



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

for VSO Volunteers



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# INTRODUCTION

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You want to take the plunge and work abroad. Maybe you have already found a vacancy that appeals to you in our international job bank. How will you apply for a job? What should you do once you have been hired? And even further in the future: what will you do when you return?

In this guide we try to answer all your questions in the following order.

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# PART 1: QUESTIONS ON THE ORIENTATION PHASE

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## **I WANT TO WORK ABROAD AS A VSO VOLUNTEER. WHAT NOW?**

In that case, you must meet a number of criteria. These are our basic conditions:

You are between 23 and 70 years old.

You have at least three years of relevant work experience in education, health care or work and income.

You have a bachelor or master degree.

You speak English well.

You agree that your remuneration and accommodation are comparable to those of local colleagues.

You are healthy and agree that the VSO medical team will perform a medical check.

You have no problem applying for and demonstrating a VOG (Certificate of Good Behaviour) at VSO's request.

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## **PART 2: QUESTIONS ON THE APPLICATION PHASE**

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### **I HAVE FOUND AN INTERESTING VACANCY THAT MATCHES MY EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE. IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD DO BEFORE I APPLY?**

That's great, because that means we are looking for you! Now, the most important thing is to check whether this is the right time for you to go abroad for a longer period of time. Only then you can do your work abroad with peace of mind and full focus.

That is better for yourself, but also for the partner organization and the local colleagues with whom you are going to collaborate. Therefore, discuss your plans with your friends and family and see if you can really leave for a long period of time.

### **I AM IN DOUBT ABOUT A VACANCY OR DON'T SEE ONE THAT FITS MY PROFILE. WHAT NOW?**

Please contact one of our recruiters. Not all vacancies are online on our website, because sometimes vacancies are filled with applicants who are in our database. Our **recruiters** know which profiles are needed now and in the future.

### **I WANT TO APPLY FOR A JOB, HOW DOES THAT WORK?**

The procedure takes place via our international website <http://www.vsointernational.org>. Keep in mind that the selection procedure is in English, because your work will ultimately also be in English. That is why we will only deal with English-language CVs and cover letters.

### **I RESPONDED TO A VACANCY IN THE INTERNATIONAL JOB BANK. WHAT NOW?**

Our international colleagues are doing the first CV selection. If we see a possible match, a Dutch recruiter will approach you for an intake interview by telephone. During this interview the recruiter will discuss your motivation, experience and the selection criteria for the vacancy with you and you will receive tips about your CV.

If there is a positive outcome, you will take an online competency assessment. This assessment consists of an online questionnaire and a Skype interview with two selectors. Within a week you will receive the results of your assessment and you will hear whether you can start as a VSO volunteer.

If you are allowed to continue, our recruiter will look with you at possible starting dates and/or suitable vacancies. Subsequently, your CV and motivation will be submitted to our colleagues in the country you applied for. After their approval, there will be a substantive interview with the programme manager.

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# **PART 3: QUESTIONS ON THE PREPARATION FOR DEPARTURE**

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## **I AM HIRED! WHAT WILL HAPPEN NOW?**

First of all, of course: congratulations! You can start onboarding from here. Our onboarding specialist will contact you. He will tell you which documents are required for a visa and where you can apply for these. This differs per country. In addition, you will receive information about vaccinations and which training courses you are supposed to follow. It is going to be a hectic period in which you will have to arrange a lot of things. You are responsible yourself for applying for your visa and getting your vaccinations on time. If you do this too late, this may have consequences for your start date. During this process you will be supported by the onboarding specialist.

## **WHAT HEALTH REQUIREMENTS SHOULD I MEET?**

Our medical team knows everything about health issues in developing countries. They assess whether the project is medically suitable for you and make a risk assessment of your health based on a medical screening. This screening consists of an online questionnaire and, in case of a placement for more than three months, a medical check-up and a dental check-up at your own dentist. (The dental check-up is not reimbursed by VSO).

## **WHAT KIND OF TRAINING SHOULD I TAKE BEFORE I LEAVE?**

We offer online training courses and a training weekend. During the training sessions, you will acquire the necessary knowledge about VSO's policy and working methods. These training courses are not only useful, but also offer you the opportunity to meet like-minded people.

## **BECOME A MEMBER OF THE VSO COMMUNITY**

Do you want to be involved in VSO in a low-threshold way? Then sign up for the VSO Community. Within the VSO Community you can get in touch with all kinds of people who care about VSO: from donors to (former) volunteers.

And all the more convenient: you will find there peer supporters who, with their knowledge and experience as former VSO volunteers, can help you with practical tips and a listening ear.

## TAKE ACTION!

Do you enjoy a sporting challenge or are you bursting with creative ideas? Sponsoring is a great way to contribute to VSO projects. What's more, taking action for VSO is a good way to meet new people - both online and offline. The possibilities are endless:

Are you sporty, musical or creative? Enlist your talent with a sponsorship campaign and make your performance even more extraordinary.

Are you having a birthday, wedding or anniversary? Let more people share in the festive spirit by making a donation on your behalf to VSO.

Every contribution makes a difference and we greatly appreciate it.

Would you also like to contribute financially to the work of VSO? You can! VSO has a **"Take Action - Fundraiser Platform"** on which you can create your own page and start a fundraising activity. This helps in your efforts to raise money for VSO. Go to the **Take Action - Fundraiser Platform** and create your own action page.

Experience shows that this is not only an effective way to raise funds but that people also enjoy being involved in your adventure. Many people also want to contribute to a good cause but are constrained or do not know which organization they can trust with their donations. Nothing is more enjoyable than supporting an organization, in which you know of someone who is personally involved.

**Do you need help?** VSO has a volunteer pool with fundraisers. They can help you come up with actions, create a page on the platform and give you tips on how to make your action successful. You can find the voluntary fundraisers on the community platform. Select the fundraising pool on the member page under the filter 'volunteer pool' and send your question to one of the fundraisers.



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# PART 4: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR STAY

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## CAN I DO EVEN MORE AS A VSO VOLUNTEER DURING MY STAY ABROAD?

You can definitely do more. Our VSO volunteers are our most valuable ambassadors. This means that you can support our work in other ways as well. By raising funds in your network or by blogging about VSO and your adventures as a VSO volunteer, for example. There are many ways to make a difference! In this chapter, we share some practical tips.

### 1. SHARE YOUR ENTHUSIASM!

Publicity, it's really nothing more than sharing your enthusiasm with others. Many local and regional media are eager for interesting stories. You have such a story because there are few people going to Africa or Asia to work for an extended period. One phone call or a press release is often enough to get into the newspaper, trade magazine, regional TV or local radio. Often it is easier if you have something in common with the media in question. For example, you live or were born in the city on which this media focuses, or because you work in a field that is preferred by the media in question.

**Are you in contact with media?** Notify Merijn de Jong ([m.dejong@vso.nl](mailto:m.dejong@vso.nl)).

**Do you need help?** The VSO Community has a pool of volunteer editors. They can assist you with writing a press briefing or share tips and tricks with you. Ask one of them your question through the community platform: <http://community.vso.nl>

Go to the member page, select the volunteer pool and then the editors pool to find an editor you can contact.

### 2. SHARE YOUR STORY!

We hope that you will keep us updated through a weblog or via email. Not only because we love to hear about your adventures, but also because your story is very valuable to us. Through your story, we can keep funding partners up to date or make others enthusiastic about becoming a VSO volunteer. If you like, we can ask one of our volunteer editors to interview you. The editor can then share your experiences on the community platform.

### **3. BE SOCIAL!**

Follow us on **Facebook** and **LinkedIn** and share our stories.

Useful online blogs:

<https://vso.waarbenjij.nu>

<https://www.blogger.com>

### **WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM VSO DURING MY STAY ABROAD?**

We are an international organization with offices in several countries. The VSO office in the Netherlands guides you during the recruitment procedures and your preparations before department.

Once you have arrived in the country of your assignment, the local VSO office will take over. This VSO office has much more knowledge about the local language and culture and is familiar with the laws and regulations that apply to your stay. During your time abroad, you will be in contact with them directly. Your local employer will be either the local VSO office – in case you will be working for VSO directly – or the partner organization that is involved in your project.

VSO covers your return airplane ticket, provides basic housing and arranges an airport transfer. Additionally, you will receive a basic allowance that is similar to the salary of your local colleagues. You are entitled to three weeks of holiday a year. You can agree with your local manager when to take these holiday days.

VSO makes sure that you have a medical insurance. In case you run into medical issues, you can approach a medical specialist from VSO who will be supporting the local VSO office during your stay.

### **HOW WILL THE FIRST DAYS AT MY NEW WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?**

Upon arrival, you will get a short introduction. Among other things, this will include important information on the local circumstances as well as medical and safety procedures. Of course, you will also get to meet your local colleagues and you will receive more information about your assignment and the specific goals you will be working on.

### **HOW WILL EVERYDAY LIFE AT MY NEW WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?**

You will receive an allowance that is similar to the local salary. This should be sufficient to cover your living expenses, but it will not be enough to maintain an expat lifestyle or to send money home. This means that you will have the same living standards as your local colleagues. Keep in mind that VSO does not cover any intermediate travel costs to/from home. Your local employer pays your allowance in the local currency. Additionally, you are entitled to three weeks of holiday leave. You agree with your local employer when you take these holiday days.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY?**

VSO provides you with a list of recommended doctors, clinics, dentists and pharmacies in the country where you will be travelling. The national VSO office is always available in



case of an emergency. They are there to assist you in case of pressing personal, medical or security issues.

### **WHAT ABOUT THE SAFETY AT MY NEW WORKPLACE?**

VSO assesses your work situation continuously. We do our utmost to prevent any form of abuse or exploitation at your work place. Whenever you meet a person connected to VSO, you ought to feel respected and protected. In case you have any worries or you would like to talk confidentially about issues relating to security or integrity, we work together with an independent counsellor.



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# PART 5: QUESTIONS AFTER RETURN

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## MY ASSIGNMENT FOR VSO HAS ENDED. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

At the end of your assignment, you will have an exit meeting at the national VSO office in the country where you have been working on your VSO assignment. The VSO office in the Netherlands will invite you for a meeting as well. During this meeting, you get to share your experiences with someone who has a deeper understanding of the conditions of your VSO assignment. Family and friends might not always be able to offer that.

## WILL THERE BE SOME KIND OF GUIDANCE AFTER I HAVE RETURNED?

Definitely. Many VSO volunteers experience a culture shock after they have returned. We help you to settle back into your daily life in the Netherlands. We do this in close cooperation with our VSO Community members. Many professionals in our community have a lot of experience with working abroad for VSO. They will surely recognize some of the things you go through: they have been there. We therefore strongly encourage you to become a member of our VSO Community. As a member, you might get to share your experiences with someone as well one day! We strongly believe that knowledge sharing does not have to stop when a VSO assignment ends.

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO FOR VSO AFTER I HAVE RETURNED?

This is where our special resettlement program comes in. This program is there so that you can:

- Give VSO feedback about your experiences during your time abroad. This can help us assist future VSO volunteers even better.
- Share your experiences with your successors.
- Become a member of the VSO Community for former VSO volunteers through <https://community.vso.nl>. Here, you will have access to VSO projects, job vacancies and events especially for former VSO volunteers. Connect with other former VSO volunteers and local VSO supporters through one of our support groups.
- Participate in a day for former volunteers, where you get to meet other VSO volunteers.
- Keep updated on the progress of the project you worked on.

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**VSO**

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