

**2015/2016 A2EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT**

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**A2Empowerment history**

A2Empowerment, Inc. was founded in 2008 by Anne Cheung and Anne Rapin in order to improve the lives of girls and women in underdeveloped parts of the world. Anne Rapin’s experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon compelled both women to act.

A2Empowerment co-founders contacted the Peace Corps in Cameroon in 2007 with an interest in developing a need- and merit-based scholarship project for young women, focusing on girls who have dropped out or are at a high risk of dropping out of school. The project proposal was embraced by the Peace Corps and developed by A2Empowerment co-founders along with Peace Corps Volunteers in Cameroon. The project started in the Adamaoua region of Cameroon and has since expanded to the East, North, North West, Littoral, Extreme North, South West and West regions. The expansion was prompted by Peace Corps Volunteers who witnessed the success of the project in Adamaoua.

Funding for all scholarships is raised through donations solicited by the A2Empowerment Board of Directors participating in bike rides, marathons and other organized events. To date, all donations have gone toward scholarships, as conservative overhead costs are maintained and covered by the A2Empowerment co-founders.

Please find more information on our website: [www.A2Empowerment.org](http://www.A2Empowerment.org)

**Application overview**

The process of selecting and awarding recipients has evolved and improved since it began. Currently, the process begins in January when participating Peace Corps Volunteers publicize the scholarships in schools and their community. Completed applications, which include a questionnaire, a report card and an optional recommendation letter, are submitted to A2Empowerment by the due date in April. **Current scholarship recipients will fill out a slightly different application than new applicants so A2Empowerment can monitor their progress.**

Recipients are selected based on the written responses on their application, school performance and recommendations. Each written response receives a numerical score by the A2Empowerment co-founders. Scholarships are awarded to applicants with the highest total score within each set of applications submitted by the Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps Volunteers are informed of the recipients in early June and sent an A2Empowerment certificate to award each young woman.

Alternate scholarship recipients are necessary because circumstances occasionally change for the girls in between the time of application and enrollment. To allow for alternate scholarship recipients, A2Empowerment asks that each Peace Corps Volunteer to submit up to 10 student applications. A2Empowerment will award the number of scholarships as the Peace Corps Volunteer feels comfortable mentoring, up to 8 scholarships per Peace Corps Volunteer. For example, if a Peace Corps Volunteer is comfortable mentoring 5 scholarship recipients, 7 applications should be submitted and A2Empowerment will pick the top 5 applicants to receive the scholarship. If PCVs feel they would like to mentor a greater number of girls, or they would like to submit applications without consideration of alternate recipients, they should contact A2Empowerment prior to submitting applications to discuss these issues.

In the past, A2Empowerment then coordinated with one or more Peace Corps Volunteer Regional Contact(s) to write a Peace Corps Partnership Project proposal (PCPP). In 2014, each PCV was required to submit their own individual PCPP for their group. We will keep you updated on the process in 2015.

Once the project is accepted by Peace Corp officials, funds are paid though the Peace Corps website by A2Empowerment. If working through regional contacts, the Peace Corps transfers the money to the Peace Corps Volunteer Regional Contact(s) in Cameroon and funds are distributed by that volunteer to the participating Peace Corps Volunteers in their region. If working through individual PCVs, Peace Corps transfers the funds directly to individual PCV bank accounts. Those volunteers then pay the tuition, fees and school supplies for each girl, up to the amount of 44,000 CFA. Receipts for all payments are collected and monitored by Peace Corps and A2Empowerment.

### **Scholarship recipient requirements**

A2Empowerment scholarship recipients have several requirements to meet throughout the school year. Shortly after recipients are announced, each recipient and her family must sign a contract agreeing to the terms of the scholarship. Terms include a full understanding of funding, which includes funding only for the school and village requested on the application. Terms also include requirements such as attendance at monthly meetings with PCV mentors, community activity, and submission of report cards for PCV review. It is expected that scholastic performance and attendance will be upheld throughout the school year. The contract also urges students and family members to continue to set money aside for additional or future school expenses should the recipient need supplies not covered by the scholarship or should she not receive the scholarship the following year. **At this time it should be stressed to scholarship recipients that scholarship funding is coming from an American NGO, not individual PCVs.**

Although scholarships are only guaranteed for one year, applicants increase their chances of continued funding through A2Empowerment if these terms are met or exceeded.

### **PCV requirements**

PCV involvement in the A2Empowerment scholarship project has minimum requirements during the application process and throughout the school year.

- During the application process, each PCV contact must meet required deadlines.
- PCVs who are interested in offering the project in their village must submit a PCV Application to A2Empowerment. Student applications will only be considered when submitted by PCVs who returned the PCV Application.
- PCVs must make an effort to solicit applications from young women who have dropped out, or are at high risk of dropping out, of school. **Focus should be placed on girls in the later years of high school when dropout rates are highest.** Suggestions for finding applicants include contacting schools for lists of students who have dropped out, contacting applicants through trusted community members, and, for education volunteers, identifying promising applicants in classes.
- Once applications have been received from students, we suggest that PCVs visit the homes of their top candidates to interview the applicants. Through the interview, PCVs gain a sense of the applicant's need for this scholarship and may verify her application. This information can be used to narrow down applications for submission to A2Empowerment, as we ask that each PCV submit no more than 10 applications. Also, information gained through the interview process can be used to write a recommendation which will be taken into consideration during the application review process.
- Student applications are in fillable PDF form. PCVs should either assist students in completing the application electronically and submit a saved file, or submit a scanned copy of each application. Please send all electronic forms and/or scanned files via email to A2Empowerment, at [a2epcv@gmail.com](mailto:a2epcv@gmail.com), by the indicated deadline.
- Following notification of the award, each PCV must notify the scholarship recipient and present her with a certificate provided by A2Empowerment through the PCV Regional Contact.
- PCVs must meet with the recipient and her family to go over the terms of the scholarship and sign an A2Empowerment Contract. A copy of the contract should be provided to A2Empowerment upon their request. **At this time it should be stressed to scholarship recipients that scholarship funding is coming from an American NGO, not individual PCVs.**
- Upon receipt of funding through PCPP to the PCV Regional Contact, each PCV involved in the project should obtain payment from their PCV Regional Contact or directly from Peace Corps.
- PCVs should accompany scholarship recipients to pay for tuition, school fees and supplies, up to 44,000 CFA. All receipts should be collected and copies submitted to A2Empowerment and the PCV Regional Contact.
- PCVs are asked to mentor the scholarship recipients by holding monthly meetings with the recipients in their area. These meetings should be used to review recipient progress, set goals, work on community involvement projects, and educate recipients on health, current affairs and women's empowerment.
- A scanned copy of recipient report cards and an A2Empowerment progress report should be submitted to A2Empowerment yearly.
- Based on PCV and scholarship recipient discretion, A2Empowerment requests that PCVs provide information to A2Empowerment on the scholarship recipients for publicity purposes. Information may include photos, an essay about the scholarship recipient and/or a thank you letter written by the scholarship recipient to donors. These items may be used in A2Empowerment brochures, newsletters, and postcards, as well as on the A2Empowerment website and Facebook page. Submission of these materials may be via email or regular mail.
- PCVs should oversee all aspects of the community involvement required by PCPP and include a description of these activities in the A2Empowerment progress report.

### **PCV Regional Contact requirements**

PCV Regional Contacts are typically in contact with A2Empowerment monthly via email and occasionally through phone or text messaging. Each PCV regional contact should serve as a communication conduit between A2Empowerment and PCVs involved in the project, especially during the application process and funding distribution. PCV regional contacts are responsible for reminding PCVs of application deadlines, informing them of scholarship recipients, editing a PCPP application for their region(s) based off of an example provided by A2Empowerment, receiving and distributing A2Empowerment certificates, receiving and distributing funding through PCPP, and collecting receipts for PCPP and A2Empowerment records.

### **Community involvement requirement**

Community involvement is a requirement for A2Empowerment and PCPP. Examples of community involvement include:

Tutoring - recipients tutor younger students and tutoring space is donated by community schools or organizations

Lectures –women in the community serve as role models, speaking to recipients and other students about career choices and independence. Recipients can be involved in organizing the lecture events.

Donations – local business donate space, resources and/or supplies for recipient meetings and workshops.

Collaboration – community members meet with recipient groups regularly to teach a trade or skill

### **Application schedule for the 2015/2016 academic year**

January 25, 2015 – April 20, 2015	PCV APPLICATIONS (excel file) ACCEPTED BY A2EMPOWERMENT
January 25, 2015 – April 20, 2015	SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS (fillable pdf file) ACCEPTED BY A2EMPOWERMENT
May 20, 2015 – June 20, 2015	PCPP SUBMITTED TO PEACE CORPS
January 25, 2015 – May 20, 2015	SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS PROCESSED AND REVIEWED BY A2EMPOWERMENT
June 1, 2015	SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED BY A2EMPOWERMENT
June 2015	SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS NOTIFIED BY PCVS AND NAME SPELLING VERIFIED
June 2015	AWARD CERTIFICATES SENT TO PCVS VIA EMAIL

### **2015/2016 Form due dates**

April 20, 2015	PCV APPLICATION
April 20, 2015	SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
July 20, 2015	PEACE CORPS PARTNERSHIP PROJECT
June 30, 2015	SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT CONTRACT
November 1, 2015	PROGRESS MONITORING FORM
June 30, 2016	TUTORING TRACKING FORM
June 30, 2016	PCV FINAL REPORT