A teacher is one who brings tools and enables us to use them.
– Jean Toomer

Thank you! We are grateful to you for agreeing to be a Bridge Kids Advisor. We appreciate you for “stepping up” and committing your time and talent to the development of young people of Africa and the African Diaspora. We know the young people in your group will rely heavily on you for your guidance and wisdom. We at Bridge Kids will also rely on you, but we also plan to give you plenty of support. We hope this guide is helpful as you get started.

In this Helping Hand Guide, you will learn about:
• The role of a Bridge Kids Advisor
• Bridge Kids International fundamentals
• What you can expect from Bridge Kids staff
• About the participation fee
• Safety precautions

THE ROLE OF A BRIDGE KIDS ADVISOR

In the 🌿 Helping Hand Guide to Starting Your Bridge Kids Group we advise young people to consider choosing an Advisor who:
• likes working with young people
• respects the ideas of young people
• is respected by young people and other adults
• is trusted by families of young people
• has wisdom
• is responsible
• encourages young people to lead
• has experience and interest in the Bridge Kids focus areas
• can work well with others
• has good connections in the community
• is enthusiastic
• has time to devote to Bridge Kids

The mere fact that the young people in your group chose you is a testament to their confidence in you. We consider Bridge Kids Advisors to be positions of honor. You, your group and Bridge Kids International are on this journey together. We are in partnership and should work as a team.
Bridge Kids sees the role of the Advisor to be:
- Providing guidance and support to the Bridge Kids in your group
- Working closely with the key youth leaders in the group
- Keeping the group members focused
- Upholding Bridge Kids International core principles
- Keeping the young people safe
- Communicating with Bridge Kids staff regarding any concerns, challenges and successes of your group
- Providing feedback regarding Bridge Kids policies, procedures and programs
- Helping your group members respect deadlines
- Encouraging group members to stretch beyond their comfort level and take on new challenges
- Helping young people to lead, including allowing them to make mistakes (within reasonable limits) and try new things
- Identifying resources that will help your group complete their projects
- Rallying support in your local community
- Serving as a chaperone to Bridge Kids activities, or designating another responsible adult to take your place
- Helping young people to manage the financial aspects of your Bridge Kids Group
- Assisting with group dynamics that may negatively impact the team
- Being a resource for the “whole person” – referring young people to where they can get help when non-Bridge Kids related needs arise
- Keeping a positive attitude and enjoying the experience

BRIDGE KIDS INTERNATIONAL FUNDAMENTALS

The Bridge Kids Group Advisor ensures that the young people understand the core values and spirit of the organization. The mission, objectives, vision and Bridge Kids Way are important guides to the heart of the organization. Please contact Bridge Kids staff if any clarification is necessary.

MISSION
Bridge Kids International, Inc. links youth and young adults of Africa and the African Diaspora for the purposes of friendship, cooperation, and individual and community empowerment, implementing the idea of dynamic global citizenship.

We are a global non profit organization improving the lives of young people of Africa and the African Diaspora, aged 13-25, through addressing the issues of economic development, education, the environment, girls’ rights, and health.
VISION
Bridge Kids International believes that young people of Africa and the African Diaspora have within them the genius and capacity to solve challenges in their lives and communities. We link young leaders from Africa and the African Diaspora, creating a dynamic global community based on real work, a sound understanding of the interconnectedness of issues and people, a genuine concern for and curiosity about each other, and a deep recognition that young people - when provided with resources and given the chance- have the ability to create lasting change.

Through Bridge Kids, young people from large urban centers to remote rural villages gain access to the world. They join a network of budding social entrepreneurs who tap into their own creativity to create smart solutions to real challenges. By helping young people improve their lives and home communities, learn about global issues, and travel internationally, the organization gives them a mechanism to exercise their leadership, access their human rights, and expand their worldview while making real friends across the globe. Bridge Kids has a multiplier effect; we impact young people and they impact others in their communities. As the small scale actions of many inspired people coalesce into a wave of transformation, the possibilities for change become limitless.

OBJECTIVES
- Inspire youth of Africa and the African Diaspora to be change agents for their own lives, their communities, and the world by helping them create simple and attainable solutions to challenges
- Foster mutual respect, understanding, positive relationships and cooperation amongst youth of Africa and the African Diaspora
- Promote young people’s human rights
- Support youth-centered community development projects
- Assist youth in obtaining the life, leadership and technical skills necessary to reach their project goals
- Use technology to provide ongoing opportunities for communication and learning amongst the youth participants
- Facilitate the sharing of history and culture amongst youth of Africa and the African Diaspora
- Educate about current social and political issues facing youth of Africa and the African Diaspora
- Organize international trips to support objectives

THE BRIDGE KIDS WAY
At Bridge Kids, we have adopted a set of core principles to guide us as we work with dynamic young people of Africa and the African Diaspora and their adult supporters. It is our expectation that those joining our programs use the Bridge Kids Way to direct their actions and decision-making.

THE RIGHTS OF ALL MUST BE RESPECTED
Bridge Kids International is an organization dedicated to the development and advancement of young people. Every young person and adult associated with Bridge Kids is a person of value; therefore, they deserve to be respected, listened to, treated with care, and given opportunities to try new experiences. All of Bridge Kids’ work is guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and is designed to assist young people as they exercise their full rights as human beings.
YOUNG PEOPLE MUST BE PROTECTED
Young people have a right to be protected from exploitation and physical, mental and emotional harm. Everyone involved with Bridge Kids is expected to take the necessary precautions to protect young people participating in our programs.

OUR WORK IS CENTERED ON CHILDREN OF AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
Bridge Kids was founded in the spirit of The Day of the African Child and works to link young people of Africa and the African Diaspora. Staying true to this mission acknowledges the past that binds us and allows us to envision a future in which borders are not boundaries to friendships and cooperation. Africa’s Diaspora stretches to almost every corner of the earth, so our focus is truly global and multicultural and accurately acknowledges that we are citizens of the world.

YOUNG PEOPLE MUST EXERCISE LEADERSHIP
Bridge Kids champions the leadership of young people. We take young people seriously, encourage them to think critically, and challenge them to be actively involved in addressing the problems that face them. The world needs people who have a sense of their power, have the tools to affect change and the confidence to take on problems. The younger they start, the better!

WE RECOGNIZE THE INHERENT STRENGTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS WORKING TOGETHER
While Bridge Kids promotes the leadership of young people, we also believe they need the guidance and support of caring adults. When young people and adults work together, we unleash the power of experience and wisdom with energy and ingenuity. That’s the right combination to change the world!

WE MEET AS EQUALS - WE AIM TO BUILD GENUINE COMMUNITY
Too often young people are taught, even unintentionally, that people from the West are the charitable donors while those in different parts of the world are in need and on the receiving end of others’ generosity. Bridge Kids seeks to break these perceptions. We work to ensure that everyone in our programs meets as equals – leaders striving toward positive change. We are working to build a real international community and that starts with healthy, authentic relationships.

CREATIVITY IS THE RULE
It has been said that you can’t keep doing things the same way and expect things to change. We encourage young people to open their minds and their hearts and exercise their imaginations. What starts out as a “crazy” idea can become an effective strategy. When we want to make change, we believe in taking the very best of what our traditions offer and adding ingenuity to develop creative approaches to real problems.

WE STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABILITY
Bridge Kids works toward lasting change. We are more interested in encouraging young people to build toward sustainable change than to design flashy efforts that only shine in the moment. By studying the complex causes of problems, and planning for the short and the long term, we are able to act powerfully in the present.
WE FOCUS ON WHAT WE CAN DO
When we look at problems facing our communities, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Bridge Kids focuses on what we can do. We don’t wait for millions of dollars or hundreds of people. When we take stock of our human and material resources and use them wisely, think creatively, and ask for help when we need it, we are able to work smart and actually get things done. We have more power right at our fingertips than we often realize!

WE CELEBRATE OUR CULTURES AND LIFE EXPERIENCES
The Bridge Kids family stretches across many continents and represents many cultures and experiences. Our strength comes from knowing one another - beyond the surface. When we are curious about one another, share our lives and dreams, spend time in each other’s homelands, and care deeply about one another, we begin to recognize that our experiences are linked and we see each others’ issues as our own. Just imagine what we can do when we know we have the support of real friends around the world!

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM BRIDGE KIDS INTERNATIONAL STAFF
As we stated earlier, consider the Bridge Kids International staff part of your team. You can count on Bridge Kids to:

• Provide materials and technical support to help with Bridge Kids activities and projects
• Be available for consultation by phone or email
• Help Bridge Kids Groups identify resources to support their activities
• Help identify financial support of Bridge Kids activities
• Coordinate international activities such as videoconferences and on-line chats and provide logistical support to Bridge Kids Groups
• Identify opportunities (conferences, trainings, internships, etc.) to encourage young people’s leadership development
• Coordinate Bridge Kids Camps and assist Bridge Kids Groups in their efforts to attend
• Publicize and celebrate Bridge Kids Groups’ achievements
• Invite Bridge Kids Advisors and group members to participate in organizational governance and evaluation of Bridge Kids programs, policies and procedures

ABOUT THE PARTICIPATION FEE
There is a $50 (US) participation fee per young person per year. The fee helps cover some of the expenses related to Bridge Kids International support - phone, postage, internet access, translation, t-shirts, etc.
For some groups that fee would prohibit participation. In those instances, Bridge Kids will work with Bridge Kids Groups to identify sponsorships. Because we have found that people tend to have a sense of ownership over things they financially contribute to, each Bridge Kids Group must bear some portion of the fees. That amount will be determined on a case by case basis. A reasonable timeframe for payment will be determined in consultation with each Bridge Kids Group. The fee does not have to be paid before your group can get started.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The safety of our young people is a primary concern for Bridge Kids. Because much of our communication takes place via the internet, we have taken some precautions to protect our young people from internet predators.

The Advisor is the first line of defense. The Advisor must verify the identity of each young person in their Bridge Kids Group. After the group has been approved by Bridge Kids International, each young person and Advisor will choose a log-in name and password for the Bridge Kids website.

Only those officially connected with Bridge Kids with a username and password will be allowed to access the "Bridge Kids Only" section of the website. In the "Bridge Kids Only" section, the young people will be able to see complete personal profiles and be able to communicate directly with each other through message boards, web conferences and other online activities. When any of our young people are featured on a public area of the website, only first name, city and country will be used to identify them.

There is a wide age range in Bridge Kids, 13-25 years of age. We want all of the young people to communicate freely and we encourage the friendships that will surely develop. We strongly encourage Advisors to monitor their group's Bridge Kids-related computer activity to make sure contact with others is appropriate. If there is ever any cause for concern, we ask that you contact Bridge Kids International staff immediately so we can address any inappropriate behavior.

We can't stress enough just how important Advisors are to the success of Bridge Kids. Thank you again for joining your group on this journey. If you have not already done so, please read the other Helping Hand Guides.