

## **How To A2**

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The A2Empowerment scholarship program was created in order to improve the lives of girls in Cameroon through a need- and merit-based scholarship program. The program allows Peace Corps Volunteers and their counterparts to identify girls at the secondary school level who have recently dropped out of school or who are at a high risk of dropping out of school due to financial reasons and to guide them through the A2Empowerment application process. If the girls are selected to receive the scholarship, they, along with their parents or guardian, are asked to sign a contract, agreeing that all of the funds will go towards the girl's school fees and related school costs, that the girl will meet with her local PCV and Host Country National (HCN) counterpart on a monthly basis, that she will participate in community activities, and that her attendance and scholastic performance will be upheld throughout the school year. At the monthly meetings during the school year, scholarship recipients will work with their local PCV and HCN to review their progress, to work on community involvement projects and goal-setting, and to learn about health, current affairs and women's empowerment.

Because we arrive to post halfway through the school year, Youth Development Peace Corps Volunteers are discouraged from applying to participate in the A2Empowerment Scholarship program in their first year. I was frustrated to find in my second year that I could have easily applied to A2Empowerment in my first year, leaving my second year to follow-up working with the girls with their monthly meetings and community service projects (while simultaneously training my counterparts). So, I have compiled a how-to for YDs arriving to country in September of 2013:

During PST: Send an email to A2Empowerment expressing your interest in participating in the program, giving them your swearing-in date to let them know your approximated arrival to post. Once you receive the name of your post, send a follow-up email to A2Empowerment to let them know where you've been posted. If you are replacing another volunteer or have another contact PCV in your region that has been involved in A2Empowerment, get in touch with them with any questions you have specific to your post to help you fill out the PCV A2Empowerment Application.

Upon Arrival at Post: Complete your PCV A2Empowerment Application and submit it. Visit your local high school(s) and introduce yourself to the principal. Explain the A2Empowerment Scholarship program to him or her (be sure to mention that the scholarship is for the next school year and that not all applicants are accepted), and ask him or her if he or she can provide you with a list of girls who have not yet paid their school fees for this school year. Then, ask if he or she would introduce you to a Surveillant General who would be willing to work with you through the application process as a point person at the high school. Explain the program to the Surveillant General, and ask him or her to go to each class to ask the girls on the list provided by the principal some preliminary questions (Why have you not yet paid your school fees? Who is responsible for paying your school fees? Are one or both of your parents dead? etc.) so that she can narrow down the list. You, with the help of the Surveillant General, should then invite those girls who remained on the list to attend an informational meeting before the December school break. Before the meeting, go to the principal to ask him or her how many boys/ girls are in each class (you will need this information to give to the girls at the meeting). During the meeting, explain the A2Empowerment Scholarship

program to the girls, and walk them through the application [all with the help of the Surveillant General and your counterpart]. The application is not too lengthy; the girls can fill their applications out at the meeting, but they may not have received their report cards (bulletins) at this point, so you will have to wait until January to make those photocopies. Once you have made the photocopies of the bulletins and received all of the completed applications, you and the Surveillant General and your counterpart can read through them to determine which applicants you will send on to A2Empowerment (maximum 10 applicants per PCV). Then, scan them in and email them, and the application process is done!

Once your girls are accepted, you will have your entire second year to work closely with them, facilitating the monthly meetings and helping them carry out their community service projects. Have fun!

For more information, visit: <http://www.A2Empowerment.org> or email the co-founders at [A2Empowerment@gmail.com](mailto:A2Empowerment@gmail.com).