Books For Africa:
Guidance to support BFA volunteers

MPA Capstone Paper

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The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs
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Christopher Nevin
Wycliffe Waganda
Mary-Margaret Zindren

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Provided to the client as a separate document; submitted as a combined .pdf document for purposes of submission to the digital library:

Manual for BFA Container Captains, Consignees, Recipients & Volunteers: A step-by-step guide to receiving your BFA books & basic set-up of school libraries

Introduction

Books For Africa (BFA) is the world's largest shipper of donated text and library books to the continent of Africa. BFA's vision and mission is to end the book famine in Africa. The organization was founded in 1988 as a 501.c.3 by Tom Wirth who, on a visit to Uganda, realized that there were no books on the shelves of Ugandan schools and libraries and was inspired to create a system of collecting unwanted books from American libraries, schools, publishers, organizations, and individuals to send to Africa. By working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), schools, libraries, and volunteers, BFA hopes to create a culture of literacy and to provide tools of empowerment to the next generation of parents, teachers, and leaders (www.booksforafrica.org) .

A multitude of BFA volunteers help sort and box the books by age and subject categories before palletizing and placing them into sea containers for shipment. Since 1988, more than 27 million books have been shipped by BFA to 48 different countries. In 2011-2012 alone, 2.2 million books valued at $28.3 million were shipped to 22 African countries (www.booksforafrica.org).

BFA Spring Newsletter (2012) shows that BFA is multi-faceted , and has also hosted events on a variety of topics such as "Doing Business in Africa: Education and Workforce Development" and other sessions focused on agriculture, natural resources, and vocational skills. BFA has a number of strategic partners, including The Happy Africa Foundation which "works to empower individuals, build strong communities, and make sure projects address real needs in the communities in which they work" (THAF). The books donated through BFA are sometimes the first books that an African community or school owns, and in some of these communities and

schools, there is a lack of knowledge about basic library systems to properly store, organize, track, and lend books.

It is for this reason that BFA engaged the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs capstone class consultants for a project focused on identifying the challenges BFA volunteers face in the receipt, storage, distribution, and management of books, and the development of a manual. The manual desired by BFA would provide guidance on these processes as well as to help recipient primary and secondary schools set up a basic library and its systems. BFA also asked that recommendations be provided as to the methods and timing of communicating this guidance to key volunteers.

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Literature Review

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BFA's mission and vision informed the context of our literature review and the identification of relevant frameworks in the realms of: 1) literacy, 2) poverty eradication / community development, and 3) "Smart (Best) Practices".

Literacy

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as "the ability to read and write, with understanding of short, simple sentences about one's own life" (UNESCO.org). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, also recognizes literacy as implicit in the right to education. The international mission of BFA is influenced by and related to the efforts of world body organizations like the United Nations, particularly those aimed at literacy and education. The 2006 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, for example, is highly

relevant to BFA's interests and provides helpful context regarding what has been achieved and what challenges remain in achieving higher levels of literacy in African nations.

In 1990, delegates from 155 countries and another 150 representatives of governmental and non- governmental organizations, convened for the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtein, Thailand. At that conference, an agreement was reached to "make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade." The delegates "reaffirmed the notion that education is a fundamental human right" by urging countries to "intensify efforts to address the basic learning needs of all." To meet the basic learning needs for all, the framework for action defined targets and strategies that focused on the following:

1) universal access to learning;

2) a focus on equity;

3) emphasis on learning outcomes;

4) broadening the means and scope of basic education;

5) enhancing the environment for learning; and

6) strengthening partnerships by the year 2000. (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006)

While the targets and strategies identified at the conference were not achieved within the desired timeframe, some progress has been made. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), literacy rates for adults and youth continue to rise throughout the world, with enrollment in formal education programs having increased by 16 million from 1998 to 2002.

The six areas of focus were designed to complement each other and to reflect a holistic approach to education; however, in the years following the conference, dominant attention was paid to schooling – specifically, Universal Primary Education (UPE), gender parity, and quality of education. By 2002, enrollment ratios had been improving and the gender gap narrowing, but challenges of inadequate facilities to accommodate enrollment remained a significant barrier to progress. 100 million school age children, 55% of them girls, were still not enrolled; and of those girls not enrolled, 70% of them were from South Asia, West Asia, or Sub-Saharan Africa. As for adults, 771 million were illiterate, with women constituting two-thirds of the adult illiterate population. By 2005, the lack of progress toward the goal of UPE led to international redoubling of efforts to achieve gender parity by 2015. In the context of that 2015 goal, it is perhaps helpful to recognize that global literacy rates increased from 56% in 1950 to 82% in 2004, and are expected to increase to 86% by 2015 (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006).

BFA's efforts to donate millions of books, and to initiate and grow school and community libraries, have put them in a strong position to help achieve the EFA goals. The EFA report identifies the development of libraries as one of the best "strategies for planning and organizing literacy." The American Library Association made a similar connection in a document published nearly 40 years ago, stating: "Every library in the country, no matter its size, function, purpose, and resources, has a place in the national literacy effort. The responsibility that libraries and librarians have for developing and interpreting collections of communication media places them in the forefront of the nation's effort" (Lyman, H., 1976).

Poverty Eradication and Community Development

The common definition of poverty is "the state or condition of having little or no money,

goods, or means of support; the condition of being poor, deprivation, neediness, destitution;

deficiency of necessary or desirable ingredients, and qualities" (Dictionary.com). Bradshaw

(2005) in his working paper series, describes poverty in a general sense as a "relative deprivation

of necessities, based on shared values of human dignity," and also recognizes poverty as a

"dominant theme within community development."

Regarding theory related to community development, the concept of "community" is

applicable in many respects to the work of BFA. As Biddle and Biddle (1965) put it,

"Community is whatever sense of local common good citizens can be helped to achieve" (p.2). A

sense of community is something that has to be created for most people in modern times, even

though most of the people that community development volunteers encounter will likely only

dimly be aware of belonging to any community " (Biddle, W &Biddle, J. 1965). For example,

the processes involved in preparing and dealing with the contents of the BFA sea container –

sorting the donated books and palletizing them for shipment here in the United States, and

moving the boxes off of the sea container and to recipient schools – are conducted by volunteers

of various ages and backgrounds who live on different continents. The volunteers involved in

any aspect of the BFA process are part of a unique community – whether they quite realize it or

not. (This is an area of opportunity for BFA to view these disparate groups of volunteers as

making up a community – the BFA community – and to shift communications to and about these

volunteers with this sense of community in mind.)

Biddle and Biddle (1965) further explain the "development" concept within community development as a moving toward some objective or goal that people desire, and therefore as being a normative process. "Development means social and personal change that moves towards consciously chosen goals, the choosing being done by the people who are in the process of change." (p.4)

With this academic context in mind, the work of BFA can essentially be framed as alleviating poverty through community development focused on education and literacy.

Further exploring the concept of poverty, Bradshaw (2005) identifies five basic categories of perceived causation that are also relevant to the work of BFA. Bradshaw's approach was used to understand how poverty and the programs and policies designed to address it are shaped by political biases. The community development approach, and remedial actions chosen, are often based on the particular perception of causation at play. Community development solutions are informed by the prevailing understanding of what causes poverty.

1. Poverty caused by individual deficiencies:

In this perception of poverty, the individual is viewed as responsible for his own poverty situation or failure to move out of poverty. When this kind of perception is held by policy makers and program leaders it is "unlikely that they will pursue a community development approach to solving poverty." (p.8) Even though the objective of community development is to work with each individual's needs and abilities, community development programs tend to oppose the use of incentives and disincentives as a means to changing an individual's circumstance or behavior. As Rank (2004) puts it, "Individualism has tended to work against a sense of community and caring for others." (p.12)

2. Poverty caused by cultural belief systems that support sub-cultures of poverty:

This view moves beyond the individual as the cause of poverty to focus on the individual's cultural context. Values, beliefs and skills are thought to be transmitted over generations yet individually held, and an impoverished individual is perceived as belonging to a dysfunctional culture for which the shared beliefs and values reinforce negative behaviors that sustain generational poverty. Community development responses include alternative acculturation and socialization. Examples of interventions born out of this perception of poverty include government- and NGO-led programs such as head start, afterschool programs, and leadership and asset-based development programs aimed at countering dominant belief systems of the subculture by acting within it.

3. Poverty caused by economics, political / social distortions, or discrimination:

Within this view of poverty, causation is attributed to a lack of opportunity and resources for people to achieve income and wellbeing brought about by political, economic, and social systems. (Rank et al) point out how lack of human capital may accentuate vulnerabilities and cause elevated risk of poverty, job instability, and longer periods of unemployment, lower wages, and part time work. Children from lower-class backgrounds may not have the range and depth of opportunities that children from middle and upper class backgrounds enjoy. This affects their human capital and they face greater economic vulnerabilities, as well as limits on their ability to engage in or influence political decision-making. Discrimination and social stigma due to race, gender, disability, or other characteristics may also limit opportunities regardless of personal capabilities (Rank, 2004). If the problem of poverty is seen as primarily rooted in economic, political, and social systems, community development efforts can be viewed

as useful, as such efforts are geared towards changing the system by "developing alternative institutions which have access, openness, innovation, and a willingness to help the poor gain wellbeing" (Bradshaw, p.11). Interventions in this realm would include governmental policy solutions.

4. Poverty caused by geographical disparities:

The basic premise in this theory of causation is that people, institutions and cultures lack resources needed to generate wellbeing and income due to geographically-based circumstances. Terms like "rural poverty," "ghetto poverty," "southern poverty," and "third-world poverty" are used in this context. Community developers look at "places and processes by which (those places and processes) can become self-sustaining" (p.13). Community developers help in the identification of geographical assets that can be brought to bear in addressing particular conditions of poverty. Examples of such efforts are improvement of local industry competitiveness, enterprise zones, inclusionary zoning, affordable housing, and channeling private investments toward particular regions.

5. Poverty caused by cumulative and cyclical interdependencies:

This theory builds on the four previously described perceptions of causation and is considered more complex in nature. Here, individual and community resources are viewed as interdependent. For example, if the community's economy is struggling, individuals will likely have fewer resources to participate in the economy. If the number of impoverished individuals reaches a critical mass, the community itself could move into permanent decline, with the consequence that people move out of the community. Similarly, if a local industry closes and tax revenue declines, schools may be unable to invest in new technologies, resulting in lower-quality

education and students with fewer employable skills. If such a situation is left unaddressed, it

can lead to the decline of the community as a whole (p.14).

Miller (1995) puts forward arguments that are from a similar viewpoint. Miller asserts

that the problems related to poverty in developing countries originated in the experiences of

foreign domination and colonialism where there was an unchecked transfer of economic surplus

from the developing countries to the developed. Essentially, Miller posits that the development

of the West may have caused underdevelopment in the developing countries. He describes a

world-system in which the United States, Great Britain, France and Japan are the core states in

the world-system, while the "periphery states are primarily depicted as providers of raw

materials and unskilled and semiskilled labor for the system" (p.23). The core and the national

elites from the periphery form a linkage. The developing states' elites share strong social and

economic interests with the elites of the core, and enact policies that may not favor the masses of

the periphery states, leading to a cycle of poverty that has a disastrous effect on the economies of

those periphery states as a whole, but especially on rural communities. In this sort of scenario,

the interests of the majority population may not be considered in the elite's decision making. At

an individual level, the lack of jobs and poverty created by such a situation causes loss in self-

confidence, weak motivation, and depression.   When individuals in this mindset associate with

others who are in similar circumstances, it can cause a culture of despair or poverty.

Overall, community developers looking to address poverty from this complex,

interdependent point of view do so through a multifaceted approach that is highly consistent with

the philosophy and work of BFA. BFA's close personal ties, as well as networks with other

foundations and organizations, can provide shared assistance in villages in a manner that is more

effective than individual, disconnected efforts. This is important as it increases overall social

capital among communities or subcultures of the poor.

Related to this assertion, Bradshaw (2005) suggests three areas of focus for community

development programs that include strategies and tools related to other theories of poverty:

1. Development of comprehensive programs that include a variety of services aimed at bridging
    individual and community needs;
2. Collaboration amongst different organizations to provide complementary services and
    synergistic outcomes, the output of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts (this
    could involve formal or informal networks of participants); and
3. Use of community organizing as a method by which local people can participate actively in
    both growing the understanding of how their personal lives and the community wellbeing are
    intertwined, and in taking collective action to change their situation for the better.

BFA is well focused on these three focal points through its efforts to grow literacy through an

inclusive and efficient program that encourages empowered participation. This context has

informed the development of the manual BFA has requested to guide the efforts of its volunteers.

Smart (Best) Practices

In seeking information about and from complementary organizations that also are

focused on international development efforts in Africa, resources from the Volunteer Service

Organization (VSO) were identified. The VSO considers itself the "world's leading independent

international development organization that works through volunteers to fight poverty in

developing countries." (vso.org.uk) Among the VSO's many resources is a publication written

by Nicola Baird, titled: *Setting up and Running a School Library.* This document provides

detailed, step-by-step instructions for how to set up and run a basic school library. UNESCO's

Libraries for All document (which has also been licensed by the Peace Corps and is readily

available online) was also identified as a document that is directly related to the needs of BFA

volunteers and recipients.

The research approaches recommended by Bardach (2009) guided the search for relevant

sources and an understanding of "best", or as he puts it, "smart" practices. Bardach points out

how documents and people should be consulted as likely sources of information, data and ideas.

One source should lead to another, and may just as easily lead from one medium to another.

"People lead to documents as well as to other people, and documents lead to people as well as to

other documents." (p.69) Bardach defines a practice as not only a tangible and a visible

behavior, but an expression of an underlying idea: "An idea about how the actions entailed by

the practice work to solve a problem or achieve a goal" (p.96). The basic mechanism of a smart

practice is its means of directly accomplishing useful work in a cost-effective manner by having

a latent potential for creating value, and the mechanism for extracting and focusing that potential.

The secondary features of a smart practice include: implementing features that directly embody

the basic mechanism; supportive features like the environment or institution, which are used to

bring the implementing feature into practice; and optional features that may be of interest and

unique to the community (Bardach, p.102).

The VSO and UNESCO documents identified practices that closely matched the features

of smart practices that Bardach has set forth. These documents are geared toward both trained

and untrained school personnel and volunteers, and are particularly useful for those communities

that may have limited resources. The documents provide practical advice on choosing rooms for

libraries, distinguishing the essential from the optional features, basic sorting and cataloging of

books, and even how to build library shelves. Both documents include a focus on how a

community of support can be built around the library, and position the library itself as a source of

literacy and a developmental building block for the broader community. Both publications are

practical and useful because they were both informed by actual work on the ground with local

communities in building libraries in developing nations.

Of the two, the VSO document is perhaps the most useful, as it includes detailed

guidance on setting up a "junior color code" system (particularly applicable to smaller primary

and secondary school libraries) and is written in a more accessible tone.

The limitations of both of these documents, and where the desired BFA manual fills a

void, relates to the high volume of books often shipped by BFA. These documents do not address

the logistical considerations and planning processes related to receipt and distribution of books;

addressing the full process from the recipient's perspective is important to achieving desired

outcomes.

Methodology

In addressing the desire of BFA to develop a manual that can be used by their key

volunteers, it was first important to understand the entire process that is used to achieve BFA's

mission. This process includes soliciting book donations, fundraising, sorting of books for

quality and appropriateness, boxing up the books, palletizing, placing the palettes onto a sea

container, and shipping the books across the ocean; however, these aspects of the process are not

the focus of the desired manual. Instead, the manual is intended to focus on the remainder of the

process: preparing for the sea container to arrive, transporting the boxes of books to the recipient

schools, and setting up a basic school library. BFA staff members provided helpful information

on the overall process and on how to reach out to key people and partner organizations that have

been involved in BFA efforts in Africa. Common roles filled by these volunteers include:

- *Container Captain*: The container captain raises money needed to pay for shipping of the

  BFA books from the United States to Africa, and sometimes for other expenses as well (such

  as for transportation of the books to their destination and for library set-up). This person

  works directly with BFA to get the project started, and often plays the role of overall project

  manager. Most often, the container captain either lives in Africa or in the United States.

  Many of the container captains who live in the United States partner with community leaders

  and/or NGOs in Africa.

- *Consignee*: The consignee is the person or organization (often a tax-exempt NGO or a

  regional government) that is named on the government forms as having authority to sign for

  the BFA shipment at the port and to remove the boxes of books from the sea container. The

  consignee helps the container captain make sure the books get from the port of entry to the

  recipient school.

- *Recipient*: The recipient is the school where the books are to be used by students. Each BFA

  sea container often contains books for more than one recipient.

Questions were developed related to the challenges and triumphs of container captains,

consignees, and recipients. Rather than utilizing highly structured questions and a high-volume

approach (commonly used in large-scale data collection and quantitative research), which would

have been too time intensive and costly, a semi-structured, qualitative approach focused on

individual interviews was employed.

Adams (2010) ideas on conducting, semi-structured interviews informed the research process. According to Adams, a semi-structured approach pulls from both the structured, standardized, mostly closed-ended surveys of individuals, and the free form open-ended focus group approach, and puts them in a distinct category. Interviews are conducted conversationally with a single respondent at a time using a blend of closed and open ended questions. This method allows for follow-up questions about why and how, and may also reveal unforeseen issues and insights.

The questions posed were designed to elicit common practices and potential improvements to the BFA process which could be captured and documented in the manual. Specifically, the questions focused on:

1. the nature of relationships between the contacts and BFA;

2. the pre-container preparation phase that includes how funds are raised to pay for shipment of books;

3. arrival of books at a port of entry and how they are sorted and transferred to modes of transportation;

4. how committees are developed and volunteer groups and organizations chosen to aid in the chain of tasks, processes, and events of these book-giving projects;

5. specific activities at distribution centers and transport to final destinations; and

6. how community libraries are created and sustained.

Questions were asked about the major challenges encountered anywhere in the process as well as thoughts about how these processes could be improved. For additional context,

questions were also asked about the mission of partner organizations and the value placed on the joint effort with BFA.

Efforts to secure interviews were concentrated on BFA's most active regions of Africa and most engaged volunteers, as they were anticipated to be most responsive to outreach and most able to provide models to work from. The process by which the interviews were set up and additional information was gathered from container captains, consignees and other BFA representatives was structured in a basic way. First, a suggested list of contacts was provided by BFA staff. Next, working through the BFA staff, a preliminary e-mail was sent to each of the suggested contacts to initiate communication and to inform them that a follow-up phone call would be placed. Through this initial communication, an IRB was delivered informing all those who chose to participate as interviewees of their rights along with possible courses of action available to them in the event of a violation of the IRB.

In total, outreach was made to fifteen suggested contacts. Of those contacts, four decided to respond solely through online feedback to the questionnaire. Three individuals agreed to take part in phone interviews as well. (Therefore, the return was seven out of fifteen, or 44%.) Online feedback came from nonprofits, NGOs and a university representative; namely, The Happy Africa Foundation, Minnesota Kenyan International Development Association, and Lead City University – Oyo State, Nigeria. Interviews were conducted with volunteers who happened to be more independent in nature (rather than primarily tied to a particular organization), including: Gary Sande, a retiree with interests in supporting the development of Nigeria's educational system; Brook Golden, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Swaziland whose primary focus during service was the development of accessible community libraries; and Paul Morande,

a community leader affiliated with Minnesota Kenyan International Development Association (MKIDA).

Findings

A compilation of all the key information ascertained through the interviews and online feedback was put into the form of a synthesized report (see appendix). The primary findings of this qualitative outreach include the following:

- Respondents shared a common value for increasing literacy rates and improving educational opportunities in impoverished areas of Africa. Many respondents saw education as a primary element to economic development and the wellbeing of a community. Some respondents alluded to their dedication to successful project work in the context of valued relationships previously formed with people from recipient communities.

- Respondents commented on the importance of ensuring project stakeholders are aware of all the potential costs within a complete book-giving project and emphasized that fundraising efforts need to take the full picture into account. Such costs include but are not limited to:

  1. transporting books from port of entry to distribution sites or final destination sites;

  2. materials used to properly transport books and protect against shipment damage;

      3.   cost of storage of books at a distribution site before shipment to final destination;

      4.   development and upkeep of library facilities;

      5.   transportation of volunteers to distribution sites for sorting and moving books, providing for food and possible lodging needs; and

      6.   general communications, maintaining feedback loops and project evaluation.

- Projects that incorporated trustworthy relationships and accountability within a network of organizers and community stakeholders, throughout the chain of tasks and events within a book giving project, leads to improved project sustainability and successful outcomes.

- For U.S.-based, container captains who take on the role of overall project manager, gaining strong cultural awareness about the recipient country and understanding of basic systems of governance on the ground can improve project outcomes by increasing engagement of project beneficiaries, better transferring project ownership to recipient communities and improving efficiencies of tasks and events throughout a complete book giving project.

- Within a project's planning phase, leaders who were mindful of implementing processes for follow up and continuity witnessed improved project outcomes and sustainability.

- Project mapping is a useful tool. Mapping that includes a complete lineup of tasks and events, a tentative timeline and contact information on all the various project participants improves project effectiveness. Within the mapping of a project, one should consider the following:

      1.   BFA contacts;

      2.   project leaders' roles / responsibilities;

3. community leaders' roles / responsibilities;

4. contacts at point of entry;

5. contacts at distribution/storage sites;

6. contacts within recipient communities;

7. contacts within recipient schools;

8. contacts of partnering organizations and agencies;

9. contacts related to training and supports; and

10. contingency planning.

- Many recipients agreed upon the importance of feedback loops and project evaluation to be used in order to learn and improve upon project processes and systems. Furthermore, recipients mentioned the importance of providing BFA with feedback in order to meet expectations and ensure good relations.

- Some respondents emphasized good project planning and the development and maintenance of stakeholder relationships as leading to improved project outcomes.

- Some respondents mentioned the desire for a more detailed method of labeling boxes of books to improve efficiencies on the ground.

Additional findings of interest include the following:

- A broad rule of thumb could be that a physically-fit volunteer giving his/her support to moving and/or processing books can handle an average of about 1,000 books in one complete work day; therefore, generally speaking a shipment containing 20,000 books would call for at least 20 volunteers to complete sorting and moving tasks.

- A valuable asset to any project committee or library board includes an individual who is familiar with the port systems and processes, in order to help in the h receipt of book

shipments at the port of entry and to improve efficiencies. Some projects found good

success when partnering with other NGOs that have direct experience and influence at

the port of entry.

- Some successfully planned and organized projects utilized a selective process for locating

  recipient schools and libraries. In this approach, recipient schools and libraries were

  expected to demonstrate their readiness, capacity and ability to participate in a successful

  book giving project. Key indicators included but were not limited to:

  1. a commitment to provide some funding for the project;

  2. dedicated school administration and willingness to send a school librarian to

     specialized training;

  3. school financials that show dedicated funding set aside for the upkeep of library

     facilities and systems; and

  4. a willingness to agree to basic project principles and expectations.

- Some project leaders made delivery of books to the recipient contingent upon a school

  administrator sending their designated librarian to training on library management. In

  some cases library training was provided in conjunction with larger, more established

  library systems and a number of residual benefits resulted, including:

  1. allowing librarians from a smaller rural community to experience a model library

     from which to draw ideas and resources;

  2. creating better links between the educators of smaller rural communities and the

     resources of a larger public library system; and

  3. improving knowledge and networking for sustaining and improving library

     systems throughout a region.

- According to one respondent, a container shipment is in most cases, much too large for one individual consignee to manage by his or herself. Getting others involved, recruiting other volunteers and recipients to make a book giving project is of great importance. A 1,000 book donation was considered significant and sufficient for a school of around 200-300 students; therefore, a shipment of around 20,000 books could well serve 20 or more schools with student enrollments of around 300 students.

- A number of respondents suggested that book giving projects where recipients are required, at least to some degree, to cover some costs including but not limited to the transportation of books from the distribution site to the final destination, resulted in greater community commitment and therefore better ownership of the project by its beneficiaries. Furthermore, when such an investment in project work exists, solicited feedback from beneficiaries is more likely to include useful information with substantive data to incorporate into the improvement of future projects.

- According to some respondents, projects that include structured ways to do follow up work – including making monthly visits to recipient sites and completing basic checklists of necessary tasks – tend to have strong outcomes. For example, in the case of a Peace Corp sponsored project, when volunteers in the field and/or individuals from committed NGO groups made regular visits to schools that received books from BFA, improvements were made in the effectiveness and sustainability of the projects.

- With a number of projects, choosing a distribution site that is accessible and central in location to recipient schools is important. Furthermore, ensuring adequate storage space at a reasonable cost is essential. BFA volunteer leaders should consider partnering with

NGOs, churches, mosques or community centers that would be willing to provide temporary storage space free of charge.

- Some respondents pointed to termite and ant infestations as a problem. In the event storage facilities for boxes of books have problems of termite infestation, keeping boxes away from walls and decreasing possible pathways by which termites can reach the books can help prevent damage.

- Some projects anticipating high costs and challenges at a nation's port of entry may consider alternate ports of entry of neighboring countries and then moving books by train or truck to the final destination. A cost/benefit analysis of options could reveal real efficiencies and thereby improved cost savings. If a project leader decides to pursue such an alternate plan, it is essential to establish effective contacts in the nation of entry and at the port of entry.

- Developing project committees or Library Committees that include individuals with knowledge of and experience with the paperwork and processes at the port of entry, school administration and facilities, transportation, library sciences, community organizing, leadership and manual labor bring important assets to a project and can lead to improved outcomes.

- One respondent stated that 6 to 8 individuals on any given committee is a good number and the ability to recognize and assign a natural leader, one who shows great commitment to project objectives and goals, to lead the committee work is most prudent. Furthermore, a potential leader's level of literacy skills should be taken into consideration as some tasks and responsibilities might demand at strong level of reading and writing of English.

- Information collected on the wishes of recipient schools, including the types of books needed and of which reading level and subject matter, can be used to better inform the book ordering process and lead toward better ensuring scarce resources are most effectively utilized.

- When forming project committees or Library Committees, engaging successful school alumni and parents of current students can improve project sustainability and impact.

- One respondent container captain stated that 1,000 books is an optimal donation for a school that serves between 200-300 students.

- Container captains and/or consignees who develop good partnerships with other organizations, NGOs, public agencies and national ministries can gain greater visibility and support of their project and even open up the possibility for larger-scale projects in the future. Such partnerships can in some cases reduce costs by securing donated space, support for training events, and transportation.

- Some book giving projects required recipient schools to have proper library facilities before the books could be received. Recipient schools were also visited on more than one occasion to ensure adequate shelving, solid security measures, and leak-proof roofing existed. In the event that any of these elements were lacking, assistance was provided.

- One particular book giving project made recipient schools responsible for arranging their own way of transporting books from the distribution center to their school, thus ensuring recipient contribution to the project. The project leader worked under the belief that the more a recipient school or library contributes to a project, the more likely they will be to take ownership of the project and feel responsibility for project success.

- Improved communication between BFA, container captains who are based in the U.S.

  and consignees on the ground in Africa can lead to improved efficiencies. It is recognized

  that differing time zones between BFA operations in St. Paul, Minnesota and recipient

  countries can create communication barriers; however, improvements in communication

  are worth pursuing.

- In some recipient countries, it may be necessary for container captains and/or consignees

  to identify and partner with a tax-exempt organization in Africa to receive the books in

  port. In some places, the absence of such a partner could greatly increase costs and / or

  impair processes at the port of entry.

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Recommendations

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The vast majority of recommendations related to the guidance BFA should provide to its

key volunteers have taken the form of a draft manual titled: *Manual for BFA Container*

Captains, Consignees, Recipients, & Volunteers: A step-by-step guide to receiving your BFA

books & basic set-up of school libraries. (Because the formatting of the manual is different from

that of this paper, it has been submitted as a separate document.)

Beyond the content of the manual itself, additional recommendations are as follows:

- The manual is provided to BFA in both Microsoft Word (.doc) and Adobe

  Acrobat (.pdf) formats. It is intended to be a living document. It should be altered

  immediately to include signatures of BFA leadership and higher-resolution BFA

  photographs; any errors obvious to BFA staff should also be corrected. Once

  these changes are made, it is recommended that the manual be shared – both

  electronically in .pdf format and mailed as a hard copy – with a select group of

BFA volunteers as part of a pilot effort. Very specific feedback should be

gathered on the accuracy and usefulness of the manual, and additional alterations

should be made based on this feedback. When the manual has been revised to

BFA's satisfaction, it should be sent in both .pdf and electronic forms to BFA

volunteers on a regular, systematic basis.

- Along with the manual, it is strongly suggested that BFA license / purchase and

  distribute copies of the VSO document referenced in this paper and in the manual.

  The link provided in the manual is to a website that does not appear to have

  received proper authority to post the document. It is available for purchase online

  for approximately $20. While the author of the VSO document is interested in it

  being utilized for BFA's purposes, the VSO's copyright attorney has been

  unresponsive to date. Alternatively, the UNESCO document (also referenced) is

  more readily available online and would be a strong substitute, if necessary.

- The manual should be sent to container captains, and any additional volunteers

  they recommend, as soon as possible in the BFA process. Even while funds are

  still being raised to cover the cost of the sea container shipment, preparations can

  be underway in recipient school communities to help make the overall project as

  efficient, cost-effective, and successful as possible.

- The labeling of BFA boxes should be rethought. There is little room for error

  with the abbreviations for reading levels being so similar. Also, the more

  information that can be provided on the label, the more time and money can be

  saved on the ground in Africa. The ideal label would clearly indicate the name of

  the recipient school, the reading level and subject matter of the books contained

within the box, and in the case of textbooks, enough information to help schools

ensure they have enough copies of a particular textbook to meet the needs of their

student population. If these measures to improve labeling are not taken, the

guidance in the manual related to keeping the boxes sealed will be

counterproductive.

- BFA's communications with current and potential funders, supporters, and

  volunteers should take into account the elements of the literature review that

  relate to perceptions of poverty and the linkage to community development,

  including the concept that BFA's efforts have created their own community of

  like-minded change agents whose work bridges a vast ocean yet establishes

  meaningful connections.

- The specific findings from the interviews with successful BFA volunteers should

  inform other BFA efforts and be augmented through additional evaluation efforts

  that include both qualitative and high-volume quantitative methods.

Appendix

Synthesized Report on Interviews and Feedback from BFA Partners.

1. What is your vision in the work that you are doing?

A.   (Brook Golden) Peace Corps Service that brought them to book projects and BFA was a
   good fit. In this case PC volunteers followed the footsteps of those who were involved in
   these kinds of projects before and BFA was used before to enable such projects

B. (Gary Sande) An independent consignee/container captain had direct experience in
   Nigeria as a teacher back in the 1960s and continued to take interest in the development
   of Nigeria. He got involved with BFA as he learned of their work in Nigeria and a
   project ensured books would be delivered to a school where the individual once worked
   as well as a school the individual helped build.

C. (MKIDA) Vision is to support and improve Kenyan rural education system through
   securing and distributing much needed books

D. (Koins) Works with a university that sees great importance in increasing number of
   books available to students as well as augmenting resources of the university to provide
   improved educational experience

E. (THAF) To establish meaningful and sustainable programs throughout Africa for positive
   and measurable impact to local communities. Primary work in Zambia and educational
   support.

2. Why is BFA important to you or to your organization's goal/vision?

A. (Brook Golden) – PCV BFA has been a partner with PC out in the field in Swaziland and
   seemed to be the best known organization to receive books from for successful book

distribution projects. In a sense this relationship with BFA has been handed down from

year to year.

B. (Gary Sande) – The fact that BFA has been working in Nigeria most interested Gary. He

has had concerns about what he sees as the deteriorating educational system in Nigeria

and wants to help. BFA was a good match and Gary has been sure to get books to

schools where he once worked as well as a school he helped build. Gary is strongly

considering sponsoring future shipments to Nigeria.

C. (MKIDA) "BFA is important to our vision because it has perfected the art of collecting,

sorting and shipping relevant books."

D. (Koins) Concerns about the present day economy and the cost of books, BFA has

relieved some stress on the university and this has become a very important relationship

for us.

E. (THAF) Although the donation of books seems to be a "handout" it has helped to bring

needed resources into some local communities and further a relationship with the District

of Education Board Secretary as well as head teachers. These important relationships can

even further THAF's efforts out in the field.

3) **If your organization has a website, please list it here.**

A. (Brook Golden) Individual e-mail address is brookergolden@gmail.com. Brook and her

husband are willing to have future interviews and/or conversations with our HHH team.

B. (Gary Sande) Individual e-mail address is gary@stagnesbakery.com. Gary is willing to

have future interviews and/or conversations with the HHH team; however, he will be out

of the country until mid to late July.

C. (MKIDA) mkida.org

D. (Koins) Individual e-mail address at stiker88@hotmail.com

E. (THAF) None listed

4) Once you have raised the funds needed for the shipment of books from BFA, what do you, as the container captain, do *yourself* to prepare for their arrival?

A. (Brook Golden) There are communications that go out to schools to apply to receive books. Then there is a process to choose those schools with all the proper measures in place to receive books. Communications and connections are made with key individuals of the schools including principals, librarians and/or lead teachers.   Furthermore, PC volunteers or other community leaders are chosen as leaders to represent schools. Volunteer groups and/or committees are established to help with future steps in the process.

B. (Gary Sande) A primary project is created and good communications between Gary and committee members is established. Through the committee there are decisions made to choose schools that show the greatest potential for success with such book projects. Communications and connections are made with key individuals of the schools including principals, librarians and/or lead teachers.

C. (MKIDA) Identification of established NGO with tax exemption to receive books on MKIDA's behalf. A plan is created for sorting, storing and distributing books. The board of directors develops a plan for recipients to collect books from a central distribution location and helping local schools arrange transportation.

D. (Koins) "Making sure payment of shipping takes place, necessary documents for

shipment and port processes are completed and transportation to site is taken care of. I

also make sure feedback is given to BFA and all they require to manage our partnership."

E. (THAF) "We have to establish a large holding area for books to be unloaded and easily

accessible. We funded the building of a large community hall close to one of the schools

receiving books. We traveled to all the receiving schools to discuss the storage of books

and helped with raising funds for shelves and cabinets and the transportation of this

storage. We established expectations for storage including a safe and clean space as well

as impress upon those receiving the books the costs involved in upkeep of facilities and

book care."

5) What do you ask *others* to do in preparation?

A. (Brook Golden) "PC volunteers who are chosen to represent the communities where books

are going to be delivered need to facilitate communications with volunteer groups, school

recipients and the like to inform".

B. (Gary Sande) Gary is in communication with committee members so they are informing

local communities on the arrival of books, expectations and all.

C. (MKIDA) Good communications with school administrators and emphasis on

expectations that the school/library will have a facility to hold books and enable system

for distribution and retrieval. Also, some reminders that there are other costs that need to

be covered including the upkeep of the library. Board members of MKIDA are involved

in choosing recipient schools. Also, relationships with other NGO's to help support book

project takes place.

D. (Koins) "I make sure that everything is handled from payment for shipping, getting access to necessary documents, container clears port and transportation from port to distribution site. In addition, I make sure BFA gets the kind of feedback they need throughout."

E. (THAF) Make sure a good holding place is established for books to be unloaded and easily accessed by recipient schools. Contact with all recipient schools to discuss proper storage of books as well as some supports for making shelving, separate cabinets, etc.

6) How ready are the primary, and secondary schools, to receive these books?

A. (Brook Golden) Some schools were more ready than others; however, there was a vetting system in place that allowed for a selection of schools that had the proper elements/measures aligned to better ensure project success. Some of the various elements/measures are: 1) The schools applied to be part of the project as recipient schools; 2) There was a committed administrator that agreed to the terms of the project; 3) A school librarian from recipient schools had to attend a library training held at the national library before being allowed to receive their books; 4) Recipient schools had to prove they had the financial resources available to cover future costs, facility maintenance, staffing etc.; 5) Attempts to get various community groups involved including PTAs, student leadership groups, teacher groups, etc.; 6) Putting into place measures for follow up including monthly check lists of recipient libraries.

B. (Gary Sande) "Some schools were more ready than others to receive books and care for them well." The quintessential element of Gary's book project was the acting committee of dedicated retired Nigerian professionals that had time and interest to give back to needy communities. These professionals (Nigerian Nationals) were best positioned to facilitate

the communications and organization on the ground. Also, they were best suited to

choose schools where such book projects would work. Committee members had good

relationships with Gary in that Gary had once instructed a number of them when he was a

volunteer teacher in Nigeria back in the 1960s. One of the committee members worked in

some capacity with the Port Authority and was an "insider" into the process – including

dealing with the infamous Form M. Even at that there were challenges to getting books

out of the port. Also, Gary took on-going visits back to Nigeria for follow up.

C. (MKIDA) "Most schools were not so ready to receive books. In fact, MKIDA's mission

is such that they purposely choose some of the neediest schools to support through book

projects. There were some schools that received additional supports to help develop

facilities and extend knowledge on book storage and library systems, but the schools

usually did not have everything well established before books arrived."

D. (Koins) Works with a university that is basically well set up to utilize books well. There

didn't seem to be issues here.

E. (THAF) "Many schools need support to create or improve storage capacity." THAF

stated that it is most important that a good storage facility exist at the distribution location,

and THAF was fortunate to have a good one that was recently funded and built to their

expectations. The facilities at the schools varied.

7) What has worked well for you related to the preparation phase?

A. (Brook Golden) People need to look at these projects with about an 8 month preparation

phase in mind, before the books actually arrive into port.   During this phase, volunteers

out in the field have to get up to speed on everything. The review of the PC manual on

how to build community libraries was great support. Communications and relationships between volunteers and schools/libraries needed to take place. A system to take applications from schools as well as a vetting process needed to be established, and basic planning on moving books needed to happen. Furthermore, communications/negotiations with the National Library to establish and conduct training for librarians was key. A look at projects in the past and understanding how improvements could be made from one-year's projects to the next was necessary.

B. (Gary Sande) Gary relied upon the good work and communications with Committee members on the ground in Nigeria. Committee members were instrumental in choosing participating schools and maintaining connections with important administrators to facilitate the projects have all the necessary elements in place for schools/libraries to receive books and put systems into action. Furthermore, there was the understanding that some kind of follow up would take place for accountability sake.

C. (MKIDA) Maintained communications with partners, most importantly the Catholic Diocese of the area. Also, there were attempts to develop a stronger relationship with the Ministry of Education in Kenya. Communications with communities and volunteer groups also took place to inform people along the chain of events when their help would be needed, when the shipments was most likely to arrive, etc.

D. (Koins) Communication with BFA and departments of the University to keep all informed was important.

E. (THAF) Doing the best we could to make sure schools understood what was necessary to properly keep the books and having materials and systems in place that could better ensure successful project outcomes. Successful project outcomes basically mean books that are

kept in good condition, facilities are kept well and good systems in place for distribution

and retrieval. These systems best ensure the longevity and good use of donated items.

8) What are the toughest challenges for you or others during this preparation phase?

A. (Brook Golden) Brook mentioned that communications/negotiations with the National

Library on the librarian trainings were a challenge. There seemed to be real cultural

differences about how these trainings should be set up and put into action. Clearing the

books from port was not a problem in that Peace Corps had relationships with important

government officials that assured the clearing process for the shipment functioned well.

B. (Gary Sande) Gary did not mention any real challenges during the preparation phase, as he

relied a good deal on committee members and they were quite successful in their efforts to

put all needed pieces of the project into place.

C. (MKIDA) The biggest challenge was the added costs along the way to make the book

project complete.

D. (Koins) From Koin's perspective there really weren't any major challenges at this point in

the process.

E. (THAF) Making sure schools had what they needed including shelves and cabinets for

good project outcomes. THAF seemed to take seriously the idea of really caring for the

donations given by others. If proper storage of books did not take place, this does not

honor the important work of BFA and the donors' contributions.

9) Also, when it comes to ordering the books you want to receive, have you had any issues or problems and if so what are your suggestions for how BFA can make it easier?

A. (Brook Golden) "There didn't seem to be many issues with the ordering of the books; however, improvements could be made to the labeling of boxes that would enable more efficient distribution, etc."

B. (Gary Sande) Gary mentioned that he was quite surprised and pleased that the communications he had with the warehouse in Atlanta, they followed through with the requests he gave them. He was surprised at the variety of books as well as the number of books that were of one type. He hopes that the next shipment that he supports might include more classics, fiction, and a mixing of more accessible reading for leisure. He does admit though that the more he or the working committee can connect with recipient schools to fully understand their specific book needs, the more effective the ordering of books can be.

C. (MKIDA) They didn't feel there were any real problems with the ordering of the books and the books they received. They mentioned that communities were so excited about what they did receive and thankful that their books had arrived.

D. (Koins) Had no concerns about the book order or the books that they received.

E. (THAF) No challenges or suggestions on this. THAF seemed to feel that the donations were a great gift and that they shouldn't expect more but be thankful for what they received.

10) When the sea container arrives, what process do you use to get the boxes of books out of the container, sorted by school, and ready to transport?

A. (Brook Golden) Volunteer groups are involved, often led by PC leaders.

B. (Gary Sande) The project committee is responsible for this process.

C. (MKIDA) The Diocese at Kisii is most supportive at this point and takes care of this process.

D. (Koins) Individuals associated with the university are involved at this point.

E. (THAF) Volunteers help out.

11) How would you like BFA to label your palettes and/or boxes?

A. (Brook Golden) "Any improvements to labeling which boxes contain textbooks and which contain reading books would be helpful."

B. (Gary Sande) Gary was impressed with the communication he had with the Atlanta warehouse and how they followed through with his request. The project committee appeared to have the kind of labeling they needed in order to move books to the right places.

C. (MKIDA) Had no complaints about how boxes of books were labeled, but emphasized that any book donation is a good one into the field.

D. (Koins) Had no complaints or suggestions on labeling of boxes

E. (THAF) Had no complaints or suggestions regarding labeling of boxes, and emphasized that any book donation into the field is a good one.

12) How do you protect the boxes from rain and other bad weather?

A. (Brook Golden) "There was deliberate planning to help ensure books did not arrive during the rainy season, and thankfully this worked out. The shipment of books did not encounter any bad weather issues and therefore were not really harmed by the elements. In the event rain was an issue, they would have tried to use resources available to them at the time including any kind of packaging that came with the books and impress upon movers to work quickly in order to protect books."

B. (Gary Sande) Relied upon knowledgeable project committee members and said that the shipment of books did not experience problematic weather conditions. If this were to happen, the project committee members would have seen to it that efforts to keep the books in the best condition possible could be put into action.

C. (MKIDA) Said they did not encounter any problems here and seemed confident that had they experienced such, those moving and transporting the books would care for them properly.

D. (Koins) The University could provide some support here to best ensure books arrived to their final destination in the best condition possible.

E. (THAF) Their books faced no challenges this way; however, had this been the case they would have taken all the measures they could to ensure books were well kept and damage prevented or reduced.

13) **What transportation methods do you use?**

A. (Brook Golden) Automobile and trucks.

B. (Gary Sande) Project committee members decided on this, seems like automobiles and trucks and other ways of village transportation.

C. (MKIDA) Automobile, trucks and other ways of village transport. MKIDA did consider

moving the books to the distribution site by rail, but after further investigation on the

ground revealed the higher cost to doing so, they moved to a place that utilized trucks

instead. MKIDA emphasized the importance of the work of people on the ground, at the

time of the project to determine was is most cost effective.

D. (Koins) Automobile, trucks

E. (THAF) Automobiles, trucks

14) What works well for you related to the process of receiving and sorting the boxes of

books?

A. (Brook Golden) PC put a strategy into place whereby volunteer groups of recipient

schools had to meet at the book distribution location to help out, receive their books and

get their books onto transportation to their school location. Furthermore, Brook

mentioned that she made it necessary for recipient schools to give her the name and

number of the driver of the transport in order to further ensure recipient schools were

planning well for the pickup and delivery of their books. Volunteer groups were often led,

if not supported by PCVs in the field that could do proper follow up, etc.

B. (Gary Sande) Project Committee members organized this on the ground and used some

volunteers for help.

C. (MKIDA) Volunteers groups were utilized for this process.

D. (Koins) Individuals associated with the University took care of this.

E. (THAF) Volunteers helped out.

15) What are the toughest challenges for you or others during this transportation and distribution phase?

A. (Brook Golden) Making sure the right books got to the right recipients. Some of this went smoothly, but there was also some amount of digging through boxes and haphazardly passing books and boxes out. Leadership at this point is very important. In fact, one of the big questions to answer throughout the complete process is where is it best to engage groups of people/committees to do tasks as to where it is best to have one, main responsible person that can be held accountable to the task. Furthermore, there was an attempt to organize the book pick up in a way that incorporated the idea that schools whose books were at the front of the container would be called first to do their pickup and schools whose books were at the back of the container would be scheduled at a later day to pick up their books.

B. (Gary Sande) The Project Committee took care of these details and he felt that things ran just fine here.

C. (MKIDA) No real challenges here with the exception of the additional costs of transportation, etc. and how to get the funds to be sure all costs are covered. Also, the Diocese gave support here and this was essential to the success of the project.

D. (Koins) No real challenges here were mentioned. The University and individuals associated with the university seemed to make this part work.

E. (THAF) No real challenges mentioned here, just the importance of informing recipients in advance of the additional costs they will encounter to get their books to their final locations.

16) Upon arrival at your destination, how do you go about setting up the library?

A. (Brook Golden) A manual available to Peace Corps volunteers on how to set up community libraries was of tremendous support. In addition, it was mandatory that participating schools send at least one staff person, most likely their librarian to attend training at the National Library. By this, the librarian, administrator or other key school member was given instruction on how to do this. Also, they were able to see firsthand the kind of systems in place at the National Library and use such as models, to scale down and draw from for help. This was also a way to get individuals from schools aware of the good resources available at the National Library. There was also a way of follow up created whereby PC volunteers or others made regular visits to library locations and ran through check lists to better ensure schools and libraries that had things in place and systems online to better ensure positive longer term outcomes.

B. (Gary Sande) Project committee members were most instrumental here and efforts were made to impress upon local communities that they were in fact responsible for the upkeep of their community schools and libraries. There is an unfortunate issue in many rural communities where there is too much reliance on government to come in and fix facilities, etc. Gary spoke of the desire to get local people more focused on doing the fixing and upkeep of facilities themselves and not relying so much on, or waiting so much on government officials to make the move to improve things.

C. (MKIDA) This was up to the schools that were book recipients; however, MKIDA did what it could to impress upon schools what they needed to keep the books well and have successful outcomes. Also, some additional help was available to schools by MKIDA or other NGOs working on common interests.

D. (Koins) The university already has relatively good facilities and systems in place to do
   this. From their point of view, the desire is just to have more books, and more resources
   to augment the student educational experience. It doesn't seem that facilities and supports
   are really a problem, but rather more books and educational resources are needed.

E. (THAF) They have a good storage facility; can provide some help to schools in need of
   developing and maintaining libraries. THAF impresses upon recipients the importance of
   honoring donations and making the best use of the books a school receives.

17) How do you sort and label the books to identify them?

A. (Brook Golden) Some schools have their own system in place, other schools needed
   guidance on this and this is where the library training was so important. Also, volunteers
   could lend support on this, drawing from the PC manual on how to start community
   libraries.

B. (Gary Sande) Project Committee members worked on this and it depended on the recipient
   schools and the systems they already had in place.

C. (MKIDA) This was determined by recipient schools and some support could be given by
   MKIDA if asked for.

D. (Koins) The University has their own system by which they go by.

E. (THAF) This was determined by the recipient schools, though some basic supports could
   be provided by THAF and other NGO operations.

18) How do you keep track of who a book has been loaned to and for how long?

A. (Brook Golden) Such decision making was determined by each recipient school.

B. (Gary Sande) These decisions were made independently by recipient schools and at times with some guidance by the project committee members.

C. (MKIDA) Recipient schools determined this.

D. (Koins) University systems are in place for such.

E. (THAF) Recipient schools determined this and some support could be given by THAF and other NGOs, if need be.

19) How do you secure the library when it is not in use?

A. (Brook Golden) One of the important elements in the vetting process included a secure and good facility to have the books. Each recipient school can do this a bit differently; however, the expectation is that this takes place. Entry points are secured when school library is not in use.

B. (Gary Sande) Project Committee members impress upon recipient schools the importance of such and can give some guidance here if need be. Furthermore, with Gary's visits and follow up to the facilities, things are checked up on and so on.

C. (MKIDA) It is impressed upon schools that his happens and that there are responsible people making sure that it happens.

D. (Koins) The university has its own systems in place for this, and things are followed through pretty well here.

E. (THAF) It is impressed upon recipient schools that this takes place. THAF can provide some support here along with other NGO groups.

20) What are the toughest challenges for you or others during this library set-up phase?

    A. (Brook Golden) Ensuring continuity and follow up is done to ensure all recipient schools are on track and following through with commitments.

    B. (Gary Sande) Making sure upkeep of facilities had taken place and things are in good order for books to be placed and kept well. Also, any way of making sure good follow up on the projects takes place enhances the likelihood of project success.

    C. (MKIDA) School's covering any additional costs along the way. There needs to be more funds and ways of funding to ensure all of this happens, and continues to happen.

    D. (Koins) No comment here, the university system seems to handle this well.

    E. (THAF) Impressing upon schools additional costs that they are responsible for.

21) When it comes to ongoing management of the library, what kinds of problems, questions or concerns arise for you or others?

    A. (Brook Golden) Continuity within project work and follow up, ideally on a monthly basis.

    B. (Gary Sande) Proper follow up and feedback loop to all stakeholders.

    C. (MKIDA) Covering additional costs, fundraising and funds to make sure the work continues.

    D. (Koins) No real comment here. The university does this pretty well.

    E. (THAF) Ways of ensuring that recipients can cover additional, future costs.

22) Are there other issues, concerns or questions that you would like to ask or raise?

    A. (Brook Golden) Continuity, Follow up and a good feedback system in place.

    B. (Gary Sande) Follow up and good feedback system in place.

C. (MKIDA) Ways of getting additional funding so that recipients can adequately keep up

with additional, on-going costs.

D. (Koins) More books and resources donated to the university system continue to be

helpful.

E. (THAF) Impressing upon recipients the importance of maintaining relatively good

facilities and covering additional future costs.

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Manual for BFA Container Captains, Consignees, Recipients, & Volunteers

A step-by-step guide to receiving your BFA books
& basic set-up of school libraries

Introduction

August 2012

The mission of Books For Africa (BFA) is to end the book famine in Africa. We are the world's largest shipper of donated textbooks and library books to the African continent. More than 26 million books have been sent to 46 African countries since we began our work in 1988. Just last year, we sent 1.9 million books to 21 African countries.

This manual is to help prepare and guide the work of BFA container captains, consignees, recipients, and community volunteers. It provides checklists and instructions to help you prepare for the arrival of your BFA books; unloading of the BFA sea container and transporting the books; and setting up systems for operating a library.

Please share and write in this manual! The checklist is meant to be filled out as you go along, and to be shared with everyone involved in your project. The manual should be read in full as soon as you receive it. Also, while we have written this manual with school libraries in mind, it may also be useful to other recipients of BFA books.

To develop this manual, we talked with BFA volunteers and recipients of BFA books. For the suggestions related to library set-up and operation, we worked from two excellent documents: *Setting Up and Running A Small Library* by Nicola Baird, with the Volunteer Service Oversees (VSO); and *Libraries For All*: *How to Start and Run a Basic Library* by Laura Wendell, with UNESCO. More information on these publications is provided in this manual.

Thank you for your work to strengthen the literacy skills of the children of Africa and the economic future of African communities. **As you work with this manual, please share your ideas for how to make it better.** Email us at info@BooksForAfrica.org, call 651-602-9844, or send mail to Books For Africa, 253 East 4th Street, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55101 USA.

Sincerely,

Norm Linnell   Patrick Plonski, Ph.D.
Board President   Executive Director

Checklist for Container Captains & Other Key Volunteers

1. Prepare for the BFA books to arrive

- ☐ Talk with people about the books and the library. Begin recruiting volunteers.
- ☐ Set up a Library Committee.
- ☐ Decide where the library will be located.
- ☐ Set aside money for expenses.
- ☐ Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries.
- ☐ Prepare the library space.
- ☐ Plan for storage options.
- ☐ Complete government forms.
- ☐ Gather what is needed to transport the books.

2. Unload the sea container & transport the boxes of books

- ☐ Bring the needed government forms to port to receive the BFA sea container.
- ☐ Assign roles and tasks to volunteers.
- ☐ Keep the books inside their boxes.
- ☐ Transport the boxes to a warehouse or other large space to divide by recipient school, or transport the boxes directly to the recipient schools / communities.
- ☐ Keep the boxes safe, clean, dry, and organized.

3. Sort and organize the books & prepare them for use

- ☐ Sort the books by type: 1) textbooks, 2) reference, 3) information, 4) fiction, and 5) books for young children.
- ☐ Group books for young children by reading level.
- ☐ Group information books by general subject.
- ☐ Put fiction books in order by author.
- ☐ Set up additional processes to organize and track books.
- ☐ Make posters and visual aids.

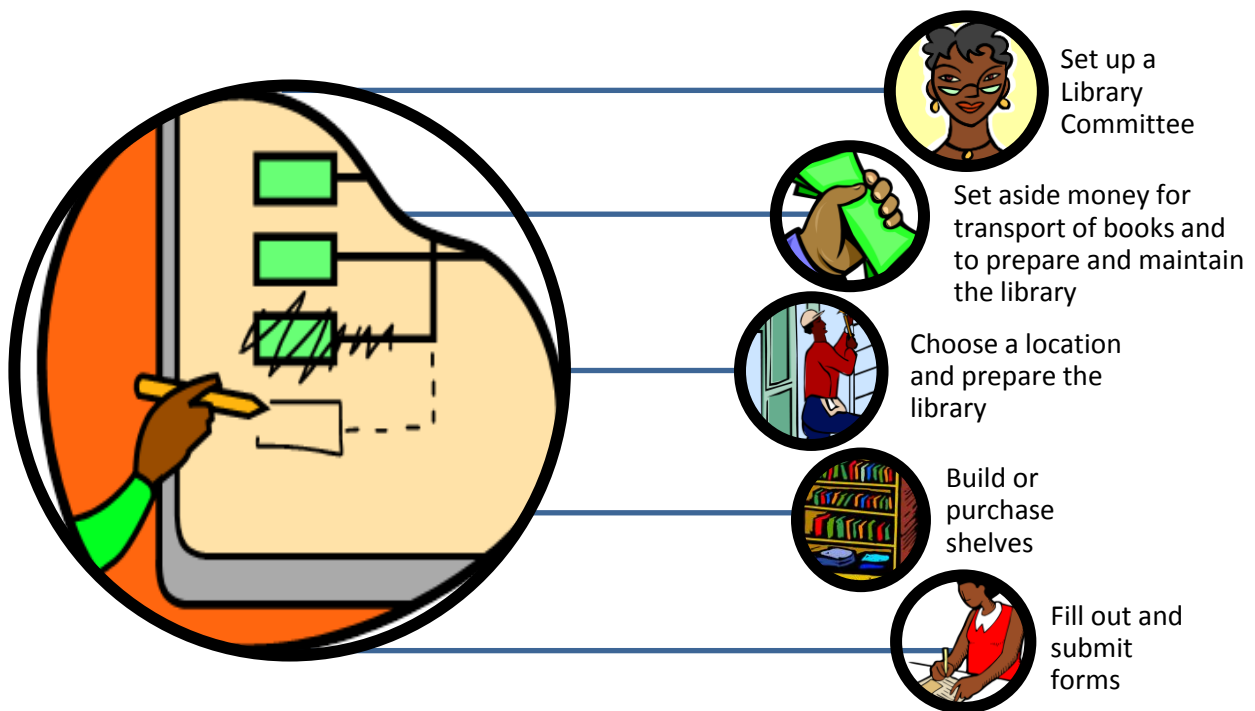## 4. Set up systems for operating the library

- ☐ Identify volunteers who can help run the library.

- ☐ Protect the books from theft and damage.
- ☐ Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library.
- ☐ Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library.

5. Encourage use of the library

- ☐ Make the library a fun, interesting, and welcoming place to be.
- ☐ Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used.
- ☐ Teach students about the library.
- ☐ Show student projects and create displays.
- ☐ Share book recommendations.
- ☐ Read stories out loud.
- ☐ Support student efforts related to the library.
- ☐ Share your good work.

Step 1: Plan for the BFA books to arrive

Set up a Library Committee

Set aside money for transport of books and to prepare and maintain the library

Choose a location and prepare the library

Build or purchase shelves

Fill out and submit forms

To prepare for your shipment of books from BFA, you will need to:

☐ Talk with people about the books and the library. Begin recruiting volunteers.

☐ Set up a Library Committee.

☐ Decide where the library will be located.

☐ Set aside money for expenses.

☐ Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries

☐ Prepare the library space.

☐ Plan for storage options.

☐ Complete government forms.

☐ Gather what is needed to transport the books.

Preparing now makes everything easier

No matter how many books you are receiving from BFA, it is important to think ahead and prepare for their arrival. Preparing well includes completing government forms, getting space ready for the

books, and talking with people in your community about how the books can help improve the literacy skills of local children and your community's development.

Key roles for volunteers

There are several critical roles related to receiving, transporting, and organizing the BFA books. Sometimes the same person will need to take on more than one role. Make sure there is one person who agrees to fill each major role, and that a back-up person for each role is also identified. Key roles for volunteers are:

Container Captain: The container captain raises the money needed to pay for shipping of the BFA books from the United States to Africa, and sometimes for other expenses as well (such as for transportation of the books to their destination and for library set-up). This person works directly with BFA to get the project started and often plays the role of overall project manager. Most often, the container captain either lives in Africa or in the United States. Many of the container captains who live in the United States partner with community leaders and/or NGOs in Africa. The role of container captain includes responsibility for tasks like:

- Raising money and making sure payments take place on time;
- Talking with schools and community leaders about the preparations necessary for storage of books and library set-up;
- Making sure government documents are completed properly;
- Finding a central storage area where recipients can come to collect their books;
- Helping to arrange for transportation from the port to the central storage area and/or to the recipient schools;
- Working with other volunteers and organizations to make sure all other roles in the project are assigned and tasks are completed; and
- Sending comments back to BFA on how the project is going and how the books are being used.

Consignee: The consignee is the person or organization (often a tax-exempt NGO or a regional government) that is named on the government forms as having authority to sign for the BFA shipment at the port and to remove the boxes from the sea container. The consignee helps the container captain make sure the books get from the port of entry to the recipient school.

Recipient: The recipient is the person who represents the school where the books are to be used by students. Each BFA sea container often contains books for more than one recipient.

Library Committee: The library committee makes decisions about the books and the library. These decisions can include where books will be stored, how the library will loan books, how the library will be organized, and ongoing staff and volunteer roles.

Coordinator of Volunteers: There are many tasks involved in receiving, transporting, and organizing your BFA books that are best done by groups of volunteers, such as preparing the library space for the books, moving the boxes off the sea container and into trucks, sorting the books by type, and labeling the books. For each major group task, a coordinator of volunteers should be identified.

Volunteers: There are volunteer roles for anyone who wants to help make your project a success. As you read this manual, think about how students, teachers, young adults, parents, community leaders, elders, and others in your community can help complete the tasks that need to be done. The more people from your community are involved in the project, the more they will see your growing school library as a source of pride. Volunteers will be needed immediately to transport the books and get your library organized. They will also be needed for months and years afterward to help maintain and grow the library.

Talk with people about the books and the library

No matter how small or large your shipment of BFA books, let people know they're coming! Talk with people in the community about the books and your school library. These conversations can focus on the importance of local children improving their literacy skills and the positive results these skills can have for the future of your community. Talking about the books is also a way to begin recruiting volunteers. You may want to make a special effort to talk with people who represent NGOs, churches, mosques, and local governments that share your goals. It is good for these organizations to be aware of your efforts – they could become potential partners in recruiting volunteers, helping make sure port processes go smoothly, and more.

Set up a Library Committee

Other BFA recipients have found it helpful to set up a library committee. A library committee is created to make shared decisions about the library (such as where it will be located and whether books will be loaned) and to set rules for how to use the library (including when the library will be open and penalties for lost or damaged books).

Encourage a wide range of current and potential leaders to participate on the library committee. If your school will have a paid librarian, she or he would be a good choice to lead the library committee. Other possible committee members would include interested teachers, school staff, student leaders (both girls and boys), parents, village leaders, and – at least for the first steps of the project – people with knowledge about port processes, transportation, and/or storage options.

When inviting people to serve on the library committee, be mindful of whom to invite or inform first in the process to make sure leaders and elders feel respected. Also, a library committee can be useful in keeping the community connected to the library throughout the year. For example, the committee could create events that link the library and its resources to traditional community celebrations.

Container captains can help a library committee get started and may want to rely on library committee members as links to the broader community. For example, the container captain can inform the library committee about developments in the project – such as when the fundraising goal has been met, or the date when the sea container is expected to arrive – and ask committee members to share the news with those they know in the community.

Decide where the library will be located

Where is the best place to locate your library? It depends. If the number of books in your library is smaller – dozens of books – a library area within an existing classroom or school office may make

sense. If your BFA shipment will cause your library to grow by thousands of books, you will need a separate room or building.

Easy access to the library for students during the school day is critical for the library to become a good learning resource. If you need to build or repurpose a separate building near the school for your library, make sure the location and the building itself are protected from flooding and other hazards. If the library will be open when the school is closed (during weekends or breaks), to be a resource for the community, consider a location that is both near the school and easy for others in the community to access. Members of the library committee should try to gather opinions and ideas from people who live in the community before deciding where to locate a library building.

Set aside money for expenses

While container captains are often focused on raising the money needed to cover the cost of sending the BFA books across the ocean, there are other important costs to think about as well. Fundraising goals should consider the decisions made by the library committee about where the library will be located (for example, the cost of building a new building, if necessary), the cost of drivers travelling to and from the port, and the cost of materials needed to get the library ready for use (such as bookshelves and supplies). When fundraising for BFA books includes several recipient schools, it may be necessary for each school to make its own arrangements for transportation and to cover the related costs.

Also, it is important for each recipient school to have a good plan for how the ongoing, day-to-day expenses of the library will be covered.

Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries

Another expense to consider is librarian training. Some nations have special groups focused on library science and centers where new librarians can go to learn from each other. BFA recipient schools that have paid to send their librarians to trainings have found it to be a very good learning experience. Trained librarians also seem to feel more confident in teaching volunteers about library processes. If training is too hard to arrange, plan to cover the costs of your librarian visiting librarians in other communities. This way they can see how other libraries operate and learn from others who do similar work.

Prepare the library space

Depending on the kind of library space needed for your books, preparations may need to begin long before the books are shipped from BFA.

For detailed guidance on all aspects of preparing a library – from making library shelves from local materials, to guarding against theft and pests – there are two excellent resources to turn to for guidance:
- *Setting Up and Running A Small Library* by Nicola Baird, with the VSO (available at http://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/vsolibrary.pdf) and
- *Libraries For All: How to Start and Run a Basic Library* by Laura Wendell with UNESCO (available at http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED521842.pdf).

The VSO guide includes drawings of simple buildings that account for humidity, security, and flooding, and plans for making adjustable-height bookshelves out of local materials that are low cost. It is very important for bookshelves to be raised off the floor to protect against water damage during rainy seasons and to be short enough for children to reach the books they are interested in.

There should be good air flow in the library, since books can be damaged by humidity. Also, depending on how the bookshelves are built, setting the legs of bookshelves in small pots of water or petrol can help protect the books from insects.

Plan for storage options

If the preparation of your library space takes a long time, or if a bigger space is needed to hold teams of volunteers sorting and labeling the books (see Step 3), you will need to plan for a space to be available for use – a warehouse or other large, secure area.

Also, if the sea container from BFA contains books for more than one recipient, a warehouse or other large, secure, centrally-located building may be needed for storing the boxes for a short time and dividing them by recipient library.

Complete government forms

Once the funds have been raised and BFA staff have provided an expected date when the sea container will likely arrive in port, fill out all government forms needed to receive your BFA books. Make sure the forms will be valid for the date when your shipment is expected to arrive. Add some extra time in case the shipment is delayed. (For example, in Nigeria, the critical form to complete is the Form M, shown at the end of this section. The Form M is only valid for six months, so the form should be submitted no later than three months before your shipment is scheduled to arrive in port, in case it is delayed.)

Getting approval of government forms can be complicated. Common challenges include:
- Delays at the port related to slow government processes or port officials who are hard to work with;
- Port officials spending extra time looking at government documents or the contents of the sea container;
- Economic problems that lead to port officials going on strike or taking other actions to show their unhappiness with the government; or
- Bad weather that slows down all tasks.

To help avoid some these problems, try to find a volunteer or NGO representative who has experience in port procedures and who has tax-exempt status to avoid paying government import duties. This person should be at the port when the sea container arrives.

Also, make sure the volunteers who are meeting the sea container at the port have with them the contact information for other volunteers in case a change in plans is necessary. (The worksheet at the end of this manual is provided for this purpose.)

Gather what is needed to transport the books

When you know the expected arrival date for the BFA sea container, begin to plan for the volunteers, vehicles, and supplies needed to transport the boxes of books.

Covered trucks are ideal for keeping the boxes safe and dry. If a covered truck is not an option, you will want to secure and protect the boxes somehow. The plastic used to wrap the boxes to keep them from moving around in the sea container (shown in the photograph below) may be useful in covering the boxes:

For more sturdy truck bed covers that can be made in advance, www.ehow.com provides instructions for several options, including:
- http://www.ehow.com/how_7588582_diy-pickup-bed-cover.html
- http://www.ehow.com/how_4620708_make-truck-bed-cover.html

In addition to the consignee who will sign for the shipment at the port of entry, other volunteers will need to be recruited to be drivers (to the port and/or warehouse and back) and to carry the boxes from the sea container to the trucks.

Make sure to recruit more volunteers for these roles than you actually need. The date the sea container arrives in port could change and you will want back-up options and a contingency plan in case volunteers who commit in advance are unable to make it after all.

Example of a Form M for Nigeria *(Source: www.hmlogistics.com)*

Step 2: Unload the sea container
& transport the boxes of books

Assign roles & tasks to volunteers

Keep the books inside their boxes

Transport boxes to a warehouse and divide by destination library

Keep boxes safe, clean, dry, and organized

To unload the BFA sea container and get the books to their destination, you will need to:

☐ Bring the needed government forms to port to receive the BFA sea container.

☐ Assign roles and tasks to volunteers.

☐ Keep the books inside their boxes.

☐ Transport the boxes to a warehouse or other large space to divide by recipient school, or transport the boxes directly to the recipient schools / communities.

☐ Keep the boxes safe, clean, dry, and organized.

Organization is key to fast, effective transfer of your BFA books

As with any project where you are moving a large number of heavy items, planning in advance is important to reducing the time and cost involved. This step in the process is best handled by a group of volunteers, led by one coordinator who is organized, able to deal well with unexpected problems, and good at working with people to keep them focused.

The container captain, consignee, or coordinator should be given the responsibility of gathering the contact information for anyone who will be helping with getting the books from the port to the

recipient schools. The worksheet at the end of this manual can be used for this purpose. This same contact information should be shared with everyone involved in the process, in case there are unexpected problems or delays.

What to bring to port

In getting ready to travel to port, there are important items to bring and things to think about:
- The government forms needed to receive the shipment of BFA books (brought by the consignee who is authorized to sign off on the shipment at port);
- Transportation vehicles, such as trucks with a covered bed, cars for smaller shipments, or open vehicles that have tarps and tie-downs to protect the boxes of books;
- The list of volunteers and contact information (including information on the temporary warehouse, if one will be used); and
- Money for fuel, food, and possibly lodging (if the port or warehouse is a long distance away, or if problems arise).

Assign volunteers to move and transport the boxes

Groups of volunteers are needed for this step to go well. For a smaller shipment, the consignee and driver(s) may be all the help that is needed. For large shipments of thousands of books, many more volunteers will be required.

The boxes of BFA books are heavy and are best moved off of the sea container by an organized, assembly-line process so that people do not hurt their backs. No more than two people should be assigned to be inside the sea container; those one or two people should pass boxes one at a time to other volunteers outside the container, one person to the next down a line, until the boxes reach the trucks. A coordinator should help arrange each person in the line and make sure the boxes are not opened or mishandled in the process.

This is the same process used for moving the boxes off the trucks and to either the recipient school or a temporary storage building.

If the sea container contains books for more than one recipient school, volunteers representing each school should be sent to port to help move the boxes from the container to a warehouse or other large building that is in a central location convenient to all the recipient schools.

Once at the warehouse/building, the boxes can be separated by recipient school. Depending on the size of the shipment, a recipient school may need to send additional volunteers to move the boxes from the warehouse/building to their final destination.

Keep the books inside their boxes

Coordinators need to be leaders in making sure all volunteers keep the boxes sealed until they reach their recipient school. Keeping the boxes unopened is important for the following reasons:
- Keeping the books inside the boxes helps make sure recipient schools receive the books they specifically ordered;
- Unopened boxes are easier to stack and keep organized;
- Opening the boxes and trading books with representatives of other recipient schools can sometimes result in bad feelings and conflict, and volunteers may not know the needs of the school library or what books are more desired than others;
- Time spent looking through the boxes of books is time lost in the process, which could increase project costs (for example, extra food and lodging for volunteers or needing an interim storage building/warehouse for a longer period of time); and
- Opening the boxes for the first time at the recipient school can be part of a celebration or a community event.

The labels on each box provide important information you can rely on in separating the boxes, including the type of books each box contains (textbooks or leisure, which includes fiction an information/non-fiction) and the reading level of the books. In the case of textbooks, the label shows the subject. (See the label code key at the end of this section for more information.)

Transport the boxes to a warehouse or directly to the recipient schools

Again, depending on the situation, a warehouse or other interim storage area may be needed. Sometimes there isn't enough time or space to separate the boxes by recipient while at the port, or the port is not a good central location for all the recipient schools. Even if all the boxes on the sea container are being sent to one recipient school, an interim storage option may be needed as a place to organize the books and get them ready to bring into the library.

Keep the boxes safe, clean and dry

Often, BFA container captains plan for the sea container to arrive in seasons of dry weather. However, if rain or other bad weather could be an issue, make sure to allow for extra time at port; extra money for fuel, food, and lodging for drivers and other volunteers; and longer use of an interim warehouse/storage building.

The more you can do to make sure the boxes are kept clean and dry, the better. Also, boxes should be secured whenever possible to prevent theft. Warehouses/buildings should be locked when not in use and trucks should be kept in sight when volunteers take a break during transport.

Label Code Key for Boxes Shipped from BFA

The following codes show the reading level of the books in each box:

P Jr = Younger primary ("Primary Junior")

P Sr = Older primary ("Primary Senior")

S = Secondary

After these reading level codes, you will see the type of books included.
For example:

S / Math = Secondary math textbooks

P Jr / Sci = Younger primary science textbooks

P Sr / Leisure = Older primary leisure reading books
(fiction and information/non-fiction)

Make sure to look at the codes carefully. Boxes of books meant for adults (being sent to college, university, or community libraries) are often shipped in the same sea container as boxes meant for primary and secondary schools. The boxes of books for adults often show the label code "**PS**" for "Post-Secondary" (for example, PS/Bus & Econ = Post-Secondary Business and Economics).

Step 3: Sort and organize the books
& prepare them for use
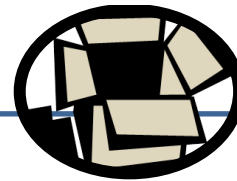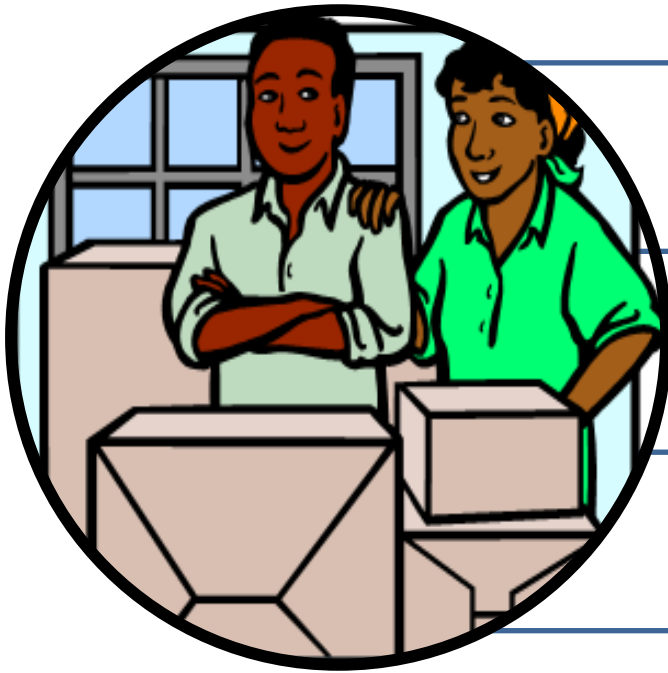
Sort the books by type

Divide information books by general subject

Put fiction books on shelves by the author's surname

Make posters to show where to find books and to share library rules

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To make the books easy to find and keep track of, you will need to:

☐ Sort the books by type: 1) textbooks, 2) reference, 3) information, 4) fiction, and 5) books for young children.

☐ Group books for young children by reading level.

☐ Group information books by general subject.

☐ Put fiction books in order by author.

☐ Set up additional processes to organize and track books.

Make the library easy to use for students, teachers, librarians, and helpers

Setting up a library involves organizing the books and creating systems that make it easy for everyone to find what they are looking for. Even if your library is small, there is value in applying the ideas presented here.

Community members and students can get very excited about the arrival of books and may push for the library to open quickly. We recommend taking the time necessary to set up your library well before it is used, and encouraging enthusiastic library supporters to help with the tasks of library set-up, such as unpacking the books from the boxes and sorting them.

Sort the books by type

One of the first and most important tasks is to sort the books by type. There are five basic types of books to consider:
- Textbooks (most often used by students and teachers as part of formal lessons);
- Reference (such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauruses, and atlases that are not loaned out of the library);
- Information (also called "non-fiction" – books that explain facts and concepts about the current or historical world);
- Fiction (stories of various lengths); and
- Books for young children (children who are still developing their most basic reading skills).

Group books for young children by reading level

Books for young children – early primary school – are sometimes called "picture books" because there are often more pictures than words on the pages. These books are best grouped by reading level (rather than by information and fiction). Because young children tend to look at many books and to not be able to place them on a shelf precisely, it is unnecessary to place the books on the shelves in an exact order. At most, you may consider further grouping the books by the first letter of the author's surname (the author's "last name" or "family name").

Group the information books by general subject

Information books for older children are best grouped by subject. The smaller the library, the more general these subjects can be. For example, a small library might group all the books about science and the natural world together. In a large library, it would be best to further group together books about plants, books about insects, and books about the solar system, for example.

The documents from the VSO and UNESCO, referenced in Step 1 of this manual, provide detailed options for categorizing information books. Both provide information on the Dewey Decimal system – the world's most widely used and specific method of categorizing information books. This system uses numbers (often specific to the hundredth decimal) and letters to give each book a unique number.

The VSO document describes an alternative system, called the "Junior Color Code" approach, which may be the most useful for recipients of BFA books. With Junior Color Coding, books are categorized by color rather than number. The illustration at the end of this section, titled "The Colors of Our Library" provides an example of how this system can be applied to a poster that helps students find the kind of books they are interested in.

The VSO document provides details in setting up this system, including labeling shelves and books to reflect their color code and how to transition from a Junior Color Code system to the Dewey Decimal system as your library grows.

Put fiction books in order by author

The fiction books for older children are best divided by the author's surname. If you have a large number of fiction books, place them on the shelves in exact alphabetical order; if you have a small number, it is fine to group them by first letter of the author's surname.

Set up additional processes to organize and track books

There are a number of additional processes recommended by the VSO and UNESCO documents that can be very useful to keeping track of the books in the library and making it easy for everyone to find specific books. We recommend that the VSO and UNESCO documents be used to guide your efforts. These documents provide in-depth descriptions on how to:

- Keep a record of every book in your library, in general order of when the books were received, and note the source of the book (BFA or another source);
- Set up a lending system for a school library (how to keep track of the books that have been loaned, to sample posters explaining the lending process to students);
- Label the books, including a label on the spine, a label showing the book belongs to your library, and for books that will be loaned out a label to stamp or write the date when the book should be returned to the library;
- Make a card catalogue by title to help people find specific books easily;
- Make shelf lists to help identify missing books and make shelving easier; and
- Make posters and visual aids, such as labels for shelves and illustrations of library rules and processes.

The Colors of Our Library

Black:
Philosophy & Religion

Orange:
Economics & Transport

Brown:
Grammar & Languages

Yellow:
Weather, Rocks & Physics

Green:
Plants & Animals

Red:
Agriculture & Business

Purple:
Art, Music & Sports

Pink:
Poetry, Myths & Legends

Blue:
History & Geography

Step 4: Set up systems for operating the library

Identify volunteers to help run the library

Make lists of what tasks must be done regularly

Assign responsibility for making sure tasks are completed

To keep your library in good condition, you will need to:

☐ Identify volunteers who can help run the library.

☐ Protect the books from theft and damage.

☐ Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library.

☐ Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library.

Before opening the library, make plans for how it will be maintained

Setting up a library is a big project; keeping a library going is a daily effort. Before opening the library for use, it is helpful to set up systems for maintaining the library.

Identify volunteers who can help run the library

Keeping a library running smoothly is more than a one-person job. Even large libraries with money to pay several staff often use volunteer helpers as well. Older students and parents are often interested in volunteering for school libraries. Volunteers can help with a wide range of tasks from putting books in order on the shelves to working with students on special projects. To find

volunteers, reach out to groups of parents, student organizations, community groups, churches and mosques – anyplace where people gather in your community.

Protect the books from theft and damage

As this manual mentions in the first section focused on preparing for your BFA books to arrive, the library space should be set up to keep books safe and in good condition. The VSO and UNESCO documents both describe the importance of good air flow in the library, keeping the books on shelves several inches off the floor, and placing the legs of the bookshelves in pots of water or petrol to keep insects away. They also suggest ways to keep the library safe from theft, such as putting up bars or metal screens on windows, having a librarian / volunteer desk next to the door, and labeling the books with nameplates showing that the books belong to your library.

Also, the more that parents and community members know about the library and support it, the more likely that books loaned to children or found outside the library will be returned.

Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library

When a team of school staff and volunteers are working together to maintain the library, task lists can be useful for assigning responsibilities and making sure the work gets done. The VSO document includes lists similar to the following for routine upkeep of a library; you may want to add items to these lists based on your library's unique needs:

Daily task list:
- Make sure the library is open at the times the Library Committee has set.
- At the beginning of the day, change the date stamp. (See the VSO document for details on how to use a date stamp as part of the book lending process.)
- Loan books to students and keep track of which books have been lent out.
- Put books that have been returned back on the shelves.
- Dust the shelves (moving the books as you dust) and sweep the floor.
- At the end of the day, lock the door.

Weekly task list:
- Identify which students have borrowed books but not returned them by the due date. Ask volunteer helpers or teachers to remind those students to return the books.
- Repair books.
- Plan for visits from specific classes / forms to the library. (This is especially important to do at the beginning of the school year.)

Monthly task list:
- Change the displays in the library (for example, posters, recommended books, etc. – see the next section for details).
- Organize activities, competitions or games.

- If additional books are expected to be added to the library, check in on when they might arrive and plan for getting them ready for use.

End of the term / school year task list:
- Clean the library well and dust every bookshelf with extra effort and attention.
- Check for insects and use preventive insect sprays.
- Ask students and teachers to return all books to the library.
- Make a list of missing books. If they cannot be found, take the books off the library lists.
- Remove damaged books that cannot be repaired from the library.
- Thank volunteers, including student helpers, for their work during the school year and invite volunteers to help in the year ahead.
- Ask for ideas on how the library can be made even better.

Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library

Work to be creative and resourceful in keeping the library in good condition. Get to know people in the community who have the skills and materials needed to make repairs to the library. Make sure a yearly budget is set for ongoing library needs, such as paying library staff, buying supplies, and ordering additional books. Keep community leaders informed and involved – they can be helpful in strengthening the commitment of volunteers and securing additional local support to maintain and grow the library's resources.

Step 5: Encourage use of the library

Change displays regularly to keep the library fun and interesting

Share recommendations from students, helpers, and teachers

Help children make their own bookmarks

Organize book clubs, hold writing contests, and other activities all year long

To keep students interested in the library, you will need to:

☐ Make the library a fun, interesting, and welcoming place to be.

☐ Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used.

☐ Teach students about the library.

☐ Show student projects and create displays.

☐ Share book recommendations.

☐ Read stories out loud.

☐ Support student efforts related to the library.

☐ Share your good work.

With a little creativity, you can make the library an active place of fun and learning all year long

Perhaps the most important purpose of a school library is to help students develop a love of reading. When children want to read and choose to spend their free time reading about subjects they are interested in, their literacy skills will improve. Holding creative activities in the library can also be a way of attracting children to the library, and many activities can be done for little or no cost. In addition to the ideas that follow, the VSO and UNESCO documents provide many more specific ways to orient children to the library and keep them interested throughout the school year.

Make the library interesting and welcoming

Make it a priority for the library to be a place where learning is fun and children feel comfortable. Think about how you can add color to the space and place mats and chairs in a way that encourages spending time with the books. Flowers, mobiles, and posters can make a big difference to the feel of the library. Talk with student members of your Library Committee about what students are interested in and ask for their ideas and help in making the library a welcoming place to be.

Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used

Before the library opens, and before each school term, take some time to bring teachers and volunteers together in the library to talk about its purpose and discuss ideas for how library resources can support the work of teachers. There may be books that relate to the ideas teachers are planning to teach.

It is important that both volunteers and teachers understand how the library is organized and the library rules. Volunteers will often work with teachers to follow up on books that students need to return to the library. Teachers can help students and their parents understand the purpose of the library and how library books should be used and taken care of.

Teachers can be encouraged to develop library activities that are specific to their students. Library time can be set aside for different form rooms / classrooms to focus on tasks like researching answers to questions or gathering ideas for writing projects. Teachers and librarians working as partners can make the most of your library resources.

Also, make sure volunteers have a strong understanding of the purpose of the library and are committed to making it a fun and welcoming place for students. If volunteers are seen as too strict and are focused more on enforcing rules than on growing a love of reading, the library will be less of a resource for students.

Teach students about the library

Meet with students in the library by form / class at the beginning of the school year and talk about how to take care of a book, how to find different kinds of books in the library, and the library rules. Help students understand the parts of a book and the meaning of the labels used in your library. Show students the posters that explain how books are organized and how books are loaned.

Teaching children good routines can help keep the library books in good condition. Hands should be washed and dried before touching library books, and children should not eat or drink near the books. These same rules should apply at home when children borrow books from the library.

Using bookmarks is also a good practice for children to learn early. A library activity could be to have children make their own bookmarks.

When talking about library rules with students, think about how quiet the library actually needs to be. A library where all talk is at a whisper level may be unrealistic. However, you can teach children a scale of 0-10 of noise levels, where 0 is silence and 10 is the loudest noise they can make. Determine what noise level will be acceptable in your library area during different types of

activities (for example, times when stories are being read aloud and times when children are reading quietly) and help children practice talking at that noise level.

Show student projects and create displays

Librarians, volunteers, teachers, and students can work together to develop creative displays that change throughout the year. Creating displays of student projects can help children feel welcomed, recognized, and important.

For example, you can hold a writing contest and display the top stories. You can have students of a particular age group create mobiles that can be hung from the ceiling. You can put together displays focused on current events or important people. Make sure to identify books in your library that relate to the projects and displays and set them out for children to look at.

Share book recommendations

Another no-cost activity is for librarians to write short book recommendations and encourage students, volunteers, and teachers to do the same. The recommendations need only be a few sentences long, sharing what the reader liked most about the book. A recommendation can be displayed where the book is usually shelved or in a special display area.

Read stories out loud

For young primary school children, one of the best ways to develop a love of reading is to hear stories read aloud. This is a good activity to hold in the library and a way for librarians and volunteers to connect with students. In addition to reading the words of the story out loud, point out interesting pictures in the book and ask children questions as you go along or at the end of the story.

Reading stories aloud in the library also models a good practice for parents to read to their children at home. Teachers can reinforce the idea of parents reading to children, and bookmarks send home with loaned books can do so as well.

Another fun activity to connect the library to the broader community and to local cultural leaders is to invite storytellers to come to the library. Often BFA book recipients do not have many books that relate to their own culture or community. Children may enjoy hearing from a local storyteller, and older children could work together to create a book based on the story and display it in the library.

Support student efforts related to the library

It is best to not have all library activities developed by adults. Students often have good ideas for how to make the library a fun place to read and learn, while following the library rules. Student groups can organize book clubs, where they all read the same book and talk about what they think about it and how it relates to their lives. Library clubs are also common, where students who choose to be in the club work with the librarian to develop posters, displays, and activities.

Share your good work

You have worked hard raising money to bring books to the community. You have invested time and resources to set up a library. You have developed ways to make the library a fun and vibrant place for students to learn a love of reading. Why not tell everyone?

The more people know about the good work you are doing, the more community support you will have to continue your efforts. Make sure to keep community partners, regional governments, and NGOs informed of your progress at least once a year.

Also, please continue to see BFA as your partner. Tell BFA staff how your library is doing and share stories and photos of how the library is being used.

Thank you!

Thank you for all you are doing to support literacy among the children of Africa. If you have suggestions for how this manual can be expanded or improved, please email us at info@BooksForAfrica.org, call 651-602-9844, or send mail to Books For Africa, 253 East 4th Street, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55101 USA.

BFA PROJECT WORKSHEET FOR CONTAINER CAPTAINS & VOLUNTEERS

Fill in the most important information for each phase of your project *(for example, names, phone numbers, email, and physical addresses)*

Raise money for BFA books & expenses (library building, shelves, maintenance).
Common amount of time: 1 year or more

Send book request form to BFA. BFA gathers books, prepares them for sea container shipment.
Common amount of time: 1-2 months

Container Captain *(fundraiser / project manager)*:

BFA contact:

Library Committee contact:

Other volunteers:

Sea container travels from USA to African port.
Common amount of time: 2-3 months

Sea container arrives in port. Unload sea container, transport boxes to destination library, or to warehouse to be sorted by destination library.
Common amount of time: 3 days – 3 months

Date sea container is expected to arrive in port:

Consignee *(signs off on paperwork at port)*:

Port contact:

Other volunteers *(drivers, box movers)*:

Warehouse location & contact person (if necessary):

Set up the library. Divide books by type, shelve them, set up library operations. Communicate library rules and how the library works. Plan regular activities.
Common timeframe: 3 months - ongoing

Library Committee contact:

Community and student volunteers: