FOCOS USA Administrator, Barbara Spiegler, answers your frequently asked questions regarding FOCOS Mission Trips. Mrs. Spiegler has been a valued employee of FOCOS since 2011 and manages all aspects of mission trips and volunteer travel.

Who can apply for FOCOS Mission Trips?
Anyone 18 years of age and older is eligible to apply but priority is given to experienced medical professionals. Nonmedical professionals are encouraged to submit a statement of special interest along with their application to describe their skills and how they will benefit FOCOS.

How do I apply to volunteer on a FOCOS Mission Trip?
To apply, you must complete the FOCOS Volunteer Application that is posted in the volunteer section of our website, www.orthofocos.org. The application is complete with detailed instructions and submission information.

How far in advance should I apply for a trip?
We recommend that you apply as soon as possible for mission trips as they tend to fill up quickly. Availability is primarily based upon the needs of the Hospital and the surgical schedule. A good rule of thumb is to apply at least three months prior to your expected departure date.

How does the selection process work? When will I know if I have been selected?
The FOCOS Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) carefully reviews all volunteer applications approximately six (6) weeks prior to each trip. Participants are selected based primarily upon the needs of the Hospital and the surgical schedule. As mentioned, a priority is given to experienced medical professionals. FOCOS staff will notify you as soon as a decision has been made regarding your application, usually six weeks prior to your trip.

What documents/immunizations will I need for my trip to Ghana?
Ghana requires that all visitors obtain a travel Visa in order to enter the country. Once accepted as a FOCOS Volunteer, FOCOS staff will provide you with an application for your Visa and assist you with the process. It generally takes a minimum of one week to obtain your Visa.

In order to enter the country, you must also have a yellow fever immunization. This can be received from your physician and is usually not covered by insurance (generally costs around $175). Your doctor will provide you with a piece of paper that you are to affix to your passport that verifies the immunization was received. You are also required to receive the Hepatitis B vaccination. Malaria pills are not required but are highly recommended.
Will I have to pay to be a volunteer for FOCOS?
There is no application or volunteer fee, however all volunteers are required to pay their own flight expense. We encourage you to find a sponsor to provide financial support, whether it is from businesses, friends or family members. FOCOS staff can offer assistance with fundraising by brainstorming ideas, creating you a personal fundraising website, and featuring you in our newsletters or marketing materials.

How long is the flight to Ghana?
A direct flight from New York City to Accra, Ghana is around 10 hours.

Where will I stay when I am in Ghana? Do I have to pay for lodging? Will I be safe?
All FOCOS Volunteers reside in the FOCOS Guesthouse free of charge. The guesthouse is complete with several bedrooms, a kitchen, TV room, bathrooms, a tennis court and a swimming pool. The entire compound is gated and monitored by full-time security guards 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Volunteers receive three home cooked meals a day, free of charge. All meals are prepared in clean and healthy environments by FOCOS Ghana chefs. Bottled water is also provided to volunteers at all times.

Will I have time to tour and see the country?
This will depend on the length of your stay, but generally yes, there will be time to travel and see the tourist attractions such as Cape Coast, national parks, and the monkey sanctuary. Travel accommodations are provided by FOCOS, but volunteers are asked to pay their own admission fees and any other expenses associated with tourist attractions. Fees run anywhere from $10 to $50 depending on the activity and no activity is mandatory. We encourage you to get out and explore all Ghana has to offer, but remind you to never go anywhere without a FOCOS Ghana staff member or representative.

How much money should I bring with me?
This again will depend on the length of your stay, but generally speaking we recommend $300 - $500 per two week stay. Our volunteers often enjoy shopping and exploring the tourist sites. Many times, there is the option to visit a restaurant or jazz club, and this will be at your own expense. Also, it is best to bring larger bills ($50s or $100s) as you will receive a better exchange rate. FOCOS Ghana staff will take you to the appropriate locations to exchange your money.

If you have any further questions, please call FOCOS at 212.308.7732.