



HEALTH + EDUCATION + ACTION + LEADERSHIP

VOLUNTEER - PARTNER | CODE OF CONDUCT

CONDUCT WHILE AT HEAL AFRICA

You go to Goma not as a tourist, but as a guest of HEAL Africa. You go to serve and not to be served. It is very important to be flexible and willing to adjust to the expectations of your hosts. You should have a flexible attitude at all times as plans may need to be changed, or may take longer to implement than expected. You should refrain from complaining or reacting, but endeavour to be understanding and supportive.

You should adopt the attitude that you (or your team) are there for the purpose of understanding the host culture and not to convince them of your own viewpoint or style. Go, knowing that there are many different ways to accomplish the same objective and that your way is not necessarily the best.

You should understand that your (or your team's) work is but a tiny speck on the bigger picture HEAL Africa is trying to accomplish. You should not be overly demanding, but do your best to help the staff attain their long-term goals.

While it is understood that special arrangements may be required to deal with particular medical cases, case-loads or special projects and teaching, you should respect the work hours and timetable of HEAL Africa Staff.

- *The work hours are from 7.30am to 3.30pm weekdays and 8am to 12md Saturdays for medical staff. Project staff do not work Saturday mornings.*
- *Staff are expected to attend the chapel service from approximately 7.30 to 8.30am on Tuesday and Friday mornings.*
- *On Monday afternoon, a bible study / medical staff meeting (where teaching may follow) is held at 3pm in the Conference Room of the LYN Building and all staff are expected to attend when possible.*
- *The other main teaching session in the hospital is Friday afternoon from 3pm.*
- *It should be remembered that many staff will have to walk home and therefore it is preferable if they finish work during daylight to minimise the risks of their travel home in darkness.*
- *Morning 'hand-over' meetings occur for staff including medical students and interns from 8am on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings.*

Remember you are visiting from another part of the world. You will be watched very closely. Do not take lightly the important responsibility of setting a good example.

It is expected that those who do not identify with the Christian faith will be sympathetic to the Christian foundation and ethos of the work and ministry of HEAL Africa. In either case, you are to respect any advice given concerning your attire, eating, drinking and other such traditions, which will help you to assimilate into the local setting and avoid being culturally offensive. Be aware of the expected dress code and adhere to it.

For those on short term teams, you should accept and submit to the leadership of your Team Leader. All individuals and team members should accept the position of the leaders of HEAL Africa and respect any decisions made, or advice given, by them. *Team leaders should submit to the authority of HEAL Africa Senior Staff.*

You should abstain from making derogatory comments or having arguments regarding people, politics, sports, religion, race or traditions.

GUIDELINES FOR RELATIONSHIPS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS WORKING WITH HEAL AFRICA

HEAL Africa respects local customs and behaviour, when they are in line with Christian values. Volunteers to HEAL Africa must respect local ways of behaviour, and must not bring HEAL Africa into disrepute. If you had been assigned to a Muslim country, you would abstain from alcohol, and dress in a way that avoided shocking cultural principles. Just as you would be prepared to respect Muslim principles in a Muslim country, so it is expected volunteers will respect the Christian principles on which HEAL Africa is based.

Volunteers should be particularly careful when relating to members of the opposite sex, as significant cultural differences exist.

In many middle-eastern countries, 'the West' is regarded as 'Christian'. It is no different in Africa. Everything they know about materialism, wealth, sexual permissiveness in the developed world correlates with what they see as Christianity. Do all you can NOT to enhance these incorrect perceptions by the way you act, speak and dress.

Be aware that, although everything you do may in itself be right, ensure that everything you do is seen to be right. For example, accepted relationship behaviour can be very different in other cultures. Ensure that you do not compromise a local Congolese person by being in any situation that may reflect badly on them. Be very careful with members of the opposite sex – eg if in a room with only one other person of the opposite gender, be sure to keep the door open. Never enter alone the home of a local person of the opposite sex if there is no one else at home. These possibly innocent events can be culturally inappropriate. Dating does not exist in DRC.

You should not initiate or seek new romantic relationships with the local Congolese people while you are visiting HEAL Africa. You should avoid any actions, which might be perceived as flirtatious to the Congolese people you meet.

Dating is a very recent importation into Western culture and only appeared after the Second World War. Dating is not at all a part of Congolese culture. Young people in DRC who intend to get married are very discreet. Until the two families agree on the engagement, no one knows about the developing relationship. When the two are present in the same group, they will show no sign to anyone that there is anything special developing between them. If an unmarried man and woman are seen together frequently, or observed showing any sign of physical affection, it is assumed that they are engaged to be married. You can hear announcements in church of an engagement, when the Pastor will say, *"Do not be surprised if you see these people together: their parents are in agreement, and their marriage will take place soon"*.

If a couple is alone together in a house, it is assumed that they are having sexual relations. In any culture, perceptions are reality. Volunteers to HEAL Africa should totally avoid being in compromising situations. Female volunteers who disregard this standard of behaviour, behaving in unacceptable ways without any intention of marriage, will find that local men assume that they are available for sexual relations. They lose the respect of the community, and may find that they are subject to sexual harassment.

Volunteers are expected to find creative and acceptable ways to socialize that conform to the highest standards of behaviour and be an example to young Congolese men and women. Everything you do in Goma is observed and recounted by local people. It is very important to HEAL Africa that you avoid every appearance of unacceptable behavior.

If you are unable to accept these constraints, then you should reconsider your intention to visit HEAL Africa; or if, while you are in Goma volunteering with HEAL Africa, you are involved in inappropriate behaviour as outlined above, then you should expect to be requested to return home.

DRESS CODE

HEAL Africa staff dress well. You are encouraged to respect them by also dressing well. If staying at Maji Matulivu, dress at Maji is casual.

It is appropriate to 'dress up' for church rather than 'dress down'.

Evenings can be cool.

Long sleeves are recommended in the evenings because of the mosquitoes.

For women, it is culturally appropriate to dress modestly. Women should always have their knees and shoulders covered while outside Maji. Strappy/singlet/tank or low-cut tops, shorts, and short skirts are **NOT** acceptable. Long pants/trousers are acceptable and longer skirts (below the knee) are appropriate for women ($\frac{3}{4}$ and no shorter!!).

For men, long trousers (or jeans) with shirt or T-shirt is appropriate.

Men do NOT wear shorts (even knee length) in public (ie outside Maji).

It is advisable to take 1 good shirt and tie (or neat casual shirt for younger men).

If you are involved in medical work at the hospital, you should wear a white medical coat. For sterility reasons it is preferable to not wear surgical scrubs outside the operating theatre building. Sometimes emergencies necessitate the wearing of scrubs outside theatre, eg to Emergency Department, but you should wear a white coat over the scrubs.

In choosing what clothing to pack, be mindful that Goma is dusty. At times you may have to crowd into the back of a dusty vehicle; the water is harsh on clothes. Non-iron clothes are best as ironing facilities are not readily available.

As the roads are all lava rock, rough and very dusty, make sure you bring comfortable shoes. (Closed-in shoes are good, although sandals are often worn.)

The climate is temperate and often rainy, so remember to bring some warm clothes.

As swimming is possible in Lake Kivu, you may want to include bathers – please be modest!
(Be aware parasites have been reported in the lake previously and Schistosomiasis may have resulted from this in the past.)

Joggers would be appropriate for any jogging, sport etc.