

Guidelines for Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa

(Version 4 revised June 2007)

Introduction

We acknowledge you as a Peace Corps volunteer for your contribution in developing African communities. We share your commitment to make a difference in the world.

Currently we are working with the Peace Corps in Lesotho and Botswana. We will expand into other countries as our our U.S. capacity permits.

About our partners

We provide our support to African schools/communities who meet the following requirements:

- Local sponsorship – A mix of teachers, students and/or community leaders are committed to sponsoring a library.
- Facilities – There is a clean, dry, secure area with adequate shelving to display the books and with easy access to borrowers.
- Leadership – One or more people can be counted on to organize the books into a library and to train others to maintain and operate the library.
- Borrowers – There is a community of beginning, intermediate and/or advanced English language readers who will actively use the library.

About our offer

If we work together, we will provide basic information about how to organize a library.

We will send gently used, English language, soft cover books that we collect through school book drives. Most of our books are for readers at the beginning through eighth grade reading levels. We can provide:

- Baby board books
- Children's picture books
- Early reader fiction and non-fiction
- Juvenile literature
- Children's encyclopedias
- Children's and adult dictionaries
- Recent atlases (after 1990)
- Textbooks in English, Science, Geography and Mathematics

How to explore a partnership

We are committed to creating sustainable libraries and are not just a source of books. If you meet the above criteria, we will welcome you as our on-the-ground-partner in establishing or improving a small library. We have folks on this end who have been through what you are going through now and understand your challenges. Using evaluations and questionnaires, we follow up with our libraries to document a project's strengths and weaknesses. We will share our librarians' best practices so that you do not have to re-invent the wheel.

1. Please email us the following information at info@africanlibraryproject.org.
2. Where will the library be located? Name? Address?
3. Whom will the library serve? How many readers do you expect?
4. What kinds of books would be most useful? How many?
5. An informal description of your community and any supporting materials that you have available (e.g., personal stories, digital pictures) so we can promote book donations specifically for your community.
6. Who in the community will actively support and staff the library?
7. Include at least 3 "Letters of Request" from local leaders who have stake in the library's success. These stakeholders may include: chiefs or government officials, school principals, teachers, students or other interested citizens. Choose carefully as these people will become the core of your library committee and continue the work after your COS. Try to include both men and women. These letters may be sent via email or standard mail.
8. Your contact information in Africa (name, location, postal address, email, phone if any, etc.)
9. Your COS date.

10. Contact information for the local person(s) responsible for the library.

We will respond quickly.

What to expect

If your request for books is accepted, a likely sequence of events is...

- We will send you an excellent book, "Setting Up and Running A School Library." This is published by the VSO (British equivalent of the Peace Corps) specifically to help volunteers organize libraries in developing countries.
- You will develop a plan to start the library and will organize a library committee to help you fine-tune and implement the plan.
- We will organize and run book drives to collect your books over a 2-3 month period.
- We will send between 250-1000 books, depending on the size of your reader population.
- We use a slow, inexpensive shipping method through the U.S. Postal Service called "M-Bag". Books usually take about 9 weeks to ship, sometimes longer.
- We will ship the books to the Peace Corps headquarters office in your country. They will pick up the boxes of books from the Post Office, handle customs fees, and notify you that they have arrived. You will provide transportation to move the books from Peace Corps Headquarters to the library location.

How you can help us

The best way to help is, of course, to create a small, sustainable library in your community. We understand your access to internet service is probably limited, but please complete our application and evaluation procedures to the best of your ability as they are crucial to our overall success.

The African Library Project is still very young, and we welcome your ideas and feedback.

We look forward to hearing from you.