



Mustard Seed
Communities Ireland

CARING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

‘Children for Children’

Volunteer Programme
To Jamaica

Begin your journey with a message from Monsignor Gregory



Msgr. Gregory Ramkissoon
Founder of Mustard Seed Communities

“For reasons unbeknownst to you and me, God has chosen you to begin this journey. Thank you for answering His call and choosing to humbly serve our children and staff. It is our prayer that God will continue to reveal Himself in the time of your preparation for your trip and of course during your stay in our homes. I thank you for sharing your time, talents and discipleship with us and look forward to meeting you.”



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A close-up photograph of three young children with dark skin and curly hair, smiling warmly at the camera. They are wearing light-colored clothing with pink accents.

The Adventure

Sign up as one of Ireland's next volunteers to visit MSC Jamaica and raise funds for the most deserving children.

A photograph of a young child seen from behind, wearing a large backpack and walking away from the camera. The background is a bright, yellow-tinted outdoor setting with a fence.

The Experience

Dedicate just seven days of your time to caring for those who are most vulnerable. The experience will ensure a personal fulfilment that will last a lifetime!

A photograph of two young children sitting at a wooden desk, smiling at the camera. They are holding pens over papers, suggesting they are doing homework or a craft project.

Your Mission

Fundraise: €2,700

The funds you raise not only cover your return airfare, housing, food, transportation & insurance whilst in Jamaica, but also directly support the children at MSC.

Volunteer Programme Overview

Mustard Seed Communities – Kingston, Jamaica

Kingston, Jamaica is the birthplace of Mustard Seed Communities, which was founded in 1978. Several MSC Jamaica homes are located in Kingston giving volunteer groups a diverse trip experience. The majority of our programmes in Jamaica focus on the care of children with disabilities. The residents of our homes have a wide range of physical and mental challenges including down syndrome, autism, hydrocephalus and cerebral palsy among many others.

At Mahoe Drive in Kingston, a bustling MSC community named “My Father’s House” comprises of a home for children, administrative offices and several community outreach programmes. My Father’s House is home to over 40 children with varying degrees of physical and cognitive disabilities. “Sophie’s Place” is an apostolate located in Gordon Town and houses over 20 children with disabilities. “Sophie’s Place” participates in a project with Kingston’s University of Technology in which the residents attend daily sessions with occupational therapists on the University campus. “Sophie’s Place” also includes accommodations for volunteer teams, a chapel and a “Little Angels” preschool.

“Mary’s Child”, located in the Kingston area, is our home for teenage mothers and their babies. When they have nowhere else to go we offer them a safe space to go through the early stages of motherhood. The young women of Mary’s Child attend classes in baking, sewing and computer skills to ease their transition back into school or employment when they move on from our home.

In Spanish Town, MSC Jamaica has developed a large community called “Jerusalem”. The property is located on eight acres and it serves as a residential care facility for over 150 children and adults with disabilities. “Jerusalem” provides a safe and nurturing environment for individuals challenged both mentally and physically. The Village section of “Jerusalem” caters to older teenage and adult residents in a setting where several houses make up a small neighbourhood. These homes provide an integrated environment where residents with varying levels of skills and development coexist. The farm located at our home in Spanish Town functions as both a therapeutic alternative for the residents and an income generating project. The farm currently has two fish ponds, 2000 chickens for egg production, a vegetable garden and a small flock of sheep, serving the nutritional needs of our residents. Surplus is sold to neighbouring communities as income generation. “Jerusalem” also houses part of our Dare to Care programme for children with HIV/AIDS and a “Little Angels” preschool.

Kingston is also home to several community outreach programmes. Roots FM is MSC’s independently operated radio station, focused on enriching the lives of vulnerable populations in Kingston. MSC also has a pottery studio and the profits are reinvested into the programme. Kingston is home to “Little Angels” Learning Centers; preschools that offer a low-cost alternative to children from the local community.

Daily Activities

- Work projects
- Playtime and Interaction with the children of Mustard Seed Communities

Programme Highlights

- Day at the beach with a picnic
- Trip to Devon House for Ice cream
- Local dinner out during the week

Volunteer Accommodations

- Volunteer accommodations are located at Sophie’s Place, home to over 20 children with disabilities. The volunteer house is dormitory style, with 12 beds in the male dorm and 12 beds in the female dorm. There is a large gathering space for groups to come together and a dining area and kitchenette for meals

Work Project Examples

- Light construction
- Landscaping/Agricultural projects
- Painting, building repair & updates
- Projects can be customized based on special skills of the volunteers and the needs of MSC

What You Will Need

- A valid passport (valid for 6 months after the date of departure) (Irish citizens don't need a Visa to enter Jamaica)
- Commitment to raise a minimum of €2,700 per participant. The funds you raise for your trip not only cover your airfare, housing, food, transportation & insurance whilst in Jamaica but also directly support the children at MSC

What You Need To Know

- English is spoken in Jamaica
- US Dollars are accepted. Small denominations are advised to simplify transactions
- It is recommended that each person brings approximately \$150 to cover souvenir shopping and other incidentals
- MSC covers the cost of meals on your day out. The group day out features a trip to Dunn's River Falls, one of Jamaica's National Parks. Admission fee \$30 (\$20 + \$10 to purchase compulsory footwear required to climb the falls). www.dunnsriverfallsja.com
- On arrival an MSC Driver and Mission Representative will meet you at the airport when you clear customs
- **Address for Customs:**
Mustard Seed Communities
One Mahoe Drive
Kingston 11 Jamaica
West Indies
- Phone: 876-923-6488



Fundraising for Your Trip

- Mustard Seed Ireland will support volunteers with their fundraising efforts with provision of fundraising buckets, bibs, etc. MSC uses an online fundraising system that makes mission trip fundraising simple and easy to track. Individuals can set up separate pages to solicit donors and track progress. The personal fundraising pages can be shared with prospective donors via email or social media. Full details on how to set up your account will be shared with participants on registration.
- Each volunteer group will have their own branded “Team Kit”. Volunteers will have the opportunity to sell corporate sponsorship spots/logo’s on this kit.

The Mission of Mustard Seed Communities

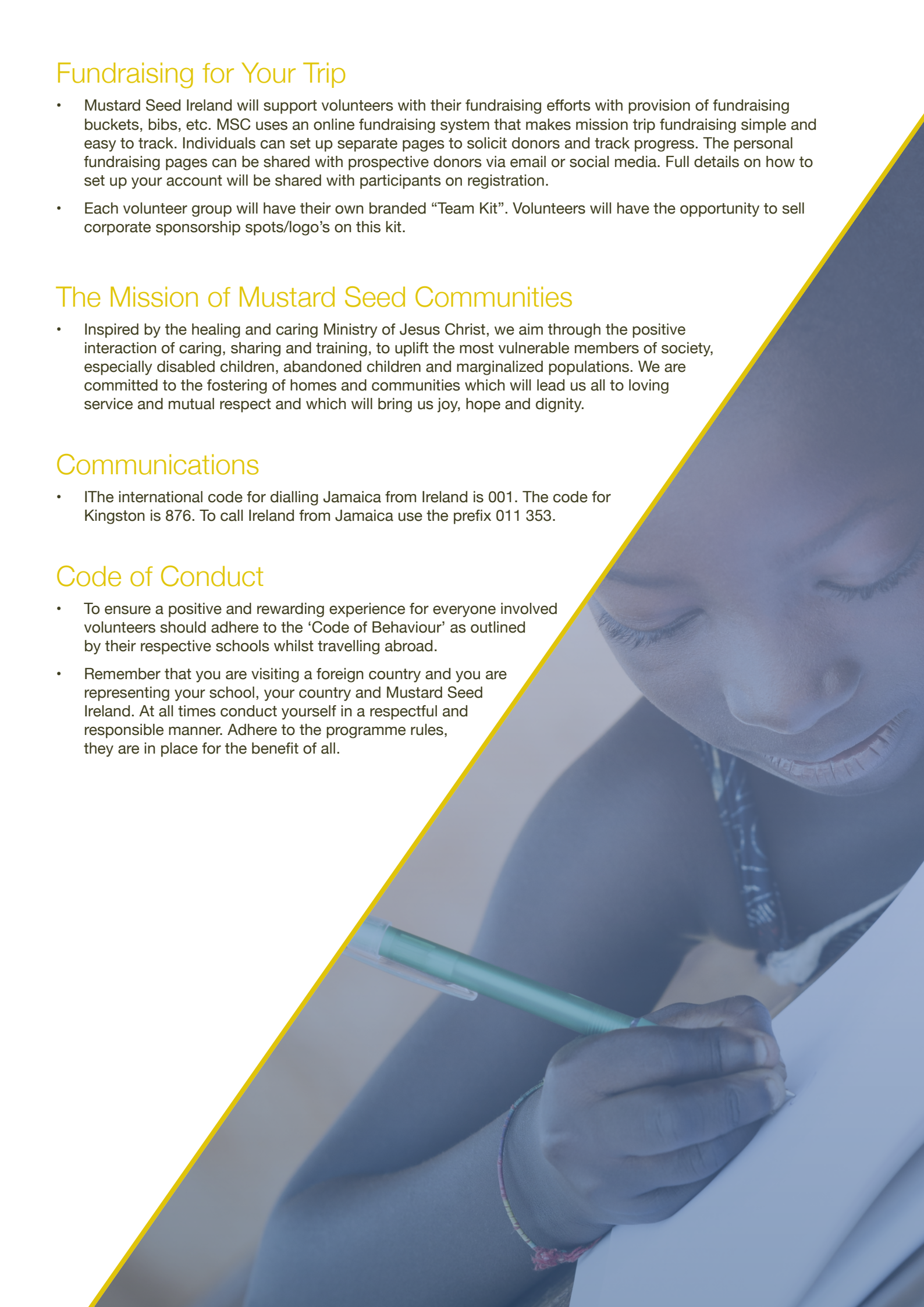
- Inspired by the healing and caring Ministry of Jesus Christ, we aim through the positive interaction of caring, sharing and training, to uplift the most vulnerable members of society, especially disabled children, abandoned children and marginalized populations. We are committed to the fostering of homes and communities which will lead us all to loving service and mutual respect and which will bring us joy, hope and dignity.

Communications

- The international code for dialling Jamaica from Ireland is 001. The code for Kingston is 876. To call Ireland from Jamaica use the prefix 011 353.

Code of Conduct

- To ensure a positive and rewarding experience for everyone involved volunteers should adhere to the ‘Code of Behaviour’ as outlined by their respective schools whilst travelling abroad.
- Remember that you are visiting a foreign country and you are representing your school, your country and Mustard Seed Ireland. At all times conduct yourself in a respectful and responsible manner. Adhere to the programme rules, they are in place for the benefit of all.



A Day in the Life of an MSC Volunteer

Use this “sample day” to get an idea of what your volunteer experience will be like. Please keep in mind that specific times and activities will vary between groups, countries & MSC homes.

Rise and Shine, Have Breakfast & Assist with Residents

Early morning for volunteers is a special time. You get insight into the daily lives of the children and have a chance to help the caregivers with preparations for the day. Then, you'll prepare breakfast with your group (food is provided by MSC). After cleaning up the kitchen & dining areas, you'll get ready to start the “work” day!

8:30 – 12:00 pm: Work Projects

In addition to spending time with our residents, volunteer groups will have work project assignments that are more physical in nature. These are typically focused on improving the infrastructure of our homes, whether it's landscaping, painting or light construction. Projects will vary with location and from year to year, so it is important to be open-minded and flexible as a group. If you or one of your team has special skills or interests, please let us know so we can keep it in mind as we plan your projects.

12:30 pm: Break for Lunch

1:00 – 4:00 pm: Resume Work Projects

4:30 pm: Spend Time with Residents

As the week progresses, you will bond as a team and you will also become closer to the children. The MSC Volunteer programme offers a unique experience in that your accommodations are on-site allowing you to spend a significant amount of quality time with our residents. At first, you will likely find it challenging to work with the populations that we serve. We encourage you to come with an open mind and an open heart, and we promise that this new challenge will be a fulfilling experience.

6:00 – 7:00 pm: Dinner & Clean Up

7:30 pm: Group & Reflection Time

Each group will have their own routine but we encourage all volunteers to set aside time each evening for group and personal reflection. It helps to share your experiences each day, to learn from your group members and from the children of MSC.

Day Out

As part of your trip you will have a ‘Day Out’ with your group to enjoy the country and culture that you are visiting. Your group will visit Dunn's River Falls & Park in Ocho Rios. You will spend an unforgettable day on the beach and climb the famous falls in a human chain, led by experienced guides. www.dunnsriverfallsja.com





PACKING LIST

WHAT TO BRING

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old work clothes and closed toe shoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Shampoo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> T-shirts, shorts, pants | <input type="checkbox"/> Soap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 nice outfit for outings | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimsuit | <input type="checkbox"/> Bug Spray (Deet) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beach towel | <input type="checkbox"/> Mosquito Net |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towel for the shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Toothpaste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shower shoes | <input type="checkbox"/> Rain coat/umbrella (if rainy season) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snack foods to share | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Toiletries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spending money in small denominations | <input type="checkbox"/> Antibacterial hand gel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera (use discretion if bringing a good camera) | <input type="checkbox"/> Journal or other reading material for quiet time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work gloves | <input type="checkbox"/> Any prescription or non-prescription medicines you need |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One or two water bottles | <input type="checkbox"/> Ear plugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hats/Bandanas | <input type="checkbox"/> Bubbles/Stickers for sharing with the kids |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Two rolls of toilet paper |

**Carry a photo copy of your passport with you at all times.*

**Many volunteers choose to leave their personal items at MSC as a donation.
Please consider this when packing.*

FAQ



Who are the children of Mustard Seed Communities?

MSC cares for several hundred children with special needs. The majority of children cannot speak so you will need to learn to communicate by other means. Some children are mobile, others are confined to a bed or wheelchair. Many have twisted and tiny limbs, but some are VERY mobile and will run up to greet you with a hug. The sooner you reach out to a child, the sooner your heart will begin to open to them. All of them are made in the image and likeness of God and are a gift to us and to MSC. If anyone on the team has questions about how to hold a child, if it's okay to move them or help feed them, the caregivers will be more than happy to help. Please don't be afraid to ask. The caregivers work with the children on a daily basis and can give advice pertinent to each child. They know their tendencies and give great advice.

What projects will my group work on?

First and foremost, all groups will have scheduled time to interact and play with the children. Interaction with the children is more important than finishing a project. Each group will also have a work project that may include light construction, painting, farming or landscaping. We ask you to always be open and flexible when it comes to your group's work projects. We will do our best to coordinate a meaningful project that you will feel great about when your week is over. If you have someone on your team with specific skills that you think may be useful to MSC, tell us and we will take that into consideration when planning your projects.

What is life like on the MSC Volunteer Programme?

Every day brings an opportunity to rise early and spend time with the children, whether it is to feed them, play with them, or simply be in their presence. Throughout your trip you will build togetherness as a team and with the staff and children of Mustard Seed Communities. Each day is filled with time to reflect, share, and come together. You will also get the opportunity to experience the culture and enjoy a "day out" in the local community. Keep your mind and heart open. That is the best way to ensure that you have a fulfilling volunteer experience. Be present and willing to learn from the children and those you meet.

What is expected of an MSC volunteer?

We hope that while you're on this trip you will think of the experience as a retreat – you are getting away from the convenience of home, hot showers, electronics and your everyday life so that you can care for the MSC children. Be present for them, the staff and your fellow team of volunteers.

What Should I Bring?

For a detailed list of what to bring, see the packing list. We recommend that you pack lightly - plan to live simply for the entire week. You may be surprised to see what you are able to live without! We caution Volunteers from bringing any jewellery, expensive watches or other displays of wealth. Please keep in mind that the needs at Mustard Seed are constantly changing when collecting donations to bring in your luggage. Mustard Seed Ireland will provide you with a 'Wish List' of in-kind needs as you prepare for your trip. An itemized list of all donations from your group and their values should be submitted to Mustard Seed Ireland in advance of your trip.

How will we get to our destination?

Mustard Seed Ireland will take care of your international travel arrangements; Return airfare: Dublin – Kingston, including the processing of all immigration documentation (ESTA's for each volunteer, should transfers be via the USA). Transfers to and from Dublin airport are not included. Once you arrive in Jamaica, MSC will meet you at the airport and handle all local travel and accommodations including your day out.

Will there be any out of pocket expenses?

During your trip you will need some pocket money to cover small additional expenses such as souvenirs, park entry fee on your 'Day Out' and for other miscellaneous items. We caution volunteers from bringing large amounts of cash.

What safety measures are in place to protect volunteers?

The safety and security of our volunteers is MSC's first priority. All MSC locations are secured and gated and have security 24 hours a day. As with any international destination you need to exercise common sense and use caution when outside the MSC facilities.

Supervision

Each volunteer group is accompanied by an experienced driver and a Mustard Seed Communities mission representative when travelling outside of MSC properties. The mission representatives, who are employees of MSC, supervise all volunteer activities and stay with the volunteer group throughout the day and evening. Mustard Seed Communities has been operating volunteer programmes for over twenty years with an average of 1,000 volunteers participating annually. Our groups are primarily teens and college students.

Does MSC provide insurance for volunteers?

To protect our volunteers whilst travelling internationally, Mustard Seed Ireland will put a travel insurance policy in place that will cover all Directors, Employees and Volunteers of Mustard Seed (resident in the Republic of Ireland) whilst travelling to Jamaica, for a maximum period of 10 days. The Medical and Repatriation Expenses sum insured on the policy is Unlimited. Pre-existing medical conditions are excluded. A policy document together with a 24-hour emergency help line number will be made available to all travellers 21 days prior to departure. This cover is included in the cost of your trip.

When do you need to pay for the trip?

Deposit: Each volunteer pays a non-refundable deposit of €250 to Mustard Seed Ireland on registration. (€200 payable towards your deposit and €50 to cover cost of merchandise; customized event t-shirts and sweater). 50% of the fundraise amount is required 90 days before departure date and remaining balance payment is required minimum 30 days before the departure date.

We are responsible first to our children and homes therefore MSC reserves the right to cancel a trip if the final payment is not received.

What happens if we have to cancel?

All deposits and donations are non-refundable. If an individual volunteer has collected funds and does not go on the trip, those funds are added to the group funds.

Garda Vetting?

In accordance with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016, Mustard Seed Ireland requires all group leaders to be Garda Vetted in advance of participation on volunteer programmes.

Are Vaccinations Required?

Vaccinations are not compulsory for Jamaica however the standard recommendations for all travellers are;

- All routine vaccines
- Hepatitis A and Typhoid

Parents/guardians of volunteers should consult with their G.P for the best information. In general vaccines should be received about 4 to 5 weeks prior to travel.

What about Zika?

Zika outbreaks are currently happening in Jamaica and in many countries including parts of the USA. Zika infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects. Therefore, pregnant women should not travel to Jamaica.

Partners of pregnant women and couples planning pregnancy should know the possible risks to pregnancy and take preventive steps. Mustard Seed Volunteers are encouraged to take steps to avoid mosquito bites by applying repellents liberally. More information on Zika - <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/fs-zikabasics.pdf>



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