



Yes, you read it correctly. Volunteers work for free! Why? Well, volunteering is a great idea for several reasons:

A volunteer is someone who performs duties for an organisation, department, event, community or worthwhile cause without expecting to be paid.

1. Experience as a volunteer makes you more employable. Even if you've never had a job in your life, a part-time or short-term stint at an organisation or within a Government department counts as work experience and can be mentioned in your CV.
2. Volunteers are more marketable as jobseekers: you'll adopt new skills; learn responsibility, reliability and commitment; become comfortable in the workplace; and make valuable social and professional Contacts.

This is a call to battle; a call to join forces in a new struggle towards achieving the country's development goals. - President Thabo Mbeki

3. Volunteering is an excellent way to explore your career-related interests and find out whether a particular industry or job is right for you.
4. By offering your time and skills – for free – to organisations or worthwhile causes, you'll be giving back to your community and to the country as a whole. Working to build up communities creates an enormous sense of pride and ownership. That's what democracy is all about!
5. Volunteering can be a huge amount of fun! Imagine being part of an exciting international project like the launch of the African Union, the World Summit for Sustainable Development, the opening ceremony of the Cricket World Cup or the Soccer World Cup in 2010.

As a volunteer you could:

- care for the aged;
- help the disabled;
- comfort those with HIV/Aids or other diseases;
- create school gardens;
- clean up litter;
- teach literacy skills; or
- build recreation facilities.

In the spirit of "Letsema", the President regularly encourages young people to carry out voluntary public service. Letsema is a noble African tradition, according to which the combined efforts of the people make it possible for them to achieve results no individual can achieve alone. A volunteer is someone who performs duties for an organisation, department, event, community or worthwhile cause without expecting to be paid.

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National Youth Service an opportunity for young people to serve their communities

Becoming a volunteer and serving your community is possibly one of the most fulfilling tasks any individual can embark on. Volunteering means that you are offering your time to help others without expecting to get anything in return.

The National Youth Service Programme (NYS) offers young people an opportunity to serve their communities while acquiring skills. The aim of the programme is to support nation-building by involving young people in the delivery of crucial government services and enabling them to acquire and apply skills and values to access economic opportunities upon completion of the programme. It is also another tool that the government is using to continue engaging young people with community and social processes.

The youth, aged between 18 and 35, can volunteer their services in various projects including mentorship to vulnerable children, providing health care assistance to people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS while also gaining technical skills such as construction, carpentry, plumbing, agriculture and environment and nature conservation.

Volunteering and the youth

A lot of young people get involved in volunteer work not only for the purpose of gaining skills or to give back to their communities but also to make friends. This year for the first time in the history of South Africa, over 20 000 young people participated in the Global Youth Service celebrations. During that week young people cleaned up community facilities and painted schools and clinics. Although all of them came from different backgrounds they had one thing in common - to give up their time for the benefit of their communities.

Volunteer Mentorship Programmes

The National Youth Service Programme has a number of mentorship programmes where young people can get involved to assist vulnerable children.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Africa (BBBSSA) Youth Service Project

This project aims to provide a 'Little' (child) with the support and guidance of a trained 'Big' (adult mentor) who acts as a role model and friend as well as a mentor.

The objective of this relationship is to encourage positive behaviour patterns and facilitate constructive choices by the "Little". Evaluations conducted in the Big Brothers Big Sisters project show that this kind of support reduces the chances of children turning to destructive behaviour while increasing their chances of growing into responsible adults. Creating caring relationships between children and adults is a fundamental component of social cohesion.

BBBSSA provides its services in schools; to children and youth living permanently or temporarily in children's homes; to children and youth affected or infected by terminal illnesses; to children heading up households

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and young people in conflict with the law. Children/young people eligible for this programme are between the ages of 6 and 18. They are identified or referred to the BBBSSA by a teacher, social service provider, parents or a diversion officer who works with vulnerable children.

Lifeline Youth Service Project

The Lifeline Youth Service Volunteer project is a mentorship initiative which trains young people to offer mentorship to child-headed households. The initiative is part of Lifeline – an organisation which offers counselling services and deals with issues relating to poverty, HIV and AIDS, bereavement, rape, trauma, crime, violence, gender abuse, depression and self esteem. They have been providing such services for over 40 years.

Maths and Science Youth Service Volunteer Project

The Maths and Science Youth Service Volunteer initiative is aimed at providing supplementary Maths and Science lessons for Grade 12 learners. The objective of the project is to equip students from disadvantaged communities with additional conceptual and practical understanding of Maths and Science, thus improving their chances of succeeding in exams.

NOTE

How to join the National Youth Service

For more information on the National Youth Service
Programme call: 086000 (NYSU) 6978
or email info@nysu.org.za

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