



Dear Prospective Volunteer,

First, I want to thank you for your interest in helping others and especially for your interest in our work. We have already made a difference in this small corner of Tanzania and your support means a great deal.

After reading all of the information in this package, we hope you'll decide to join us. Why? Because, we need your help! The need here is so great and the hours of the day simply too short for us to accomplish all that needs to be done without your help. You will find that the entire staff of the Rift Valley Children's Village is working hard from dawn till dusk. And there is still so much more to be done! We will make every effort to guide you through your first days here, but we won't be able to hold your hand every step of the way. As a result, you will need to be independent, motivated and imaginative. Know that you will fall into bed each night exhausted and fulfilled. In short, being a volunteer is hard work and not a humanitarian holiday. If all of this makes you excited and eager to come, we can't wait for your arrival!

Living and working with our children will be an experience unequalled in your life. I can think of no greater joy than giving kids "a chance in life". Their laughter and cuddles will be your daily salary and their success in life will be your pension that is paid through the years to come. Prepare yourself for a life altering and heartwarming experience.

Karibu!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "India Howell".

India Howell  
Founder and Executive Director

# Who We Are and What We Do

The Tanzanian Children's Fund (TCF) provides support for the Rift Valley Children's Village and other community-based programs that improve the lives of marginalized children in Tanzania.

TCF recognizes that the best way to promote the well-being of all children is to provide access to high-quality education, free healthcare and microfinance trainings and loans to the entire community. Our innovative, multi-pronged approach to addressing systemic poverty is what has enabled us to have a deep impact and catalyze real and lasting change.

## **Rift Valley Children's Village**

The Rift Valley Children's Village (RVCV) currently provides a permanent and loving home for 97 marginalized and orphaned children. When the children arrive at the village, they are welcomed into a loving home where a team of Tanzanian social workers, international staff and volunteers work with them to ensure that they are physically and emotionally cared for, providing them with the opportunity to learn and grow into happy, healthy adults.

## **Kids Living with Relatives**

Some of the children that we care for have a place to live, but their relatives lack the resources to provide them with adequate care. These children participate in our Kids Living with Relatives (KLR) program. RVCV provides these children and their families with the material goods necessary for the children to thrive including food, clothing, medical care, and school funds. Like the children living at RVCV, KLR kids receive the individual attention and unconditional love that allows them to grow into happy, healthy leaders in their community and beyond.

## **Student Teachers**

Students who have graduated from Form 4 of their secondary school studies, but cannot afford to continue their schooling at this time, apply to be a Student Teacher for RVCV and Gyetighi Primary. They will teach some classes at the school and live on-site in the children's houses. They also supervise the kids at RVCV when volunteers are on time off on Sundays. They receive a stipend and free room and board as well as 3 years of higher education, paid for by TCF, after their time as a student teacher.

## **Medical Care**

RVCV serves as the base for a Rural Community Health Clinic for our children, the students and faculty at Gyetighi Primary and Oldeani Secondary Schools, and our wider community. We have a full-time Registered Nurse who holds daily office hours, conducts annual health screenings for primary and secondary students, as well as assists the Foundation for African Medicine and Education (FAME) during their bimonthly medical clinics providing medical consultations and treatments free of charge for RVCV children and the wider community.

## **Microfinance**

RVCV instituted a microfinance program in 2008 to give local entrepreneurs the training, support and resources needed to operate small businesses. This program provides loans to over 590 clients, who together support nearly 700 children and an equal number of dependent family members. In 2010, the program expanded its efforts and helped found three Savings and Credit Cooperatives in the surrounding communities. Locally owned, and locally led, these cooperatives operate like small-scale banks: members contribute funds and use those funds to make loans within the community.

## **Education**

Since 2007, RVCF has been in a partnership with the government in managing Gyetighi Primary School. Currently, the school has 460 students in Awali through Standard VII. The school became #1 in the Karatu District in 2010. In 2014, RVCF created a partnership with the government to manage Oldeani Secondary School. Currently, the school has 365 students in Form I through Form IV.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Getting to RVCV**  
If you need a ride to RVCV from Karatu, Arusha or from JRO airport, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator (volunteer@tanzanianchildrensfund.org) who would be happy to arrange a ride for you.
- 2. Does everyone at RVCV speak English?** We have several staff that speak English and are happy to help with translation. We encourage the children to speak English and ask that you help them practice their speaking skills; you will have very little trouble communicating with them. Since many of our Tanzanian staff do not speak English it may be helpful to know some basic Kiswahili phrases prior to arrival. Many volunteers and visitors bring a self-teach Swahili book or phrasebook; though we have copies you can borrow.
- 3. How's the food?** Great! RVCV has three cooks for volunteers/visitors and you can expect food similar to that which you might have at home. For breakfast we have pancakes, French toast, oatmeal, and eggs with toast. Yogurt, granola, and bananas are also available. For lunch we have soup, salad, sandwiches or pizza and for dinner we have beef, chicken, pasta, potatoes, rice, and vegetables. There is always peanut butter and jelly, though you may also want to purchase personal snacks (e.g. trail mix, dried fruit, nuts, candy, protein bars, etc.) at home or in Arusha. **We cannot accommodate special dietary needs or requests. The village is not nut-free.**
- 4. Can I drink the water?** You should not drink water directly from the tap. However, our staff filters and chemically purifies water every day for cooking and drinking. Please bring a re-usable water bottle to help you stay hydrated. You DO NOT need to buy bottled water unless you think it's a necessity.
- 5. Are there items available at RVCV made by your microfinance clients?** Yes! We have a duka (shop) with items made of local fabrics and beads made by our microfinance clients. We welcome shillings or USD to purchase these items.
- 6. How much does it cost to stay at RVCV?** There is a \$100 non-refundable administrative fee that must be paid in order to reserve your spot at the village. For volunteers staying less than 9 weeks, the cost is \$200/week. If you are staying with us for more than 9 weeks, the cost goes down to \$130/week. This will cover your housing, three meals per day, laundry, and cleaning services while you are staying with us.
- 7. How safe is it?** In general, Tanzania is one of the more stable African countries. That being said, petty crime (e.g. theft) is common in cities including Arusha so be aware and pay attention to your valuables. This does become less of a threat as you move away from the cities. We also have "askaris" (guards) who patrol the property at night and keep a close eye on things for us.
- 8. Will I be teaching a class? What if I have never taught before?** All volunteers will be asked to *lead* a morning "class" for a group of our younger kids, but don't worry! Your most important job is exposing children of all ages to English so any simple activities will be helpful. Many volunteers do art projects, read books, and some do math or English practice as well. Be creative with the activities you plan, we have many supplies and resources for you to use at the village! The Volunteer Coordinator will also assist you as you prepare for your trip, coming up with larger projects and activities that you can work on with the kids.

## Contact Information

**Important Phone Numbers:** To call Tanzania from the US add 011-255 before each phone number. To call within Tanzania drop the +255 and add a 0 before the phone number.

Rose Tobiassen (Volunteer Coordinator): +255 693 369 628

India Howell (Founder and Executive Director): +255 754 300 813

Peter Leon (Managing Director): +255 784 817 985

Foreigners living or traveling in Tanzania are encouraged to register with their home embassy – for the U.S. Embassy: <https://travel.state.gov>.

## Daily Life at the Children's Village

### Weekdays:

The children are up by **5:45am** and have breakfast from **6:15–6:30am**. Our volunteers make breakfast for the children in their houses and then walk their kids to Gyetighi Primary School at **6:45am**.

Volunteers then run morning informal “classes” for our day care program from **8:30–10:30am**. The day care program is for RVCV kids who are too young for primary school, as well as children of RVCV staff and Gyetighi Primary school teachers. These classes are an opportunity to do creative activities with the kids, practice proper classroom behaviors, and practice English. From **11:00am–12:30pm** day care kids have playtime at RVCV supervised by volunteers.

Lunch is at **12:30pm** and after this everyone has naptime from **1:00–2:30pm**.

After naptime there is one additional hour of “class” with all the day care children and then 30 minutes of additional playtime, an ideal time for volunteers to just have fun with the kids: kick a soccer ball, paint some pictures – use your creativity and imagination.

At **4:00pm** the kids are given a snack of bread and milk. Then it is time for cleanup and chores. The children help the mamas with laundry while the volunteers do various volunteer projects. With the help of the mamas, student teachers and volunteers, every child has a bath and changes into clean clothes at **4:30pm** and then they all watch a movie together.

Dinner for the children is served at **6:30pm** and bedtime is around **7:30pm**. The older children have study time after dinner. Volunteers are free to rest, go for a walk, etc. between **4:30–6:30pm**, with dinner in the Volunteer house served at **6:30pm**. Once a week volunteers and staff eat with the kids in their houses and work on speaking English and using table manners.

### Weekends:

The schedule on Saturday is the same as weekdays, but only some of the children have morning classes at Gyetighi Primary School. The rest of our children have informal morning “classes” at RVCV, which are led by volunteers from **8:30–10:30am**. After that, it's time to play! Weekends are an opportunity for volunteers to plan longer, fun activities for the kids. In the past, we have taken walks, done scavenger hunts, created art projects, and organized soccer games. We are lucky to have a small playground, a recreation hall, several balls, and many toys for the children to use. On Saturday night the kids can continue watching a movie after dinner and can stay up until **9:00pm**. On **Sunday**, the volunteers have the day off and the kids are supervised by our student teachers. All of the children attend Sunday school in the Rec Hall. They then clean up outside and have playtime.

## Accommodations at the Children's Village

### Housing:

Volunteers stay in a children's house. We currently have three younger children's houses, each with a family of 8–13 children, 2 Tanzanian mamas, and 1–2 volunteers. We also have two houses for young women and two houses for young men. During your stay, you will receive three meals per day, laundry, and cleaning services.

In each children's house the volunteers share a bedroom and their own bathroom with a shower, western toilet, and sink. There is hot water some days, but know that there may be some days where you cannot take a hot shower. Although there is solar power this is for the mamas and is not for charging electronic devices.

### Meals:

All volunteers eat their daily meals in the Volunteer House, which is also the place to hang out, watch a movie, prepare projects, or take a break.

### Computer/Internet:

**Computers and internet are not provided to RVCV volunteers.** Due to limited Wi-Fi and internet capabilities, volunteers are not permitted to use the office Wi-Fi network or any staff computers.

### Rural Setting:

Keep in mind you are going to be visiting a remote, rural area of Tanzania and it is important to remain flexible and understanding of the way things work (or don't work) here. Prepare to live more simply and to appreciate the simple joys that your days at the village will bring. Please remember that the RVCV staff are here to make your stay safe and meaningful, but that does not mean they can accommodate your every need or comfort.

## What to Bring

### Luggage / Donations:

We receive a great number of donated goods in the US that are critical to our operations at RVCV. The best way to get these materials is to have volunteers carry them over on their flight. As each international passenger (from the US) is allowed *two* 50 lb. checked bags (three on Turkish Airlines), we kindly request that you take one of our 50-pound duffels if at all possible. Please contact Natalie Pruell at [info@tanzanianchildrensfund.org](mailto:info@tanzanianchildrensfund.org) if you would be willing to bring a bag of donations to RVCV. **If you intend to bring personal donations for RVCV, please ask the VC what is needed.** We truly appreciate your offer to carry over much-needed donations!

### Conservative clothing:

Because we want to be respectful of Tanzanian culture and adults are usually covered in long sleeves and pants and/or traditional wraps, **please make sure all your clothing is modest. Do not bring shorts or skirts above the knee, tank tops (even for exercise) or tight or revealing clothing.** This does not mean you need to purchase a new wardrobe. Basic clothes you can mix/match and that can be easily washed are best.

### Gifts for Children:

We **cannot allow gifts or candy/soda to be handed out at random to children.** These items are reserved for holiday as we do not want our children to become spoiled or to expect gifts from visitors. Please respect this policy and help us take care of our children in this way!

## Healthcare

RVCV's medical wing hosts a full-time American Registered Nurse who takes care of minor illnesses and injuries. For more serious health issues or concerns needing diagnostic services, you will be referred to FAME clinic ([www.fameafrica.org](http://www.fameafrica.org)) located 45 minutes away. FAME is operated by Dr. Frank, an American Physician.