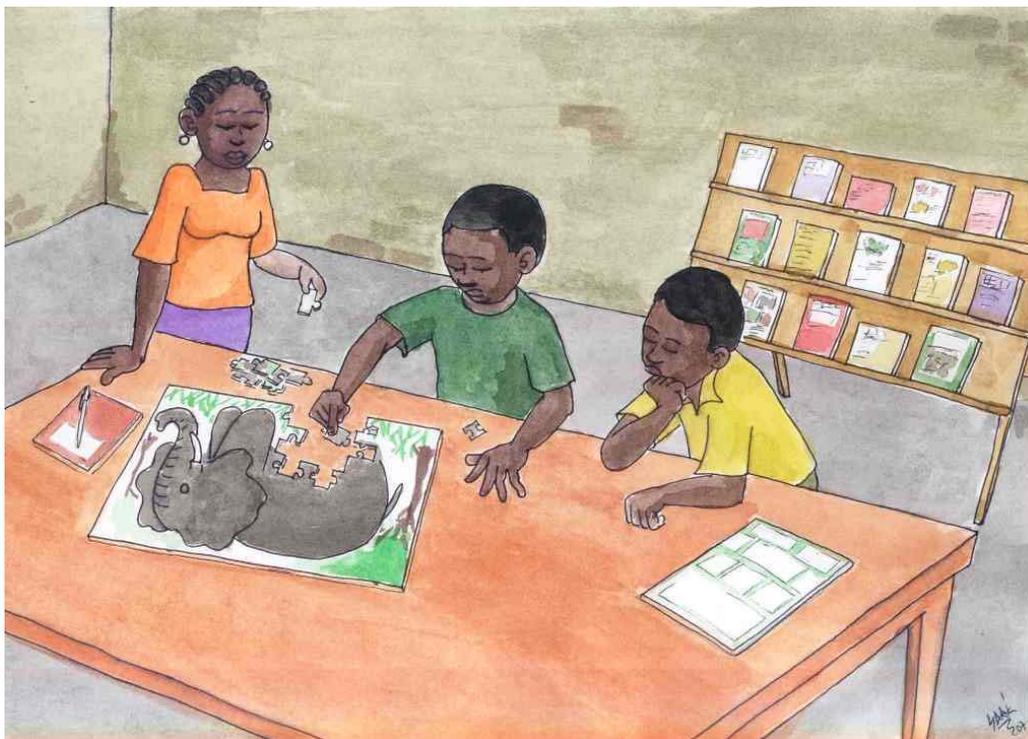


Guide for Friends of African Village Libraries (FAVL) volunteers

Bolgatanga area, Upper East region, Ghana

Revised 30 May 2007



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Responsibility

You are about to embark on a potentially life-changing trip: volunteering in a small community library in northern Ghana. The region you are going to is one of the poorest in the world. You will be surprised and challenged by what you see. People getting by on almost nothing. Children crowding around to read a book or practice their English. You will also see how lucky you are to have grown up in a developed country. The comforts and knowledge that you take for granted, you will find absent at every turn. The goal of your volunteer stay is to learn and to help. Most likely, you are a university student or recent graduate and this is one of your first experiences abroad. Choosing to go to a very tough environment is a first sign of responsibility. There will be even greater challenges ahead. At FAVL, we want to emphasize your own responsibility to be prepared to the fullest extent possible. The more you know about Ghana, the more benefit you will get from your trip. The more you understand the dangers of travel in the Third World- particularly health hazards, but also regarding personal safety- the more effective you will be as a learner and a volunteer. So please read this manual and other materials very carefully. Ask lots of questions. Talk with friends who have traveled in Third World countries. Read websites devoted to Ghana and West Africa in general. Read travel guides (that you can purchase easily at a major bookstore).

To be an effective volunteer in a library, you need to know how libraries work and what their purposes are. Please read the materials available on the FAVL website www.favl.org especially the links to various library guides. Visit your local library and talk with the children's librarian about your trip, and how you might be most effective. Spend some time watching how the children's librarians read stories aloud with children in the library. Go to used bookstores and buy a few children's books that might be appropriate for a village setting and that you would enjoy reading aloud to children (e.g. picture books about a monkey who comes from the jungle to the city, or a bear that eats too many blueberries...). It would also be helpful if you read some of the classic novels of African literature, such as Things Fall Apart, The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born (from Ghana), The Famished Road, Nervous Conditions, and saw some African movies.

Your biggest responsibility as a volunteer is to communicate. The least we at FAVL expect from you is that you will write a trip report at the end of your stay where you will offer constructive suggestions about how to improve library services and the volunteer experiences, and that you write an article (for your local newspaper or college paper) about your experiences (hopefully positive and inspirational) in northern Ghana and in the libraries.

On the financial front, this is your trip and your volunteering effort, and so we expect you to be self-financing. FAVL's resources are limited, and we cannot finance airfare, lodging, food, or other travel expenses. What we can do is help with the logistics: find you a place to stay, usually meet you at the Accra airport, if not in Accra or worst case in Bolgatanga, and get you oriented when you arrive in Bolgatanga, and keep you busy with work in the libraries. In order to cover our overhead (emails and faxes and trips to Accra to meet you) we would ask that you make a \$200 contribution to FAVL/CESRUD if you are able to. There will also be a small charge for staying in the rooms at the Sumbrungu Women's Center (perhaps \$5 per night). Depending on the program activities you choose to implement, FAVL may or may not cover the expenses (buying books, materials, offering payments for assistants). We work this out on a case by case basis.

This is our first guide for volunteers, so one of your responsibilities is to improve it. Take notes during your stay, and please email them back to FAVL. We would appreciate full paragraphs that we can cut and paste into the guide directly.

What to do before departure?

- Buy a Ghana travel guide. The Lonely Planet travel guides are excellent, as are the Bradt guides. Read the sections on health very carefully.
- Take care of health issues. You should consult your travel clinic and get all vaccines and malaria prophylaxis that are required. Read about health issues in Ghana online at the Center for Disease Control website. Consult with your family about your health insurance and make sure you are covered for travel.
- Purchase an International Student ID card and purchase supplemental travel insurance and emergency evacuation insurance.
- Make a reservation and purchase your airplane ticket. Consider buying trip cancellation insurance, just in case. Generally a round-trip to Accra costs about \$1000.

- Once you have a plane ticket, make a reservation in a hotel in Accra for two nights, giving yourself time to explore the city. You might want to send the hotel a fax to make the reservation. For example: Granada Hotel Tel:+233-21-775293, Fax:+233-21-775244 To Whom it May Concern, I would like to make a reservation at the hotel for 2 nights, June xx, 2007 and June xx 2007. I will be arriving on flight #xx, Airline xx, arriving at xx pm. Could you please confirm that you have a room available by return fax to xx or by email : xx. Thank you very much,
- Let Leslie Gray at FAVL (lcgray@scu.edu) know your arrival time and hotel. FAVL will try to arrange for a librarian to come down from Bolgatanga to meet you.
- If you are a university student or still living with your parents, then keep your parents informed. Parents will worry a lot about your travel. They are very concerned about your health and safety. The more you take the time to inform yourself and keep them informed, the more reassured they will be that you are capable of handling yourself in an emergency. If you adopt an attitude that they are over-concerned, or that knowing as little as possible about where you are going until the last minute is the best strategy, you are setting yourself up for family trouble.
- Get your passport and make sure it will not expire in the coming months and that there are enough pages for visas and stamps (if you are already a world traveler). Download the application for visa from the Embassy of Ghana in Washington, DC. (www.ghana-embassy.org). Get your passport photos taken (Walgreens, Costco... good idea to get a half-dozen extra just in case). Send in your passport and application and money order and return envelope. Federal Express or similar service allows you to prepay the return envelope and remember to write down the return envelope tracking number before you send it.
- Get a 'letter of introduction' from FAVL and copy it, in case you visit local NGO's and offices.
- Prepare an 'emergency card' that contains information on who to contact in case of emergency. A model of this card is on the FAVL website, and you should carry it with you at all times.

What to bring

Checklist of what things you should bring for travel to Ghana:

1. ATM card for withdrawing money in Accra and Tamale. ATM cards with the Visa logo are usually safe bets for being able to withdraw money, and ATM machines are the most convenient way to get local currency, the *cedi*.
2. International Health Card (Yellow card) showing Yellow Fever vaccination. If you do not have this, you risk being administered a large shot at the Accra airport!
3. Sunscreen- enough for the trip; usually it is not available in Bolgatanga
4. Mosquito net for a twin bed and four pieces of string about 6 feet long each, to tie to places on wall (available in many camping stores)
5. Anti-malaria pills (consult your doctor)
6. Insect repellent (Cutter's is good, and cream is much more compact than spray)
7. 2 twin-size sheets
8. Small pillow (then you can have it on the airplane)
9. Iodine tablets (for purifying water- camping stores sell these in small bottles, they are good for emergencies)
10. Half-liter, tough water bottle, for traveling
11. A money belt that you wear underneath your pants or dress, for passport, credit card and airplane ticket when traveling
12. Small flashlight and extra batteries
13. Do you wear contact lenses? Maybe leave them behind and bring two pairs of glasses, one for emergencies if they break. We don't have nightstands, and sometimes you end up sleeping on the ground, and you wake up late at night and you step on your glasses (has happened to me twice). Bring a glasses case that is hard. Cheap sunglasses are far better than expensive ones since it is highly likely you won't be returning with your sunglasses...
14. Sturdy comfortable sandals
15. Flip flops
16. Old clothes with holes in them... Jeans are often too hot, so make the pants khakis or other cotton pants.
17. People in Ghana generally do not wear shorts in public except when doing physical work or around the house. Women almost never wear shorts. Don't make yourself stand out if you are a woman; bring loose cotton long pants or long skirts. Bring shorts for around the house.
18. At least one set of presentable clothes. You'll only be in town for a couple days, but people you meet there will be wearing nice clothes. Guys should bring two decent button shirts, cotton and short-sleeved, women should bring two decent dresses or pant-blouse combo.
19. Hat- whatever you feel comfortable with. Sometimes it is very very hot, and you have to wear some kind of hat.
20. You probably will do your own wash, so consider that jeans are very very hard to wash by hand...
21. 15 Powerbars in case you hate the food or need a late nite snack in order to go to sleep. Good travel food also.
22. Any medicines you might need.
23. Women- tampons and pads- not available in the village!

24. Small towel and toiletries (toothbrush, etc.) Very good to have a small plastic toiletries bag that is somewhat stiff on the sides and opens easily- you will be occasionally bathing outdoors in a shower stall, from a bucket.
25. Day backpack or bag that is lightweight, for your water, sunscreen, and work materials

What to do in Accra when you land

Take a registered taxi only, and not an informal car, to your hotel. The first day in Accra, go to the U.S. embassy (or the embassy of your country) and register, letting the consular office know where you will be during your stay. The consular officials can be very helpful in emergencies. Stop at an ATM machine or bank on the day before you leave for Sumbrungu, and withdraw about \$500 to cover your expenses for the first month. You should visit in Accra the libraries supported by Osu Children's Library Fund (see their website for details). This will give you a good idea of well-functioning urban libraries. You should also visit the Ghana Book Trust. Finally, you should visit local bookstores and purchase several Ghanaian novels. While in Sumbrungu, reading Ghanaian novels will set a good example for students, enable you to have something to talk about with the librarians, and also donate the novels to the libraries when you are finished.

Taxis in Accra are reasonably cheap, and a trip in town should cost about 50,000-60,000 cedis.

How will I get to the libraries?

The libraries that FAVL supports in Upper East region, Ghana, are located close to the town of Bolgatanga, near the border with Burkina Faso. A paved road takes you all the way north from Accra. This will be a very long bus ride, typically about 10 hours, though it is a good way to see the whole country. Numerous bus companies serve the Accra-Bolgatanga route.

What to expect in Bolgatanga?

When you arrive in Bolgatanga, you will typically be accompanied from Accra by a librarian, or else you will be met when your bus arrives by a librarian or CESRUD board member, who will then take you to the Sumbrungu women's center, where small rooms are available for volunteers. These are very basic rooms- do not expect luxury accommodations. After a few days of walking and bicycling around to get to know the area, you will begin a regular program of volunteering in the libraries.

What will I do in the libraries?

The following is a set of suggested activities for volunteers. Depending on the background and preparation of the volunteer, he or she will work together with the librarians to agree on a specific program of activities. The volunteer is expected to take this as a serious commitment, and notify librarians in advance of planned travel. If you commit to a certain amount of work, and to being present in the libraries for certain periods of time, please respect your commitment. The volunteer program depends on volunteers being useful, and not being 'adventure tourists' who simply see the library as an interesting curiosity and are really interested in dancing, drumming and basket weaving.

What kinds of activities are appropriate for a volunteer?

- Overhaul of the accession register and inventory: From time to time the accession register will become out of date and include many damaged or lost titles, and books weeded out of the library, and the register will need to be updated, with new books replacing the old numbers (record should be kept of the old books whose numbers are replaced). This is a good job for a volunteer, especially one who has computer skills and might have the time to enter or update the accession list into Excel.
- Improve or develop a system for classifying books: many small community libraries use a 'color code' systems to classify books, putting pre-printed colored stickers or labels on the spine of the book to enable the librarian to quickly sort and reshelv books. For example, African novels might have a green sticker on the spine of the book. Alternatively, the volunteer might develop a modified Dewey Decimal system if the library stock exceeds 2,000 books, and includes a large section of miscellaneous fiction and non-fiction titles.
- Reading programs. One of the hardest things in a village setting is organizing and sustaining a regular reading program, where children or adults meet regularly to read together or discuss a book they have read. A reading circle, for example, would be appropriate for young readers. A 'Read to your little sister' program might be appropriate for teenagers with younger sisters or brothers. A "Grandparents read books too" program might encourage the elderly to come to the library, demonstrating the value they place on reading, and enabling them to enjoy picture books and story books if they are not literate.

- Locating book donations in large towns: Many large towns have sizable expatriate communities who often have lots of books and are willing to donate them to libraries. Peace Corps volunteers also frequently can mobilize resources for books. The volunteer can, on behalf of the library, approach these donors and arrange for book donations (and thank you letters)
- Promoting the library in schools: Most schoolteachers are very happy to have a volunteer come to the classroom and bring an interesting storybook to read in class or during recess. The volunteer should prepare a handout and photocopy many copies to hand out to the students.
- Improving the system for book circulation: No system is perfect, and many volunteers have experience with libraries in developed countries. Short of developing a computer system, which would be too much technology, the volunteer might think of ways to improve the circulation system and record-keeping. The improvements should be thoroughly discussed and potential problems anticipated before implementation, though. Experimenting with a crazy idea may lead to a big waste of time and inconvenience everyone.
- Decorating the library: The volunteer often has a good eye for aesthetics that comes from years of visiting museums and public spaces in places where art is abundant. He or she may be able to explore the marketplace for African art and paintings and drawings, and organize an exhibit for the library. The volunteer might be encouraged to raise the money for this exhibition; a typical traditional work of art can cost from \$20-\$30 dollars (with some art, such as baskets, being far less expensive), so a budget of \$200-\$300 would be sufficient. Educational posters are often available from the NGOs that are active in the area, especially United Nations organizations.

Money

Currently there are no ATM machines in Bolgatanga, and so money has to be changed at one of various banks. There are ATM machines in Tamale, but as of June 2007 they have limits of 400,000 cedis (\$40), not really enough to justify a two hour trip to Tamale. The exchange rate is about 9,500 cedis per US dollar. The currency is set to change in July 2007, lopping off three zeros, so that will be helpful. Traveler's checks are advisable; if they are lost or stolen you can get them fully reimbursed. You should plan on having about \$500 per month for your expenses. Typically your expenses will be less than this if you stay in Bolgatanga area volunteering in the library. But if you travel around Ghana you will need more. You should also plan to have a reserve fund of \$500 with you until the end of your stay, for emergencies. A credit card is also sometimes useful in Accra in emergencies, but will not be useful in Bolgatanga. Transfers via Western Union are very safe and secure and can be picked up in banks in Bolgatanga.

Medical facilities and health issues

Bolgatanga has limited emergency medical facilities. If you have any serious medical issues, then you should not be traveling and staying in Bolgatanga. The town has a hospital and a private clinic is located near the Comme Ci Comme Ca hotel. When you first get to Bolgatanga, a CESRUD board member or librarian will take you to the clinic so that you know where it is. In case of medical emergency, you should either go the hospital or to the clinic. Be sure you have your emergency card at all times, and leave copies with the librarians, so that in case of emergency they can contact your relatives and FAVL.

Lodging

If the Sumbrungu Women's Center lodgings are completed, you will stay there. Details will follow. Hotels are plentiful in Bolgatanga.

1. St. Josephs hotel (not very nice) 072-23214
2. Azonsolum Guest House 233 072-24058
3. Comme Ci Comme Ca Hotel 072-22355
4. Sira Lodge (very nice hotel) 233 72 24451, 233 24 3299378, 233 27 7759189 siralodge@africaonline.com.gh, siralodge@yahoo.com
5. Samata guesthouse

Food

Here is what library science student Claudia Entrup wrote about food in the area: "I cooked myself on a gas cooker that volunteer James Hooper had left in the house. Ingredients for an ordinary stew could be purchased in the village as well as rice and noodles. Other things like yam or plantain could only be bought in town (i.e. Bolgatanga). There was also the opportunity to buy prepared food in the village: boiled yam and rice with beans, Kenkey, spaghetti, meat, fish, boiled eggs and salad was available every day on the market. On a market day, which was every third day, other food like rice balls, TZ (short for "Tuo Zaafi", very popular local food made from millet) and Banku was prepared for sale as well. In town there was the possibility of getting all kinds of Ghanaian

dish. My host family sometimes prepared food for me, which was really great. Through this I got the opportunity to taste TZ, dog meat and soup prepared with groundnuts from the family farm. All different kinds of fruits were available in the area – mangos in Sumbrungu and apples, pineapples, oranges, bananas and avocados”. (Yes, dog is a luxury meat item... not too common though. But if you see a dog on a leash, the owner is indeed taking it on a walk... to the market!)

Contact information

Back in the United States

Michael Kevane
Friends of African Village Libraries
P.O. Box 90533
San Jose, CA 95109
Home # (408) 298 4048

Work:
Dept. of Economics
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053
(408) 554 6888

FAVL's partner in Ghana is a local non-governmental organization called Center for Sustainable Rural Development (CESRUD)

P. O. Box 267, Bolgatanga, Upper East Region Ghana

The international dialing code for Ghana is 233. Try variations of the numbers when you call; for some phone systems the leading 0 in the area code (024) is required, for others it is not.

- I. Rex Asanga rexasanga@yahoo.co.uk (233) 020- 8247156, Asanga office- near the National Bank office in central Bolgatanga. Rex Asanga's wife's shop is at Estates (that is how the place is called). The shop is located along the Tamale road just at the end of the dual carriage way in town. The dual carriage starts at the hospital junction and continues towards Tamale and ends at Estates. Just at the end of the dual carriage, on the left side, you will see a Container shop where provisions are sold. The name is Living Water Enterprises.
- II. Georg Ayanore (CESRUD board member): Mobile number: (233) 024 - 217608 He is an Engineer with the Ghana Water Company.
- III. George Akundikiya - (CESRUD board member) mobile no. (233) 024 - 580530, Tel.nos. home. 072 - 22275, office 072 - 22837 He is the Regional Boss for and NGO called ISODEC (Integrated Social Devt. Center. This office is located at the Ministries on the FASCOM (Farmers Services Company) Building. Every one in town knows where FASCOM Building is, just ask.
- IV. Rose Azupokaazupoka47@yahoo.com, 024 4760763, 024 07222175

Librarians:

The librarians have mobile phones, though they are not always reachable.

Lucas Amikiya (regional coordinator)(233) (024) 28 56 237 and (233) (020) 926 5632

Bernard Akulga (Sherigu) (233) (024) 673 7543

Darius Asanga (Sumbrungu)

Communication

There are internet cafes in Bolgatanga. The librarians will show you where they are. It is best to have a yahoo account in addition to your university account (if you are a student) as university email services experience frequent outages. Cell phones are available, and you may want to purchase one in Accra before you come to Bolgatanga, if you are on an extended stay.

Professional demeanor and personal conduct

The librarians in FAVL supported libraries consider themselves to be professionals, and they expect you to act professionally. The librarians are not your tourist guide. If they take time to show you around, they are doing you a professional courtesy. They should always act responsibly and professionally towards you, and you should act the same way towards them. Your behavior in your lodgings should also be circumspect, taking care to present an image of “Where’s the party?!” Your good conduct is what keeps this program operating. Needless to say, HIV/AIDS is widespread in Ghana and is transmitted through sexual intercourse. FAVL’s firm opinion is that you should not have sexual intercourse with ANYONE while you are in Ghana. It is just too risky. We are sorry to have to be so frank about personal issues, but HIV/AIDS is one of the most devastating problems of sub-Saharan Africa, and it is irresponsible for a privileged volunteer to reinforce sexual behaviors that contribute to the spread of the virus.

Local culture

Claudia Entrup, FAVL research student in Sumbrungu in 2006, has a few remarks:

“During the dry season a lot of funerals are performed, since during the rainy season the people are busy with farming and the weather conditions are not favourable. Funerals normally last a week – different rites are performed on each day. As I stayed in Sumbrungu during the dry season I had the opportunity to witness a lot of funerals. I saw the men perform the traditional war dance, took part in prayers and dancing and tried *pito* (locally brewed beer from millet) and *kose* (fried dough made from beans). I was always received very warmly and everybody was patient enough to explain the ongoing events to me. Every Sunday I went to church with some friends, which was a new and interesting experience. Even though I am a catholic and the church we attended was also catholic it was different. The music alone with traditional drumming and singing made a difference as well as the way of preaching – and dancing during the mass. Church plays a bigger social role in the community than in my part of the world. It was interesting to see how important it is in the life of the people and how community events are announced – and sometimes managed – by the church. The people welcomed me very warmly and I was happy that I got the opportunity to be part of their parish for some time.”

Short history of FAVL in Ghana

In 2003 FAVL was approached by Rex Asanga, a social development worker then working with the Catholic diocese of Bolgatanga (the regional capital, and a large city of 100,000), about the establishment of a library in his natal village of Sumbrungu. The village is about 15 km. from Bolgatanga, and while the village is small with about 2,000 residents, the primary and secondary schools serve approximately 2,000 students who walk in from the numerous neighboring villages. Students previously had to walk the 15 km. to Bolgatanga to use the regional library. Many students do not have access to their own schoolbooks, and instead share books with friends, or carefully copy and study the texts that teachers write on the blackboard. Upper East region has a large mix of ethnic groups (Frafra and Kasem are the main groups in the Sumbrungu area) and religions (Christians and Muslims mostly in Sumbrungu, but followers of traditional religions are also numerous). Education is in English, following the colonial practice, and there are virtually no written works in the local languages.

After a preliminary site visit by FAVL volunteer Charlotte Vallaeyts, the project was given the go-ahead. Rex Asanga suggested partnering with a local development organization that he had formed with other Sumbrungu residents, the Committee for Sustainable Rural Development (CESRUD) of Sumbrungu. CESRUD agreed to take on the tasks of obtaining a building for the library, recruiting a librarian, and providing other logistical support. They were remarkably effective, and by January 2004 they had gotten written permission from the local District Council to use the District Council building, located on the outskirts of Sumbrungu, for the library. Books were ordered from Macmillan, the publisher of Ghanaian school books. The library opened in February 2004.

Travel to Burkina Faso and Ouagadougou

FAVL maintains an office and guest house in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, which is about four hours by bus from Bolgatanga. The guest house is in the Zogona district, and information is on the FAVL website. You will need a visa for Burkina, which you can get at the border crossing, or which you can get from the Burkina embassy in Washington before leaving. If you would like to visit the libraries in Burkina, let the FAVL office know and arrangements can be made. French is the language of schooling in Burkina, and very few people speak English. Bus companies Kilimanjaro Transport, SKV and SOGEBAF all serve Bolgatanga-Ouagadougou route, and the cost is about \$20 each way.

Reflection

Many people will ask you about your experiences volunteering in a small community library in Africa. They might tell you about their cousin, who sends books from the elementary school to African libraries, or about a neighbor who built a library in Africa a long time ago when they were in the Peace Corps. While you are in Ghana, it is a good idea to reflect on these activities: international charitable assistance—friendship with local libraries—where is its place in the scheme of things. At FAVL, our philosophy is that building the institution of the library-- as a set of persons and relationships working together to encourage reading—is more important than the physicality of the library (the building and the books). That is why we want to encourage volunteers; they add one more strand of connective tissue to what we hope will be a dense network of people, locally and internationally, who support the library. The building, shelves, books, tables, chairs, and manual of procedures ... they can all be established and turned over to a community in a month. But keeping track of the librarian, ensuring that they are excited about their job, that they see a future in the organization, that people who are responsible take on responsibilities, that authority is delegated to the right person, that village governance structures take increasing

ownership over the library affairs, that volunteers from the village see themselves as having a role in the library and are effective in that role, that exhibits and programs unfold regularly in the library... all of these ongoing processes demand lots of personal attention and time, for years and years. Ask yourself what happens when that time commitment, over years, is successful? And what happens when it is not, when the effort is abandoned early on, and the library is left to itself, with an ill-trained librarian who has no institutional network and few incentives to perform well left alone in a village in rural Africa?

Previous volunteer contact information

Many of our previous volunteers are eager to help you with advice, and to hear how librarians and libraries are progressing. Help them re-connect with Africa by sharing an email update every now and then.

Charlotte Vallaey (2003)

James Hooper (2004)

Claudia Entrup (2006) Claudia.entrup@web.de

Mia Francisco ()

Jenevieve ()

Disclaimer

Volunteers in libraries in Ghana travel to Ghana, inside Ghana, and to other countries, as independent volunteers, and recognize that FAVL does not have the financial wherewithal or obligation to provide them with living support during the course of their activities nor with emergency support. Volunteers undertake responsibility for their well-being while in Ghana, and must take active steps to become informed of health and safety risks.

Although the President and Vice-President of Friends of African Village Libraries both are employed by Santa Clara University, FAVL has no official ties with the university and operates as a completely separate non-profit 501(c)(3) public charity.

Annexes

1. FAVL one page summary sheet. You can copy this for use in fundraising for your trip, or sharing with local librarians.
2. Osu Children's Library Fund guide to libraries in Africa

Friends of African Village Libraries

Friends of African Village Libraries (FAVL) believes that children, young adults, farmers, weavers, traders, and others in very poor villages in sub-Saharan Africa should have access to reading material and information. FAVL thinks that development can only happen when people are empowered by access to information and the habits of reading and critical thinking. Greater opportunity and encouragement of reading enhances schooling attainment and quality. Reading, schooling, and more broadly, literacy, have positive effects on well-being. Literacy is correlated with higher quality of life through improved health and nutritional status. Literacy leads to reduced child morbidity and mortality. Even in the small-scale, low-input agricultural settings of developing countries in Africa, literacy is strongly correlated with improved incomes.

The dearth of books in rural Africa means that an effective way to achieve and deepen literacy is being neglected. To that end, FAVL's goal is to assist the rural poor of Africa by helping create village libraries. The fundamental problem that FAVL addresses is the inequality in access to educational and reading materials. Without a local library, rural children attending village schools are at a clear disadvantage in their education due to the lack of access to supplemental reading materials. By giving rural residents access to books, FAVL seeks to promote equitable social development by enabling educational opportunities to children and students in rural areas. FAVL's mission is to provide village libraries with buildings and furnishings, organize local village committees to oversee village libraries, deliver donated and locally-purchased books, and guarantee librarian salaries until such time as the local or national government is able to support a librarian. FAVL also sponsors librarian training and library outreach and advocacy.

In six years, FAVL has established and successfully operated seven village libraries in Burkina Faso and Ghana. They each hold

approximately 1,000 books aimed at pre-school and primary school children, secondary school students, and literate adults. A paid librarian operates the library for 20 hours each week. The libraries are open to the public, and subscribers have the right to take home books for two weeks after paying a very modest annual fee (\$.20 for children and students, \$.40 for village residents, and \$.60 for government officials per year). Librarians have discretion to give out free memberships to children whom they

believe do not have the financial means to become subscribers. FAVL funds the refurbishment and maintenance of a locally donated building for use as a library, pays for initial and periodic training of librarians, pays the salary of the librarian (equivalent to one-half the salary of a primary school teacher), funds initial and ongoing purchases of local books by African authors, and ships appropriate donated books from the United States. Four libraries are equipped with solar panels permitting evening reading hours.

Survey research findings from Burkina Faso indicate that reading of books among 10th graders has doubled (from six to 12 books per year, on average) in villages with FAVL libraries compared with villages without libraries. With committed financial and organizational support from FAVL, village communities are effective partners in establishing and running libraries at low cost, village residents, especially educated women, can be recruited and trained to be effective librarians, and many members of village communities, including especially female secondary students, will use libraries to increase their reading. This success has been accomplished with no paid support staff in the United States; until now FAVL has relied on volunteers for management and fundraising.



FAVL currently has three medium-term strategic goals for the coming three years:

- *Promote 'proof of concept' for village libraries.* African governments and international donors have neglected libraries in rural Africa for decades. But FAVL demonstrates that village communities can run libraries at relatively low cost, and many members of the village community, especially students, will use the libraries.
- *Demonstrate effectiveness of village libraries.* Well-run village libraries have an impact on literacy comparable to that of government provided schooling because they generate considerable reading at relatively low cost.
- *Deepen FAVL's institutional structure and demonstrate scalability.* A management structure capable of handling a large number of libraries using tested and easily implemented procedures is essential. FAVL would like to be ready to support village libraries for the indefinite future, implementing a model of gradual but steady turnover of public library management to local government, coupled with continued support for training, book collection development, accountability and transparency.

FAVL's overriding philosophy is that public libraries are not just collections of books and reading spaces, but rather are institutions. The most valuable thing that FAVL creates is a sense of durability and successful local management. FAVL does not believe that opening a library for two years and then allowing it to fall into disuse can be called a success. FAVL has a long-term commitment to ensuring that libraries remain open and staffed with engaged, reliable, and trained librarians, so that when adults return to their home village decades later their children can participate in the same story hours that they enjoyed in the village library.

When FAVL establishes a village library, it requests a significant contribution from the village community. Usually this means the donation of an old building in the village center that is suitable for conversion for use as a library. Providing this concrete resource involves village residents in negotiations and discussions about the role and importance of a library. Village leaders then have a stake in the successful operation of the library, and leaders active in obtaining the building often become the

core of the village library committee. This committee is entrusted with overall and day-to-day supervision of the library. Libraries and books belong to the village collectively where the library is located. FAVL partners, to the extent possible, with local non-profit organizations and village committees that oversee day-to-day library operations. In Ghana, FAVL has established a partnership arrangement with the Center for Sustainable Rural Development (CESRUD), a local Ghanaian non-governmental organization based in the town of Bolgatanga, to manage the libraries of Sumbrungu and Sherigu in cooperation with the village committees.

FAVL currently has a budget of roughly \$30,000 per year, with funds originating mostly from private, individual contributions. A typical library costs \$5,000 to set up, and operating costs are roughly \$1,500 per year for salaries, maintenance, and stocking of new books.

FAVL incorporated in 2001 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit based in San Jose, California. The members of FAVL's board of directors are dedicated volunteers. Most have had experience as development workers in Africa, and are affiliated with other non-profit organizations.

For more information, please visit our website: www.favl.org, or contact us directly at FAVL, P.O. Box 90533, San Jose, CA 95112.

How to Set Up Community Libraries for Children

Prepared by: Osu Children's Library Fund

The Joy of Reading

Every time we open a book, we discover something new – a beautiful story or a fairy-tale, the strange and wonderful habits of animals, the mysterious world of science, and the customs of people who live in a far-distant country. And every time we open a book, we learn something new – we learn numbers and letters, colours and shapes, poetry and songs. Books are, quite simply, windows on the world! A library is a place to read and to enjoy and celebrate books.

What is a children's library?

A children's library is a place where there are books, children and committed and enthusiastic staff to assist the children to develop their reading skills. Libraries depend on financial and staffing resources and come in a variety of styles.

Adult libraries and children's libraries, what is the difference?

When adults come to a library, they usually know how to read and they are seeking information on a specific topic, or a certain kind of fiction book to read. Adults will usually seek out staff and ask for assistance. If adults cannot read and if they are interested, they can be directed to adult literacy classes in their community.

Young children may not be able to read so they need to be attracted to the library and, whenever possible, assisted with their reading skills. Children need to feel comfortable in a library setting and should be gently encouraged to participate in the activities offered. The staff should play an interactive role with the children. It is a very demanding job, but also a very rewarding one.

Part One: Active Programming

"Few children learn to love books by themselves. Someone has to lure them into the wonderful world of the written word; someone has to show them the way."...Orville Prescott from "A Parent Reads to his Children"
The role of librarians cannot be more important for creating a nation of readers. Providing opportunities for children to read helps a great deal, but a library has the potential to offer so much more. For a child who is unable to read, active participation on the part of the librarian can play a major role and should be encouraged.

Story times

Story times should be considered part of a daily library routine. By reading aloud from books or telling stories, librarians can build up the vocabulary of library members and improve their listening, comprehension and observational skills. Good listening skills provide a foundation for reading later on and are, therefore, very important. If a child has never heard a particular word before it is unlikely that the same word in print will have any meaning. Many children come from homes where their parents are not able to read stories to their children; either they don't have the literacy skills or there isn't time. A library can play an important role here.

Story times may include the following activities:

1) Telling a story in English or in one of the local languages

2) Reading a story

First introduce the story by giving the title, author and illustrator and set the stage by telling a little of what the story is about. For example, in the story of Cinderella, you could explain that it is about a young girl who lives with her stepmother and two mean stepsisters. Hold the book so that the children can see the illustrations.

Asking questions and leading a discussion of the story, thereby testing their understanding of the plot, the kind of characters, where the story takes place, etc.

3) Performing finger plays and singing action songs

4) Hearing and reciting poetry and nursery rhymes

5) Providing opportunities for quiz competitions

The types of activities will depend on the age and needs of the library members. There should also be

opportunities for library members to take turns reading stories aloud. This will promote confidence in their ability to read and will encourage others to do so.

During a recent study, a Primary Five student achieved an exceptionally high reading score. When questioned she explained that she didn't have a book at home, but visited the library every day after to school to listen to stories and read. Daily story times play an important role at her library.

Puzzles and games

If there are funds in the budget, the purchase of puzzles and quiet games for in-library use add a great deal. Children certainly enjoy the challenge of completing puzzles; puzzles help with motor coordination, memory skills and understanding spatial relationships. Games also encourage cooperation among others and promote social skills. Careful attention to keeping the educational materials intact needs to be given as a puzzle or game with a missing piece is not much fun! At busy libraries we arrange for children to sign out their puzzles or games in an exercise book. It is required that they be returned intact to their original spot.

A small library in Accra takes great pride in their wooden, locally made jigsaw puzzles. The puzzles are used daily and, after 10 years, most of them are still intact!

Drama

Libraries are wonderful places where drama can be enjoyed. Stories, both from books and the imagination, can be acted out for other library members. Simple costumes and props add a great deal to the performance.

Guest speakers

Libraries offer countless opportunities to engage others from the community to share information. This can be in the form of talking about careers, news items and health issues.

At a children's library in Accra serving a poor, densely populated area, a doctor was invited to speak about abortions, a topic suggested by a library member. The questions asked by the teenage members of the library were well thought out and served an invaluable purpose.

Miscellaneous activities

There are no limits to the sorts of activities that can be offered through libraries. The types of programs depend on the resources available and the talents and interests of library staff.

A large library in Accra promotes free twice-weekly literacy classes, a wildlife club, a choir, two football teams and puts together a newsletter highlighting members' contributions. Although the range of programs seems beyond the typical library definition, books and literacy are still the essential component. One of the football teams is called the "Joy of Reading"!

Part Two: How to maintain and operate a Children's Library

According to the dictionary, a library is defined as, "a room or building where a collection of books is kept". A library can really be any size. It can simply be an area under the shade of a tree where children gather on mats, or a small room in a house, a school or a community centre. A library can also be a larger freestanding building accommodating hundreds of children. The size doesn't really matter. The enthusiasm and commitment of the staff members make the difference!

Whatever the library size, funds need to be spent wisely. The following is a breakdown of expenses excluding the costs associated with the library space:

Library staff

A library's success is wholly dependant on its staff members who, while working together, derive pleasure from their work and, more importantly, like interacting with children. It is important that the staff members work cooperatively; their roles need to blend in harmony in order for the numerous tasks of the library to be accomplished. Everyone should be encouraged to take ownership for having an organized, well-attended and attractive library and surrounding compound.

It is crucial that the library have at least one paid staff member (funded by the community, either privately or

with government support) who will take the responsibility of running the library. This person will not only need to be in command of the day-to-day running of the library but will need to have a gentle, yet, firm character to manage the large number of children who pass through the library's doors every day. In addition to paid staff, teachers and community volunteers make a valuable contribution.

If the library is at school it is helpful to have library prefects or 'monitors' assisting the one overseeing the library's operation. The students should be selected from two different years to allow for continuity. Monitors are then given the responsibilities of daily cleaning, preparing the books in an orderly fashion and demonstrating book care.

Books

There is always a temptation to gather as many books as possible for a library. It is much better, however, to have a good selection of well-written and colourful books that you think the children might enjoy versus large numbers of inappropriate, drab-looking books. Keep all the books in good order and dust and clean them on a regular basis. Glossy-covered books can be wiped with a slightly damp cloth (with a small bit of diluted soap) and dried.

If the books are soft cover without a laminated finish they should be protected with a clear plastic cover. We purchase large clear bags (the ones used by the market women for selling quantities of food items) and cut them to the required book size. The plastic is held in place with clear tape. Another option is to order plastic sheeting in bulk from a plastic factory. They will make it according to the width and thickness required.

An inventory list should be kept of all books received. **If your budget is limited the books should be kept at the library and not loaned out, as it is very costly to replace books.** It is unlikely that an African child will have the financial means to replace a missing or damaged book.

We visited a new community library (serving both adults and children) in rural Ghana and we were surprised to see thousands of books lining the library's bookshelves BUT not a single storybook seemed appropriate for an early reader.

Where to keep books?

If funds are scarce, and, if the library is small, books could be kept in durable bags or lightweight metal boxes and brought out for library use.

For larger, permanent libraries, books should be placed on bookshelves with their spines facing out allowing the children an opportunity to read the titles easily. When making shelves, think of the types of books they will accommodate, as the shelf heights need to be appropriate. It is best if the top shelf is not too high; this is both to make dusting effortless and to give children easy access to the books. The surface of the top shelf may be used to feature newly acquired books. A library looks much better if there are not too many empty shelves; low bookshelves do not require as many books. Display racks can also be made with sloping shelves so books or magazines can be displayed individually.

For young children the best way to display books is using kinderboxes, wooden cabinets that stand slightly off the floor (they are divided into four sections and each section can accommodate approximately 25 books).

Whatever furniture is built try to have it well made with carefully sanded surfaces and nicely polished. Bookshelves that are not completely smooth will damage the books as they are taken off the shelves. Occasionally, the furniture should be checked for insect infestation; if that happens the affected wood should be removed immediately.

Sadly, many libraries make the mistake of investing large sums of money on bookshelves that line the walls. Their modest book collections tend to look insignificant in comparison to what their bookshelves can accommodate – very discouraging for all.

Other furniture

If the library is in a temporary structure mats can be used for the children to sit on and a stool or chair for the librarian.

For a permanent facility the furniture should include a desk for the librarian, small tables, chairs or stools for the children and mats for story time. If furniture is too big, a child will most likely feel awkward and/or inadequate. This can affect how they feel about themselves and their confidence or lack of confidence in their ability to read or attempt new tasks. If literacy classes are being held for adults, larger tables and chairs should be included.

Additional materials

Every library, large or small, should have a washbasin with soap and towels for children to wash and dry their hands before entering the library. Ideally, there should be two: one for washing and one for rinsing. Books are very expensive and children (and adults!) should learn early on that books require proper care. In addition to clean hands, those reading will need to be shown how to turn the pages carefully so that they don't tear. Books will last for many years if they are treated with respect. If care is not taken, books will only last a few days before being torn and soiled.

Lighting

It is important to ensure that the lighting is adequate, either ample natural daylight or good overhead electric lighting. Good natural lighting is far superior to overhead lighting for reading. Walls that are painted in white or light colours are more suited to libraries because they reflect light. Note: For ease of cleaning we recommend using a high-gloss paint for the first five feet from the floor

Ventilation

If the library is to be accommodated in a room or building, careful attention should be paid to ventilation. When air does not circulate properly, a room can easily become hot, humid and stuffy. These are conditions that make reading and learning very difficult.

Library hours

It is necessary to assess the needs of the potential library members prior to setting out the library's hours of operation. Staff should arrive punctually and welcome the children according to the posted hours of operation. If the library is closed, notification should be posted. Regular activities including story times should also be carried out punctually. Otherwise the children will lose interest.

A beautiful library

Attention to keeping the library clean cannot be overemphasized. Cleaning and dusting the books and furniture, and sweeping and damp-mopping the floors daily take a great deal of time. The operating hours of the library should provide sufficient time for this.

Libraries should be cheerful, bright and welcoming places. Visiting the library is not a required activity and, therefore, it is important to make the place as inviting as possible. Colourful wall hangings help, as do photos, banners and children's drawings or creative writing pieces. Changing the displays is advisable and, over time, it is good to highlight work from all participating library members. Every child likes to see his or her piece displayed!

Flowers and bushes planted outside add colour and make libraries attractive places to visit. A dustbin near the entrance will keep the place neat and will discourage littering.

Young library members were asked to draw pictures of their library and they exhibited them proudly on the notice board. Their pictures showed the library decorated with colourful flowers, curtains neatly pulled back and lots of smiling faces.

Respect for the library

Children should feel a sense of pride in their library and treat the room and its contents as property belonging to their community. This means that children should refrain from sitting on the tables, writing on the furniture or books, and keeping hands from the wall (soiled walls look unsightly).

“Don’t touch the wall!” is probably repeated 20 times per day, in many cases by young regular members, at a busy library in Accra.

Although the library can be a lively place with quiet discussions among children and, possibly, singing at story times, shouting should not be permitted. If children are shouting or acting aggressively they should be quickly escorted out of the library and told to return another day. Food should be kept outside the library and chewing gum discouraged.

Evaluation of a library’s performance

It is important to have a guest book for comments and suggestions. A written record of the library’s performance also allows one to assess the library’s development and progress on a monthly and annual basis. The statistical records should detail the daily attendance of all library visitors, indicate special programs offered and note concerns. Information regarding expenses could be included to provide an easy reference for annual expenses.

Costs Involved in running a library

The costs of setting up a library are completely dependent on the setting and size of the library. The initial expenses to set up a library are significant and there is often a big rush to raise funds for books and bookshelves. Sadly, very little consideration is given to planning for the month-to-month payments of the staff salaries and library upkeep. A library’s success, however, relies on excellent staff and this falls apart quickly if money cannot be found for salaries. The community or school supporting the library should be involved in addressing these issues from the very beginning.

Many libraries think that they can generate ongoing funding from membership fees and user charges. Please think twice about doing so because it denies children from impoverished homes the opportunity to visit the library. On the other hand, there can be two levels of privileges: one where the member pays a fee for borrowing or one where in-library reading and library activities are free.

Conclusion

With careful planning and community support a library is a wonderful resource for children and their parents. Please keep in mind that a few good books and an enthusiastic librarian under the shade of a tree do more to foster reading than a big library with thousands of tattered and inappropriate books and uninterested staff.

NB Please feel free to copy these guidelines. Comments and suggestions should be sent to this address: kknowles@mts.net Our website address is www.osuchildrenslibraryfund.ca