other information sources.
 - b. This site is likely to be kept up-to-date because of its maintenance by the State Department.
3. *Uganda* by Ian Legett from Oxfam Country Profiles series.

This is a short, readable account of the geography, history and life of Uganda. It is available from amazon.com.
4. *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* by Doreen Baingana.

Doreen is a Ugandan woman who came to the United States. This is a novel consisting of short stories of a family of Ugandan girls, one of whom eventually comes to the U.S. Although the setting is quite different from that of Buseesa, the book gives good insights into female adolescence in urban Uganda and in girls' boarding schools.
5. *Mzungu: A Notre Dame Student in Uganda* by Michael Sweukar.

This is a short and excellent book that is basically a journal Michael wrote while living with the Holy Cross Brothers and teaching in a Benedictine primary school during a summer of volunteer service in Uganda. Michael was a student at the University of Notre Dame at the time.
6. *Tips on Ugandan Culture: A Visitor's Guide* by Shirley Byakutaaga

This short book is reader-friendly and offers practical insights into Ugandan customs and culture. It is meant to further understanding of Ugandan values and day-to-day behavior. It is available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Living Conditions in Buseesa

As a volunteer, you will be living with other volunteers at the mission site in Buseesa. Others living on the same property will include Sisters of Notre Dame from the United States, Germany and Uganda, Ugandan teachers from the schools and various workers. Buildings are generally brick with cement floors. Living quarters consist of a simple private room with bed, desk, and storage cabinets. There are common showers and flush toilets. Common spaces allow for social interaction.

Since St. Julie's is situated in the highlands of Uganda ("upcountry"), the climate is pleasant even though the equator is only 4° distant. Dry and rainy seasons alternate twice yearly. The dry brings dust and the possibility of water shortage. The rainy brings mud and frequent soakings. Sunny, beautiful weather is the rule, even in the rainy season when the daily rains typically occur in late afternoon and evening.

Buseesa is an isolated village. The people speak Runyoro, a Bantu dialect, which Westerners find very difficult to learn. This severely limits interaction with adults who have not learned English. The nearest town, Karuguuza, is about 30 minutes away by car. The larger town, Mubende, is approximately one hour distant. You can take a "taxi" (usually crowded minivan) for transport. Bicycles and motorbikes are also popular methods of travel.