

Alison McQueen

**Ghana Innovator Alumnus 2010 &
Kenya Alumnus (2007)**

I have had the privilege of volunteering overseas with YCI in Kenya in 2007 and again in 2010 in Ghana. I was initially drawn to YCI due to their mission and values, their local youth-driven projects and their support from CIDA.



As a young person with only a small amount of professional work experience, my first overseas volunteer project to Kenya in 2007 provided me with an opportunity to gain international work experience, utilize my university background in health sciences, increase my cross-cultural knowledge and improve my people skills.

Shortly after I returned to Canada from Kenya, I began employment as a Human Resources coordinator in a Toronto-based company of 120 employees. I can confidently say that my project in Kenya equipped me with skills that I used on a daily basis in a professional work environment, including project management and financial management skills. Perhaps most importantly, I further developed my ability to be aware of, and sensitive to, the cultural differences amongst a diverse group of employees.

In late 2009, I applied and was chosen to participate in a four-week project in Ghana, which focused on advanced HIV/AIDS education for Ghanaian teachers. I again had the opportunity to further develop my skills both personally and professionally. My experience in Ghana solidified my decision to become a nurse and I will begin my Bachelor of Science in Nursing at McMaster University in September 2010. I hope to participate in an overseas nursing placement before graduation, as my experiences with YCI have given me the confidence and skills to work anywhere in the world.

I am continually impressed by the opportunities and support that YCI provides to youth. My experiences volunteering with YCI have been fundamental in my personal and career development and have made me a more active and engaged citizen. I would highly recommend sponsoring other Canadian youth through YCI, to allow them to have some of the same opportunities for personal and professional growth, while also supporting important youth-focused international development projects around the world.