



**WWF** *for a living planet*<sup>®</sup>

## **EXPLORE!**

### **WWF International Youth Volunteer & Internship Programme**

#### **Application Preamble**

#### **Please read carefully before proceeding**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Carefully chosen young people will take hands-on experience, expertise and knowledge into their future professional careers & spheres of influence, spreading a wider understanding of conservation issues and sustainable development, while inputting their skills and experience into WWF teams and projects.

WWF's commitment to engage with today's generation plays a crucial role in developing our leaders of tomorrow!

#### **BACKGROUND**

WWF's Youth Volunteer & Internship Programme aims to provide motivated and committed young people with an opportunity to engage in the conservation of the environment – regardless of their backgrounds – and work on WWF conservation projects internationally through a facilitated 3-6 month assignment, including hands-on engagement in WWF field projects and exposure to local conservation practitioners, scientists and communities. This unique experience enables them to raise awareness about nature conservation on their return home and helps develop the next generation of conservationists and future leaders in sustainable development. WWF seeks to attract young people from all walks of life, to provide them with a chance to engage now. Conservation and sustainable resource management require a huge range of skills, so whatever professional career they choose, this experience will be crucial for Alumni to become environmental champions for the rest of their lives.

Participants are drawn from a vast range of backgrounds and, while they have previously demonstrated commitment to the goals of WWF, they are not required to be pursuing a career in nature conservation. This programme aims to provide a global view of conservation for a select number of young people who are likely to “go places” in their lives and careers and who will contribute to WWF's mission throughout their lives in their different spheres of influence.

After a successful pilot phase in 2005, the Programme has evolved considerably and now offers different opportunities ranging from placements at WWF field project sites, Programme Offices and Global Initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to internships at WWF International. So far this year, there have been 31 WWF Volunteers out in the field and 4 Interns at WWF International.

The aim of the programme is to create a win-win situation for both the volunteer/intern and WWF – committed young self-starters bring added value to a WWF team with their knowledge and background, and take ownership of their activities. In turn WWF provides these individuals with a powerful, direct experience of the challenges we face in protecting the environment. They work closely with WWF experts and local communities, enabling them to get a better grasp of the issues, transferring knowledge and providing them with leadership skills.



***I feel that my experience was incredibly successful. I learned a huge amount about the work that WWF is doing and I met the day-to-day people whose lives WWF are affecting in a very beneficial way. I have seen animal species that I have always wanted to see ever since I was a child. I met some incredible people that I will never forget who inspired me to work harder and be a better conservationist. I have seen things and places and had experiences that I had only dreamed about, or I did not think were possible. Ultimately it was a life changing experience and a big success.***  
***Will, Participant in India, 2005***

During their experience, participants may work on conservation initiatives called *Youth Flagship Projects* that are integrated into the field activities of WWF. An example of such a project is the establishment of a new protected area or species conservation campaign; participants are involved in a range of activities such as collection of field data, consultations with local communities, awareness campaigns and building of infrastructure. Participants will meet a range of conservation practitioners, scientists, and community leaders and will have the rewarding experience of being coached by these people. Volunteers will gain knowledge, guidance and support from them and develop emotional ties and understanding for local circumstances. Specific information on their programme of activities will be distributed to the selected participants prior to their departure.

***In short, the juxtaposition of challenges and possibilities made this internship an eye-opening and simply unforgettable experience. Malagasy people taught me that it is possible to face adversity (extreme poverty in this case) with strength and optimism, as well as to make the most out of every situation. To be able to learn this, while contributing a little in the conservation of four possibly endemic fish species and of their habitats, was very gratifying. My easy immersion in Malagasy culture showed me that perhaps basic human values are the same all over the world, no matter your ethnic group, social status, gender, or culture. More importantly, the reality I lived in Madagascar showed me the way forward for conservation efforts, making me realize that it is all about people, their personal situation, and their ties with nature.***  
***Carolina Zambrano-Barragán, October-December 2005***

The Youth Volunteer & Internship Programme is designed to have an impact far beyond the individual youth who are directly involved. Participants will complete writing and digital photo assignments about their experience and in some instances will have the opportunity to create a short video. These creative expressions serve to profile WWF's field projects in the context of personal stories and are shared globally through their individual web pages on [www.panda.org/explore](http://www.panda.org/explore).

Participants undertake to cover their return airfare, visa and vaccination costs, as well as their food during the assignment. These funds can be provided from personal sources or through fundraising efforts. Except for the food allowance, WWF will pay for all the in-country support for the participants as well as health and repatriation insurance.

On their return home, participants will share what they have learned through a minimum of 3 presentations to audiences of their choice, e.g. to WWF offices & other NGOs, local funders (for their airfare, etc), schools/universities and community organizations. They will then receive a certificate of successful completion of the experience.



## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?**

- People aged 20-27 from any country

## **WWF IS LOOKING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Demonstrated leadership for conservation and sustainability
- Self-starters who have ability to adapt to changing situations
- Highly motivated team players
- Open mindedness and willingness to build bridges between cultures
- Ability to cope without modern comforts such as running water and electricity
- For Madagascar, Senegal & Cameroon placements, participants must have proficiency in French
- For placements in Latin America (Peru, Paraguay), participants must have proficiency in Spanish
- In other countries, only English is required
- Interest or prior skill in communications (journalistic writing, photography, video production, etc) an advantage

## **YOUTH VOLUNTEER'S OBLIGATIONS INCLUDE:**

- Covering roundtrip airfare, visa, medical vaccinations, food and personal items such as clothing. This will cost approximately Euros 2,500-3,000 and can be provided from personal sources or through fundraising. Participants will receive a Participant Guide that provides a description of effective fundraising tips.
- Preparing for their experience by researching and reading about the host country (especially by authors from that country).
- Preparing for the experience by reading the Participant Guide and liaising with the WWF International Coordinator to ensure preparation is on-track.
- Completing to best abilities tasks attributed to them during their experience.
- Acting in a way compatible with being an ambassador for WWF.
- Completing programme evaluation report.
- Upon return, completing at least three presentations in their community to share their experience as a WWF Youth Volunteer.



## **WWF OBLIGATIONS INCLUDE:**

- Providing in-country transportation, local language courses (where applicable e.g. in Madagascar), accommodation, equipment (e.g. tents, bicycles, kitchen utensils), laptops, digital photo cameras, video cameras
- Providing medical & repatriation insurance coverage
- Providing coaching and logistical support during the experience.

## **OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME & TIMELINE**

### **Pre-Departure Stages (approximately 4 months)**

#### *Application*

- WWF receives and reviews applications (deadline for submission approx. 3-4 months prior to start of placement) and draws up a shortlist of applicants

#### *Interview*

- Candidates are interviewed in person, by telephone or by skype

#### *Selection*

- WWF selects participants based on ensuring overall quality of applicants and fit with mission of the programme, as well as geographic, cultural and gender diversity (in the case of a team of volunteers)

#### *Notification*

- All shortlisted applicants are notified of the selection decision
- Participants can apply for visa and make flight reservations
- Participants can begin fundraising

#### *Confirmation*

- A contract is drawn up outlining the roles and responsibilities of both the Volunteer and WWF
- WWF takes out medical & repatriation insurance (SOS International & Vanbreda International) for each participant for the duration of placement
- Participants purchase their roundtrip air ticket and inform WWF International Coordinator of their flight details
- Participants receive all relevant information regarding their programme of activities and locations of their placement

### **Hands-on Experience (three-six months)**

- On arrival in the country, volunteers are given an introduction to the country, including topics such as health, safety and security, acceptable norms of behaviour, as well as an overview of WWF's projects and activities. They also begin their local language lessons where applicable.



- Participants leave for the field where they are introduced to the local authorities, briefed on WWF's activities in the region.
- In Madagascar, volunteers participate in a session on multi-media storytelling (including shooting and editing of video) in order to create a short video about their experience.
- Complete programme evaluation report.

#### **Post-Experience (over a period of six months)**

- On their return home, participants finalize their stories and send these to the WWF International Coordinator together with their photos to post on their individual web page that is created for them on the WWF website [www.panda.org/explore](http://www.panda.org/explore). Volunteers will post their videos on the WWF Volunteers page on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/wwfvolunteers>
- Within six months of returning, participants are required to do at least three presentations about their experience to audiences of their choice (if logistically possible, this should include a presentation to their nearest WWF office). They submit to WWF a list of these presentations.

Once this has all been completed, WWF will issue a Certificate of completion to the participant. Volunteer/Intern Alumni are also invited to join the Alumni group on Facebook.