

# Ultimate Voluntary Organisation Handbook

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## **Akwabaa**

It is a joy to us to know that you are interested in being a part of Ultimate Voluntary Organisation as a volunteer. This information packet will help you get a better understanding of the projects and how to prepare for them. Please print this information and read it carefully. It is important that you understand the culture and the Projects in Kwahu-Tafo.

Kwahu-Tafo is a small village 3 hours north of Accra, the capital of Ghana. The people who live in Tafo are mostly farmers and therefore relatively poor. Ultimate Voluntary Organisation was formed to help the kids of Tafo and surrounding areas. The Organisation has four projects. They include the Kwahu-Tafo Cultural Center, the Kwahu-Tafo Football Academy, the Ultimate Voluntary Organisation School and the Health Program. The Organisation is run by Christian Ofuso Ansah and Eric Djane, with the help of Kofi, George and Mr. Ofosu. The project has been operating for the past 10 years, as of June 2008.

Christian is the overall director of the organisation. He is Ghanaian and lives in Tafo with his family. He teaches English and Social Studies at the local Junior Secondary School, and is involved in fighting HIV/AIDS in Tafo. Christian is also the Tafo Cultural Center Director.

Eric is also a teacher at the local Junior Secondary School. He teaches Pre-Technical Skills, Math and Computer classes. He has been working with the project for four years as of June 2008. Eric's commitment to the project has caused him to move from his apartment to stay with the boys at the Football Hostel. He lives day in and day out with the boys. Eric enjoys reading and telling jokes. He is very skilled in African drumming and dance. He, along with Christian, teaches Twi at the Ultimate Voluntary Organisation School.

Kofi is the Head Coach of the Football Academy. He has been with the Academy since the beginning, when there was a single U12 team, to now with an U12, U14 and U17 squad. Kofi also plans to begin an Open Division team soon, which will compete in the national league, and to start our first girl's football team. Kofi runs the football training sessions each afternoon, and welcomes and encourages input about any new ideas or training techniques that you may bring to the academy.

George and Mr. Ofosu are assistant coaches at the Football Academy. They supervise the football trainings, organise matches and look after the the equipment. Mr. Ofosu is even a Twi teacher and will teach you a lot about the local language.

## **The Projects**

There are four projects running under UVO. The Kwahu-Tafo Cultural Center, The Kwahu-Tafo Football Academy, the UVO School and the Health Program. As a volunteer, you will be placed at the UVO School during the day and then go to either the Cultural Center or Football training at 3:30.

**The Kwahu-Tafo Cultural Center** allows town kids to meet 4-5 days a week to learn and practice traditional dances, drumming, songs and dramas. You will be involved with teaching new dances, helping with choreography, teaching new plays/theatre pieces and playing games. Come prepared with ideas of what you would like to teach the children.

Some past volunteers have taught the children poems, plays and even dances from home, ranging from hip-hop to salsa. Your options for creative expression are wide open!

**The Kwahu-Tafo Football Academy** gives the opportunity for underprivileged boys, in the Tafo and surrounding villages, to come and play football in Tafo while attending school. The boys are housed in a rented hostel in Tafo. They are fed, sent to school and looked after. During the week the boys go to school. After school from 3 to about 6, they go to training. You will go and assist with football training. You will work along side Coach Kofi, George and Mr. Ofosu. You can help teach drills to the boys and give them tips on improving their skills. You can organise new drills for the boys to do as well. The coaches have everything well-organised and will be appreciative of any new ideas that you would like to try and demonstrate.

**The Health Program** educates children and adults in health related topics such as HIV/AIDS. It provides all the UVO children with National Health Insurance. It also lets interested volunteers help in the nearby clinic and hospital.

The newest addition to the organisation is the **Ultimate Voluntary Organisation School**. As of May 2008, the school has been up and running. The kids in the organisation are educated for free and are given lunch. School starts with morning assembly, followed by classes that range from Math and English all the way to Citizenship and Creative Arts. The school is run entirely by the volunteers, with Eric and Christian teaching the Twi classes. Upon arrival in Tafo you will be able to choose what subjects you would be interested in teaching.

### **The Children**

The children of UVO come from the town of Tafo and the surrounding communities and villages. The children range in age and development. Most are in the early stages of puberty, growing from children into young adults. **Their developmental levels are as different as their personalities.** Some of the children come to the project on a regular basis and others have duties at home that keep them from coming all the time. There is a core of children that normally always come and the others fluctuate. The children are high energy and rambunctious. They like to play and run about. They are also very obedient and listen very well (if they understand what you are trying to tell them). They also love to learn and show you all that they know.

### **Before You Come**

Before you head off to Africa, here are some things that will be useful to you.

### **The Weather**

Tafo is located in the Kwahu Ridge Mountains of Ghana and is notably cooler than any other part of Ghana. Dry dust storms and intense heat are usually in January/February after which the rains come for a few months and cool things down considerably. May-July is the major rainy season with impressive thunderstorms and torrential downpours nearly

everyday.

You might want to bring a sweater or cardigan to keep you feeling warm during the night and early morning. The Harmattan blows off the Sahara shortly after Christmas. This dry dust storm cools temperatures considerably. February is the hottest month, with a daytime temperature of 95 Fahrenheit! This is followed by the short rainy season for a few months, cooler temperatures returning.

### **Travel Requirements**

You will need to get your Ghanaian visa before leaving home. Tourist visas can be extended within the country if needed for a fair amount (about US \$20 per every extra month) for up to 6 months. After 6 months you will need to cross over into a bordering country and return to begin the 6 month visa extension all over again. Note, even if you get a one-month visa, at the airport they will authorize it for 2 months, free of charge.

#### **Less than 6 months**

For volunteers staying less than 6 months, when applying for your visa from your home country you will apply for a single-entry tourist visa. Although your visa might be good for up to 6 months or less, every couple of months, while in Ghana, you will be required to visit the Immigration office to have your visa extended. Normally you can have up to a 6 month extension in increments of 2 months at a time. So plan on visiting the Immigration Office a few times, while in Ghana.

#### **More than 6 months**

For volunteers staying more than 6 months, when applying for your visa from your home country, you will need to apply for a multi-entry volunteer visa (Note: a multi-entry visa is more expensive than a single-entry visa, but is valid for up to 3 years normally). You will then need a sponsorship letter from *Idea & Ideology* to declare and verify that you are a true volunteer. Let your volunteer coordinator know before you apply for your visa that you would like for them to send/email you a sponsorship letter for your visa at that time. Make several prints/copies of this letter and bring it along with you to Ghana. You will use this letter when you go to the Immigration office while in Ghana to have your visa extended.

Although you will have a multi-entry visa that is good for 3 years, every couple of months while in Ghana, you will have to visit the Immigration Office to have your visa extended. After the 6 months, you will be required to cross a border into a neighboring country and have your visa extended from the Ghanaian embassy within that country. Right now the easiest country to do this in is Togo.

Thus, you will need a visa for Togo. If you only plan to cross Togo one time you will only need a single-entry visa. If you plan on staying for longer than 1 year in Ghana, or plan on visiting Togo on other occasions, you might go ahead and purchase a multi-entry visa for Togo as well. You can get the Togo visa in your home country before you depart to Ghana, or you can visit the Togo Embassy in Accra, Ghana and get your visa there. When applying

for the Togo visa it is best to say that you are applying for a tourist visa and not a volunteer visa. In Togo you will go to the Ghanaian Embassy to have your visa extended again. Be prepared to stay the night and for a couple of days if they cannot return your passport on the same day. When you return to Ghana you will begin the whole process again of having your visa extended for another 6 months (in 2 month increments) before being required to cross another border.

**When You Go to Immigration in Ghana** to extend your visa you should bring: your passport, 1 passport size/style photo, 1 photocopy of your return ticket and 2 addresses like the first time you applied. On the form it is best to say that you are touring Ghana (rather than volunteering) and just want to tour more, because you like it. If you say that you are volunteering you will have to provide a letter from the organisation. Christian or Eric can give you a Volunteer letter before you go renew your visa. Your visa should be ready in two weeks, but sometimes it takes longer. You will then return to the office to pick up your passport.

The Immigration Office in Kumasi is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m to 5 p.m. It is located perpendicular to the clock tower and the main post office. The phone number is 051-28938. Take a tro-tro to Kumasi (2 cedis, 50 peswas). From Kejetia Station you can take a taxi to the Main Post Office, or walk, asking directions along the way. The Immigration Office is located on the cross street just past the Post Office (to your left when looking at the post office), opposite the clock tower. On the right hand side of the road are several 3-story buildings. Ask for the Immigration Office and someone will direct you. It is on the 3rd floor.

## **Money**

Right now the Ghanaian Cedi is 1 cedi = 1 US Dollar and 100 peswas = 1 cedi.

You will probably need about US \$50-100/month for day-to-day living expenses (email, buses, snacks etc.). Credit cards are not widely used, even at travel agencies and airline offices. However, there are cash machines for debit or check cards at the major banks in Accra and most big cities (Barclays Bank, Standard Charter Bank and EcoBank are the most popular). **Mastercards are often not accepted at all.** Visa is widely accepted. Check with your bank or financial institution before you depart to make sure your credit/check card can be used to draw money in Ghana. Don't wait to get to Ghana to discover your card doesn't work and then you have to have money wired from home. Do make sure you do carry enough cash or travelers' cheques when you arrive. The main currencies that can easily be changed in Ghana are US dollars, Canadian dollars, British pounds, and Euros. You can't exchange Australian money, so convert Australian money to dollars before you leave. **The best exchange rate is for cash in large denominations- 50 or 100 notes.** Travelers' cheques can be exchanged only at major banks in Accra and big cities.

Please be careful of your money. Although pickpockets are uncommon in Ghana, when traveling in the surrounding Francophone countries, they are common. Also you should always lock your room when you leave in the morning and place your money in a safe

place. It is also wise to put your personal things away before retiring.

Any usual tro-tro within the area costs about a cedi. Eating off the street, you can have a 'meal' for under 50 peswas. An expensive restaurant in Ghana would charge about 5 cedis for a main dish. A cheap hotel could cost 5 cedis a person and a nice but simple hotel is about 7 cedis per person. Souvenirs cost around 2 to 10 cedis per item.

## **Medications**

If you are on prescription medication, bring what you need. Ask your pharmacist for the patient information print out for all the prescriptions and any over-the-counter medications you might take routinely. This information might be helpful if you need medical attention. Also check with the pharmacist or your health care professional about any drug-drug, drug-food, drug-herb contraindications and about any sun-sensitivity issues.

- Prepare a list of any known allergies to medicines, insect bites, foods, etc.
- Consider if you need a medical alert bracelet or other identifying tool.
- If you wear glasses or contacts, consider a second pair. Bring your eyeglass prescription with you. Don't forget to bring enough contact solution with you as well.
- Check with your health care provider with regard to self-treatment of diarrhea. He or she might prescribe a course of treatment that will be compatible with your other medicines.
- A good book of medications and health in Africa is the Lonely Planets: "Healthy Travel Africa".

## **Malaria Preventatives**

Consult your doctor about malaria preventatives. Almost all of the anti-malarials can be bought, without prescription, in Ghana in most pharmacies in Kumasi and Accra. These are often much cheaper than what you will pay in your home country, as they are subsidized by the government here. Do come with at least one month's supply if you plan to purchase them in Ghana. You will need to start taking the medication before you leave your home country. Read all the instructions on the bottle carefully when you get them. Some common malaria preventatives are: Doxycycline, Lariam or Malarone. You can purchase some malaria preventatives in the town of Nkawkaw. But come with enough of supply so that you do not run out if you need to take a trip to Kumasi or Accra if Nkawkaw does not sell what you need.

## **Immunizations**

You'll need to get an International Vaccination Card. Call your local government health department about where to get a YELLOW FEVER immunization. Your doctor or health care provider may suggest you get other vaccines as well. These might include cholera, hepatitis, typhoid, polio and/or others. Please follow the advice of your personal health care provider as he/she knows your medical status best. If you plan to travel to other countries in Africa, cholera or other vaccines may be required. You will have to check with their embassies. Remember that the yellow fever vaccine is necessary for Ghana.

## **Hospitals**

There are several hospitals and dozens of clinics in Accra and Kumasi. Remember it is

nothing like a hospital in North America or Western Europe. The wait to see a doctor is normally pretty long (could be hours) and the doctors' and nurses' English is not perfectly fluent, but you are treated well and they do their best for you. There is a clinic that is sponsored by the local Catholic Church in Tafo, within walking distance from the project site.

Once you get to the hospital or clinic you need to locate the receptionist and have a hospital card filled out. You just need to give them your name and age. It costs 50 peswas. Then you sit down and wait on the benches for your turn.

If you are prescribed anything, you can get some of it at the hospital, and if not, you can pick it up at a nearby chemist or take a visit to Kumasi or Accra.

### **Travel Insurance**

Private insurance for medical evacuation and flight changes is available and recommended. Do a Google search or ask your travel agent to determine what is available from your country of origin.

## **What to Bring**

### **Clothes**

You will need light summer clothes, but Ghanaian culture is much different from that of home so we ask you to respect the way of life here and wear modest clothes. No miniskirts or low back-line or necklines, or overly exposed torsos. Women, please choose clothes that will cover your belly. Low slung pants or cropped t-shirts are not the best choice. Exposed shoulders are fine, just not bellies!

Because you will be taking on a professional role here, you need to respect this dress code. Tight clothing, especially pants draw negative attention.

The best clothes to bring are light, breathable, easy to wash, and quick to dry. Heavy, denim jeans are a headache to wash! Think "light" and "washable"!

You do not need to bring many items to wear, as you will do your laundry as necessary. Most Ghanaians do not have many outfits, so they will think it is just fine if they see you in the same things all the time. Also, you can pick up second hand outfits at the market for under a dollar if you want something else. Or you can get a custom-fit traditional outfit made! This makes a nice souvenir for your trip.

A rain jacket will come in handy if you plan on coming during the rainy season!

Once it gets dark, the mosquitoes come out. At that time it is a good idea to cover up with a light long-sleeved shirt and/or trousers. Bring running shoes if you think you will like to play sports in them or that you would use them to walk in the bush.

Nearly everyone wears sandals or flip-flops. It's a good idea to have at least one pair with no heel strap. This is because Ghanaians take their sandals off when entering a home. You can buy flip-flops at any shop in Tafo for a cheap price. A decent pair will cost about

70 peswas and last for a long time.

### **Toiletries**

In Tafo, you can get most basic things from the markets in the town center. Basic toiletries like soap, toothpaste, etc., can be bought from the shops. If you need anything specific, on a trip to Kumasi or Accra, you will be able to find what you need.

For women, sanitary napkins are widely available, but tampons are not. Tampons can be found in Osu, the westernized part of Accra, but can be more expensive from what you would pay at home. If you prefer them, it is recommended to bring them from home.

### **Room Supplies**

Consider bringing a light sleeping bag if you are planning on coming during the rainy seasons (Sept-October and May-July) as it might get slightly chilly. Any other time, a light sheet will be fine.

You will need to bring a mosquito net and a hook and string to hang it with. Make sure you are aware of its shape and size BEFORE coming. Open it up! They come in lots of shapes, from ones that hang from one string, to ones that have a tie in each corner. Both of them work fine.

## **When You Arrive**

### **Airport Collection and Getting To Tafo**

You will land at Kotoka International Airport. You will need to inform us of your exact flight details (flight number, arrival time, name of airline, departure city you will be departing from to Accra). Send a photo of yourself if you wish to be picked up at the airport. This should be sent to the volunteer coordinator and Eric or Christian who will arrange to pick you up.

A US \$30 airport collection fee is asked from each volunteer. This will cover your pickup from the airport. Either Eric or Christian will guide you around Accra for the first time.

We ask that all volunteers plan to arrive in Accra on a weekend day. By coming on the weekend will give you a little more time to orientate before starting as a volunteer.

To Nkawkaw, from Accra, takes about 3 hours by bus. You will then get a taxi from the Nkawkaw lorry station to Tafo, which takes about 30-40 minutes.

### **Program Fees**

We value the time you have committed to volunteering with us. We have set a program fee schedule that covers our costs of running the volunteer program, with a bit of it going to support the projects of UVO. The money that you give us goes to covering three meals a day, plus a donation to cover school fees, food and health costs for the children. While we welcome any amount of time that you stay here, we encourage you to stay at least one month. This gives you the opportunity to really get an understanding of our community, what UVO is trying to achieve and gives you enough time to really know the children. We've had volunteers stay for as much as one year!

<b>Length of Stay</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Under One Month	€150
One Month	€350
Every Additional Month	€250

### **Leaving Early**

If for some reason, you decide to leave the project earlier than you originally planned, Eric or Christian will refund 50% of the remaining amount for the time that you will not be on site. The 50% that is not refunded will be used by UVO to help with the project and to cover your loss of time at the project since another volunteer could have been scheduled in for the time if it had been planned ahead of time.

### **While You are Here**

#### **Ghanaian Culture**

Ghanaians are traditionally very friendly people and they pride themselves on the peaceful state, which the country has maintained since independence, despite over a dozen of coups. This is especially true compared to the bordering countries, Ivory Coast and Togo, which are currently experiencing much political upheaval and military oppression.

Ghana is about 66% Christian, with Muslims making up 24% of the population. Traditional religions round out the count. Christianity is more in the South and Islamic is more common in the North. Ghana is a great example for the rest of the world, with Christians and Muslim communities living together in harmony.

English is the official language of Ghana, but there are 56 languages and dialects throughout the country. Most people in Accra and the surrounding area understand English. Accra is part of the Ga tribal region and Ga is the common language. Accra is also a convergence of all the tribes in Ghana and all the languages can be heard: Twi, Ewe, Fante, Hazara etc. Kumasi is part of the Ashanti Region and Twi is the most commonly spoken language.

#### **Culture Check**

You will be exposed to many new ways of thinking and acting. Some things you see or hear "will not compute" with what you are expecting. When this occurs, consider the encounter a learning experience.

Living in a totally different culture can make you feel off-guard and perplexed at times.

To avoid a big culture shock try to be prepare for...

- being stared and spoken to because you are foreign
- being called "Obruni" (white person)
- being directly asked for money, food, your clothes...
- receiving countless marriage proposals
- people asking you to take them to your home country

## Gestures and Greetings

Using the left hand in greeting is considered in bad taste. Ghanaians traditionally eat with their hands, using a bowl to hold the yams and soups. The right hand is used in eating, never the left.

When entering someone's space, it is proper to call "ago-o" to seek admissions. The person will respond "ame-e" if they are receiving guests. Taking sandals off upon entering the house is usually considered the proper response.

The people in Tafo are open and friendly. It is polite to greet every person you pass. You will find that everyone you meet is eager to talk to you and wants to invite you into their home for a meal and to ask you millions of questions. "Obruni! What is your name?", and "Obruni! Where are you going?" are just a few of the questions you will encounter. These customs take some time to get used to, but give it time and you will go back home bringing these customs home with you! Imagine your friends' faces when you call them "Obruni!"

## Holidays

Times of major holidays and school vacations:

- December until the beginning of January (Christmas, Boxing Day and New Years)
- Weekend near and day of March 6 (Independence Day)
- Weekend of Good Friday and Easter Monday (one week holiday)
- May 1 (May Day)
- May 25 (Africa Unity Day)
- June 4 (June 4 Anniversary)
- July 1 (Republic Day)
- August, about a month long break from school
- December 5 (Farmers Day)

## Names/Days of the Week

One thing to know before coming to Ghana is the day of the week you were born on. Part of every Ghanaian's name is one of the seven. With this chart, you can find yours!

Day	Female	Male
Sunday	Akosua	Kwasi
Monday	Adwoa	Kwadwo
Tuesday	Abena	Kwabena
Wednesday	Akua	Kwaku
Thursday	Yaa	Yaw
Friday	Afua	Kofi
Saturday	Ama	Kwame

## Daily Routine

Ghana is located close to the equator and the sun shines 12 hours each day, from 6:30 a.m to 6:30 p.m, 365 days a year.

You will find the family compound and the neighborhood up before dawn. Children have chores to do before going to school. Women have food to prepare and a compound to clean and men have to get to work in time to get a full day in before the sun sets. Traditionally in the Ghanaian culture all of the extended family: cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents may all live together in the same household.

All volunteers for both projects will be placed at the UVO volunteer run school during the day time when project activities are not occurring. For volunteers, the day can begin with a bath before breakfast between 6 and 6:30. Children start arriving at school at 7 a.m. A typical day at school begins with the children reciting poems and songs at a morning assembly before heading into the classroom. The subjects the students study include Math, English, Science and Social Studies. In addition they also learn about their local language (Twi), Creative Arts and Citizenship. The students are divided into different classrooms. Primary School is divided from Kindergarten to class 6. Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School are divided into forms 1 to 3.

After school you will head to your respective project and stay there until 6, when football ends and the Cultural Center closes. Dinner is served for the volunteers and the 40 boys at the hostel at that time. After dinner there are evening classes for all the UVO kids, from Primary to Senior High school. You can tutor them in any subjects and introduce new teaching methods! We have recently started a small computer lab where we hope to improve all the children's computer skills.

On the weekends the volunteers have the chance to explore and get to know more of Ghana. You can visit the surrounding area with fellow volunteers or guides (for a small fee). Some of the popular spots include Volta Lake, Buruku Rock Shrine, the village of Kotoso and Butuase Waterfall. **A popular Saturday night activity is to hit the local bar, Galaxy.**

### **Length of Service**

We recommend a minimum stay of two weeks. You will find your experience more fruitful if you plan on four weeks or more. As visas are validated for two months upon arrival, you may wish to consider at least a two-month stay. In the past, volunteers have come with staying only a few weeks in mind and upon arrival, extending their stay much longer. Extensions, once you are in the country are possible.

### **Meals**

The food served at UVO is typical Ghanaian food. If you are a vegetarian or vegan, please let Eric or Christian know. You can also purchase food outside already cooked and eat it there. Almost all the meals for the volunteers are prepared and served by Christian's wife, Patience. You can help with the meal preparation if you like. Breakfast in Ghana is simple, consisting of tea or coffee with bread, and porridge. Lunch is usually yam and a soup to go

along with it and dinner can vary from rice, to pasta, to traditional Ghanaian cuisine. The Ghanaian "cuisine" mostly consists of local dishes, which almost always include a starch-based staple with a stew or soup to accompany it. Some local dishes include fufu, a dumpling-like starch, red-red, which is beans (black-eyed peas) mixed in palm oil and fried plantains and my personal favorite, banku, which is fermented corn dough served with soup. There also is an abundance of fresh fruit when in season: bananas, pineapples, oranges, mangos, papayas, etc. The money for food and accommodation goes towards supporting this simple diet. However, this does not include expensive, imported items, such as ice cream or mineral drinks. You will probably want to buy such items as a treat from time to time, so it would be good to budget a little bit of your money.

## **Chores**

Becoming part of community life is doing chores, just like at home! As volunteers feel motivated they should become involved and help with the chores around the volunteers' compound. Be willing to perform the necessary household chores to help keep your room, the volunteers' compound, where food is served, and the project site, stay clean and comfortable. Possible chores include doing dishes, sweeping, cleaning up after project activities and various other ones.

## **Volunteer Space**

All the volunteers for both projects live together in a beautiful compound with several separate rooms. There is electricity but not running water (think bucket showers).

If you are a couple coming to the project together and it is important for you to share a room, please let Eric or Christian know in advance.

The Ghanaian mattress is a thick foam pad. We will provide a single bed sheet for your use. Bring an extra one for times when washing.

## **Bathroom Facilities/Electricity**

There is one shared bathroom/shower room, but no running water.

There is electricity at the compound, although many neighbors do not have electricity. Shortage in electricity do occur from time to time so make sure to bring a strong flashlight, or torch. Electronic things can be re-charged. Those coming from the USA and countries that use 120V should bring power converters for all of their electronics. Ghana uses 220V electricity, and 120V devices will fry if used without a power converter.

## **Clothes Washing/Drying**

You are on your own for laundry service. Eric, Christian or one of the senior kids will be happy to show you where to wash your clothes and how to wash your clothes. There is a clothesline to hang your clothes to dry. If you wash them in the morning, and hang them out to dry, they will be ready by late afternoon.

## **Snacks/Water Sachets**

The simple African cuisine may become repetitious. You may want to supplement your diet with snacks and non-African food. In Tafo there are small stands where snacks can be bought, but no imported items are available. You can buy things such as cold drinks,

biscuits, juice and bread. Chocolate is available, as well as ice cream. "FanIce" is sold in plastic bags that you puncture and suck.

Purified water is found in every shop in Tafo. The water comes in 500 ml. "sachets", a sealed sack that you pierce before drinking. You can also buy large bags of water sachets at the shops for a reasonable price.

### **Staff Meetings**

If issues that need to be discussed come up, please ask Eric or Christian to call a meeting or to discuss them with you. This will allow the volunteers and the staff to work together to improve their experiences and solve any concerns that might evolve. Other meetings with the local volunteers happen from time to time as well. You can ask to be apart of those meetings as well. If you feel like you need to contact the volunteer coordinator(s), please send an email to: Ulises: [chulohuerta@hotmail.com](mailto:chulohuerta@hotmail.com) or Nigel: [nigel.kt.kee@gmail.com](mailto:nigel.kt.kee@gmail.com)

### **Traveling through Ghana**

Lengthy tours of Ghana, or neighboring countries, should be planned for during holidays or at the completion of your volunteer placement at Tafo. If you decide to travel light, you may leave your larger pieces of luggage at Christian's house, while away. Make sure to secure any valuables that will be left behind with Eric or Christian. To learn more about places of interest to visit in Ghana, we recommend the "Bradt Guide to Ghana". The guide will also give help on maneuvering and finding your way around Accra as well. Some favorite places are Mole National Park, to see some elephants, Cape Coast for the slave castles and canopy walk, and the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary.

### **Personal Visitors**

Perhaps you would like family or friends to experience a taste of Tafo. If space is available, you may house a visitor for up to two weeks. There is a daily fee of US \$5 a day. All visits must be discussed with Eric or Christian beforehand. This is to insure adequate space and appropriate welcome.

### **Phoning**

Phone cards are available in most parts of Accra and Kumasi. In Tafo there are communication centers and you can make international direct calls from these centers. Rates vary by the country you are calling.

The easiest way to make an international call, I found, is to bring your phone from home along with you and buy a phone-chip to put in your phone. You can buy recharge credit cards at any shop in Tafo, and any of the volunteers or older children will be more than happy to show you where to buy them and how they work.

### **Internet**

Internet cafes are fairly cheap- about US \$1/hour in the main cities of Accra and Kumasi. The closest Internet available from Tafo, is the nearby town of Nkawkaw. From the lorry station in Tafo, take a shared taxi to Nkawkaw. When you arrive, go to the Harborbase

Internet Cafe. It costs 60 peswas for one hour of browsing. On your first journey there, one of the other volunteers will be happy to accompany you and show you there area.

### **Snail Mail**

For your email-challenged friends, or if you want a package sent from home, you may use the UVO post box

That address is:

Ultimate Voluntary Organisation (NGO)

P.O. Box 10

Kwahu-Tafo

Eastern Region

Ghana

West Africa

OR

Ultimate Voluntary Organisation (NGO)

0209040537 or 0245255855 or 0247225777

FedEx, Mpraeso (Opposite Chief's Palace)

P.O. Box 9518, Airport, Accra, Ghana

This is the FedEx address. If you send a package through FedEx, make sure you put the return address on it. Do not put your name on the package. If you do, expect to pay a few cedis for duty fees. The phone number on the address, is Christian's number. When FedEx receives the package in Mpraeso, they will contact Christian.

**\*Be warned, if you are getting sent/sending a package here, it might take months. Past volunteers have had their packages sent one month and received them 4 months later!**

### **Curfew**

Please be advised that all volunteers are expected to be back at the volunteer compound by 11:00PM. If you plan on being later than that, please arrange for other accommodations for that particular night. Be sure to tell Eric or Christian along with any other volunteers. This is a safety factor.

### **Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs and all that jazz**

Not allowed: plain and simple. Anyone using any type of tobacco, alcohol or drug at the project site, or compound will be asked to leave immediately. If you use tobacco in any form, or smoke anything else that burns or wish to have an alcoholic drink, you will need to do so away from the UVO sites. Please plan your adventures so that when you return, you are not under the influence.

## **Sex**

You will be working and living in close proximity to children. You are expected to maintain a professional stance with them. Hugging the kids in a friendly manner is acceptable. Touch that could be misunderstood is not. Anyone suspected of inappropriate touch or comments will be asked to leave immediately. With adults, we ask that you maintain a celibate lifestyle if unmarried or if married, that you stay within the bonds of marital fidelity. We cannot overemphasize the potential health dangers of sexual contact with previously unacquainted volunteers or with host-country nationals. Developing an inappropriate intimate relationship with fellow volunteers or host-country nationals has a negative impact on others who are volunteering and can distract from the goal: serving the children of UVO.

## **Organization & Management**

This project, like many in rural Africa, is not as organized or well managed as its high-budget counterparts. We are aware of this and would like you to be also. We are currently making choices and putting things in place to increase the organisation and capacity of our project. We are inspired by what is in place and how the school be be enhanced in the future. It is the volunteers who bring us new ideas and motivation to make this possible! Thank you!

## **Donations**

If you want to bring specific supplies for the projects, don't hesitate. It's always fun to have a few things from home to share!

### **Some Items that the School could use are:**

- Reading Books
- Games
- Textbooks
- Educational Supplies (pencils, pens, color pencils, crayons, workbooks, paper, erasers, **chalk** etc)
- Videos

### **For Cultural:**

- Costumes
- Recorded music(CDs, Tapes etc.)
- Portable tape/CD players
- Instruments (Brass, drum kits, woodwinds etc.)
- Games
- Used clothes, shoes and sandals (boys and girls 7-25)

### **For Football:**

- Footballs
- Jerseys (for practice and matches)

- Shin guards
- Cleats/Football boots
- Cones/small nets and other training equipment
- Used clothes, shoes and sandals (mostly boys, ages 7-25)

If you decide to bring money as an extra donation, remember to bring large bills for the best exchange rate. Ghana will allow you to bring \$5,000 into the country without making an declaration. For your volunteer contribution all payments are to be made in \$US bills because checks and money orders add complications and can take months to process in Ghana. In Ghana, US \$100 bills get a higher exchange rate than smaller ones. You can also pay in Cedis. Ask your volunteer coordinator before your departure to see if the currency of your home country can be used.

You can also transfer your money by Western Union. Check out their website. But for the lowest fee, go to an agent with cash in hand. You will save nearly 33% depending on the amount of the transfer. And remember that there is a test question/answer required for Ghana. You will need to let Eric or Christian know the control number, test question/answer, sender's name as stated on the form, receiver's name as stated on the form, and the amount of the transfer. There are Western Union offices in Kumasi, Accra and Mpraeso.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Before your journey, please email your volunteer coordinator with any questions. Once you are at Tafo, Eric and Christian are great people to talk to. We welcome all ideas, suggestions, and contributions from you to help improve the project.

Also, feel free to email past volunteers. They went through the same thing at the beginning and would be more than happy to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

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