



Build a Better World

You don't have to be a carpenter to rebuild a community. "All you need is passion. If it's a hands-on project, anyone can help," says Twesigye Jackson Kaguri (below), who founded two schools for Ugandan orphans who lost their parents to AIDS. Here are six volunteer trips where you'll work alongside locals on construction projects. From rebuilding homes damaged by hurricanes in Jamaica to putting together greenhouses in the Himalayas, all offer the chance to do a lot of good in a little time. Grab a hammer and get started.

THE HUMANITARIAN

NAME: Twesigye Jackson Kaguri

LOCATION: Originally from the village of Nyakageyezi, in southwestern Uganda; now based in Michigan

BACKGROUND: Founder of Human Rights Concerns, an organization that helps victims of human rights violations in Uganda; founder of the Nyaka and Kutamba schools for Ugandan orphans whose parents have died of AIDS; author of *The Price of Stones: Building a School for My Village* (Viking Press, June 2010)

PERSONAL GOAL: "My dream is to build a school for HIV/AIDS orphans in every district in Uganda. These schools would change not only the lives of children, but the lives of the grandparents they live with and the lives of the people in the communities around them. Once you help one child, that child's family tree changes forever."

WHAT WORKS: "You must involve the local people. For the schools for HIV/AIDS orphans, I sat down with leaders in the community, shared with them the problems we were facing, and asked their opinions. We also asked community members to donate stones, bricks, wood, and labor so that they were stakeholders. That way the community did not see these projects as an imposition, but as something they were part of and wanted to see grow."

ON VOLUNTEERING: "When you speak to our volunteers, all of them—young, old, doctors, teachers, financial advisers—tell you that they went to Uganda thinking they were going to serve the children and the community. Once they got there, they realized the community and the children had more to give to them—the volunteers ended up being the ones who were served. To see children who had no hope of ever going to school now taking that step, it's so meaningful."

To volunteer with the Nyaka and Kutamba schools, visit nyakaschool.org



HOME WORK: In Australian slang, a carpenter is referred to as a chippie. In the Kenyan Masai culture, women are in charge of housing construction. When a new house is built in Thailand, it's traditional to hold a *keun baan mai* ceremony: The owner invites over nine Buddhist monks, offers them food and gifts, and receives their blessing.

TRIPS WORTH TAKING

INDIA

I-TO-I MEANINGFUL TRAVEL,
(800) 985-4852, **I-TO-I.COM**

In India's remote Spiti desert, at an elevation of more than 10,000 feet in the Himalayas, frigid winter temperatures and scarce rain make it difficult to grow fruit and vegetables. Travel company i-to-i works with Ecosphere, a community-based organization in Spiti, to help build greenhouses so that the local people—Buddhists with a culture similar to their Tibetan neighbors—can benefit from fresh spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, and other produce year-round.

HOW YOU HELP: Working under the guidance of a local expert, build a greenhouse from foundation to roof; paint the south-facing walls black to absorb the heat from the sun; prepare vegetable beds for cultivation.

HIGHLIGHTS: Take a “yak safari,” in which you ride a yak and look for local wildlife, including blue sheep and red foxes. Ride a mountain bike deep into the Himalayas. Meet monks at the 1,000-year-old Tabo Monastery.

PRICE: Two-week trips from \$1,999; includes some meals and lodging in a local home or monastery.



JAMAICA

PROJECTS ABROAD, (888) 839-3535,
PROJECTS-ABROAD.ORG

Hurricanes Dean and Gustav tore through the Caribbean island of Jamaica in 2007 and 2008, leaving many houses water-damaged or completely destroyed. Volunteer organization Projects Abroad, together with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, is dedicated to rebuilding more than 40 homes in the parish of Saint Ann, on the island's northern coast.

HOW YOU HELP: Repair damaged homes by mixing mortar, laying blocks, fixing aluminum roofs, and installing windows; build sanitation facilities such as drains, toilets, and sewage systems.

HIGHLIGHTS: Practice basic Jamaican Creole in a language lesson with locals. Visit Bob Marley's birthplace,

FIRST PERSON

School Dance

Reza Pakravan / Azafady participant / Madagascar

“I wake up with the sunrise, have breakfast, and take a one-hour Malagasy language lesson. By 7:30 we start working on building the school. We do everything by hand—mix gravel, make concrete, saw wood, create bricks. We make so many bricks. It's really hard work. We break for lunch, then we work again until six o'clock. At night, we sit around a fire. I'm a musician, so I play guitar with the Malagasy people. Their sense of rhythm is completely different than our rhythm in the Western world. I sing U2 songs and 50 Malagasy boys and girls jump up and down in front of me. The Malagasy drummer plays drums with me. It's incredible. In three week's time we manage to finalize the school. Once it's done, everyone is so happy. To celebrate, the community throws a big party for us. A band comes from a village seven miles away to play for us on these strange instruments that we've never seen in our lives. The whole community dances. We can't dance like them, but we do some silly dance and they laugh at us—they can't help themselves. The party goes for hours, until one in the morning. All the local people come to say thank you. Once we leave we are in tears, because for that short time, that place has become our home. I've never been that close to a place and its people—people who can't understand your language, but who you can really talk to in something like a human language. Those three weeks were the best weeks of my life.”

Help for Haiti

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti, killing an estimated 230,000 people and leaving more than 1 million Haitians homeless. You can help in the initial recovery effort by making a financial donation to a reputable aid organization, such as the American Red Cross. If you'd like to play a hands-on part in rebuilding Haiti in the years to come, here are a few nonprofits to contact.

Habitat for Humanity

(800) 422-4828, habitat.org

Habitat for Humanity is helping with emergency shelter, clean-up, and transitional housing in Haiti. Sign up online to volunteer when conditions allow.

Architecture for Humanity

(415) 963-3511,

architectureforhumanity.org

In their long-term reconstruction plan for Haiti, this design services firm emphasizes collaboration between architects, nongovernmental organizations, and community members. They are looking for volunteers with design or building experience.

Global Volunteer Network

(800) 963-1198,

globalvolunteernetwork.org

Global Volunteer Network offers volunteer opportunities in Haiti in building and construction, teaching, counseling, and medicine.

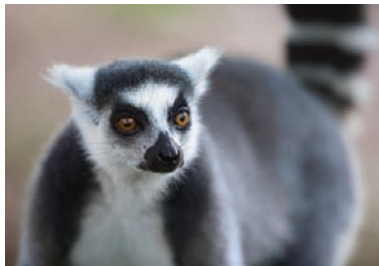
the village of Nine Miles, located within the parish. Hike to waterfalls in the eastern Blue Mountains. Relax on a beach by the resort town of Ocho Rios. **PRICE:** One-month trips from \$3,145; includes meals and homestay lodging.

MADAGASCAR

AZAFADY, 44/(0) 20-8960-6629,
AZAFADYUSA.ORG

Some children in the rural region of Mahatalaky in Madagascar must walk up to 12 miles a day to reach any school. Illiteracy here is among the highest in the nation. Volunteers with the nonprofit organization Azafady work with members of Mahatalaky villages to build schoolhouses in the area. The project is run in collaboration with the Malagasy Ministry of Education.

HOW YOU HELP: Take part in building a two-room, tin-roofed wooden schoolhouse by assisting with such tasks as laying stone floors and installing shelving and blackboards; you might also help build a latrine, a well, or a teacher's house.



HIGHLIGHTS: Scope the treetops for ring-tailed lemurs at Nahampoana Reserve. Play a pickup game of soccer with school kids. Sample the program chef's specialty, cassava fritters with ginger.

PRICE: Two-week trips from \$950; includes meals and lodging in tents.

NAMIBIA

HANDS UP HOLIDAYS, (201) 984-5372, HANDSUPHOLIDAYS.COM

While on a 17-day trip to some of Namibia's most spectacular sites, travelers with Hands Up Holidays spend four days volunteering in the village of Opuwo, home to the nomadic Ovahimba people—known for covering their bodies with a mixture of ochre and fat to protect their skin from the sun. Travelers assist with such projects as building a mud hut. The program aims to encourage meaningful exchanges between diverse cultures and help the Ovahimba preserve their way of life.



HOW YOU HELP: Projects include building a traditional dwelling from sand, mud, cow dung, and branches; collecting wood to build an animal shelter; fixing wells; and herding cattle.

HIGHLIGHTS: Spot lions, elephants, and giraffes on a safari in Etosha National Park. Zip down sand dunes near Swakopmund on a snowboard. Take a walk into the wilderness with a guide from the San tribe.

PRICE: 17-day trips from \$2,400; includes some meals and lodging in tents and hotels.

FIRST PERSON

It's Off to Work We Go

Sandra Cirie /Habitat for Humanity participant /Portugal

“When I first arrive, there’s a moment of chaos. I don’t know what to expect.

There are 14 strangers in the volunteer group, ages 22 to 70, and I don’t even know them from Adam.

We get a briefing from our leader, catch the local bus, and hike up to the building site. We get there and say, ‘Oh my goodness, I wonder where we start?’

🔪 We see the spot where you make concrete. Somebody says, ‘I do concrete.’

I walk through the house, and I say, ‘This is the kitchen? I do kitchens!’

Then the Portuguese builders say, ‘OK, we’ve got a job to do. You do this, you do that. Pour this, pour that.’ Through body language and instructions, we figure it out. 🔪 I tile the kitchen walls.

I put concrete on the floors and screed them until they’re nice and smooth.

I clean up. I do everything and anything that’s required of me. And it’s not like they’re backing up some big concrete truck and pumping in concrete. We’re mixing it, putting it in little buckets, climbing the stairs, and dumping it.

But we self-organize. We say, ‘Let’s get it done.’ 🔪 At the very end, we start taking pictures. We look at the floor, the tiles, the kitchen, and the bathroom.

When you’re working in pieces, you don’t see it holistically. You’re happy little dwarfs coming together for a cause.

Then we see it finished and think, ‘We all really did this.’ The great satisfaction that we did it for somebody else is just beyond measure.”

PERU

GAP ADVENTURES, (800) 708-7761, GAPADVENTURES.COM

Cooking stoves in most rural Peruvian homes don’t have chimneys. As a result of the smoke, many Peruvian women suffer from chronic eye and lung infections. Travelers on Gap Adventures’ Project Peru trip volunteer for two days in Ccaccacollo, a community 40 minutes southeast of Cuzco, to build cooking stoves that remove smoke and reduce wood usage. After completing the project, participants hike the Inca Trail to the mystical ruins of Machu Picchu.

HOW YOU HELP: With the aid of a Peruvian guide, use adobe bricks, cement, a cast-iron plate, and a pipe chimney to build a smoke-free stove.

HIGHLIGHTS: Learn to weave from women in a cooperative in Ccaccacollo. Hike along the Inca Trail through high plateaus and dense cloud forests filled with orchids.

PRICE: 11-day trips from \$1,399; includes some meals and lodging in local homes, hotels, and tents.

PORTUGAL

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, (800) 422-4828, HABITAT.ORG

For 14 years, the international nonprofit Habitat for Humanity has been working in Portugal, where a large percentage of the population lives in dilapidated housing. The organization’s short-term program, Global Village, recruits volunteers to the city of Braga to lend a hand building houses and apartments for some of the country’s neediest citizens.

HOW YOU HELP: Work with a group to construct a home made of traditional Portuguese materials, including red roof tiles, bricks, and ceramic tiles.

HIGHLIGHTS: Visit a 12th-century cathedral in Braga, known as the spiritual capital of Portugal. Dine on *arroz de pato à moda de Braga*, a local dish of duck, rice, smoked ham, and garlic pork sausage. Purchase a *cavaquinho*, a four-string baby viola that is Braga’s trademark handicraft.

PRICE: 10-day trips from \$1,900; includes meals and lodging in a hotel. **A**

