“Ninety percent of the world’s children live in low- and middle-income countries, where barriers to health contribute to significant child morbidity and mortality.”

As the December 2018 American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement highlights, there is an urgent need for pediatric services around the globe. Children have specific health, physical, psychosocial, developmental and communication needs. From neonates to adolescents, children require care that serves their overall wellbeing to ensure a healthy foundation for a more productive life.

To meet these needs and realize the global goal of universal health coverage, health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) need a cadre of well-trained child health providers. You can help sustain and expand the child health workforce in low-resource areas by sharing your skills and knowledge.

Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) is a global health nonprofit based in Washington, DC that is dedicated to improving the quality and availability of care in resource-scarce countries by providing education and professional development opportunities to the local health workforce. HVO recruits experienced pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists to work directly with physicians, residents, medical students, and staff at health institutions in resource-limited settings. Volunteers provide knowledge, skills, and professional opportunity to these local health workers, supporting them and expanding the quality and availability of care available to their patients.

Since its founding in 1986, HVO has facilitated more than 11,500 volunteer assignments. HVO offers projects in more than 18 health specialty areas, including a pediatrics program supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

HVO relies on equitable partnerships to deliver education and training to medical students, staff and physicians focused on child health in Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, St. Lucia and Uganda. We base every partnership upon honest and open communication, equity and flexibility, and we adapt to the needs of our project sites.

As needs and skills at our project sites have evolved, so too have our projects. While we continue to recruit pediatric educators and generalists, several sites also seek subspecialists to advance the provision of specialized care. We are seeking subspecialists in cardiology, endocrinology, neurology, infectious disease, intensive care, neonatology, and nephrology, in addition to other subspecialty needs identified by project sites.

HVO envisions a world where all people have access to high quality health care delivered by local health professionals, and works toward that vision by fostering partnerships and strengthening health systems in order to support and expand the global health workforce. As humanity faces new and evolving global health threats, we must accelerate the exchange of knowledge between practicing providers, and support those in training to ensure that all communities have access to timely and effective health services. Although HVO’s approach is gradual and focused on long-term impact, it is also imbued with a sense of urgency as the know quality of life and life itself are at stake for every child who lives without access to care.

Volunteers must be experienced, board-eligible general pediatricians or pediatric subspecialists. Retired pediatricians and pediatricians in academic practice are also encouraged to apply. A team of staff and volunteers works closely with each prospective volunteer to identify the best project site for their unique skill set and background. These individuals also work to prepare prospective volunteers for their assignments. For a full list and description of HVO projects, please visit our pediatric program page.

Assignments typically range in length from two to four weeks. To start the volunteer placement process, complete the HVO volunteer application or contact HVO.