Preparing To Volunteer in Tamale, Ghana

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Vaccinations/Pre-cautions

West African region

An anti-malarial net in the background. Average cost is about $15-20 US. Most Hiking/Outdoor (REI.com) stores have them for sale.

This is your enemy. Use insect repellents that contain DEET (N, N-diethylmethyltoluamide).
Pre-Departure Packing

- Bring whatever items you need from home including medications, clothing and toiletries.

- Please refer to Unite For Sight’s inventory travel list for recommended items.
  
  - The idea is to not bring too much, but not too little. Think of it this way, if you bring tons and tons of clothes for every occasion, then you’ll be doing plenty of laundry. It’s advised to bring 1.5-2 weeks of clothing. Once one wears a weeks worth of clothes, they can spend the weekend washing to prepare for next week.
Pre-Departure Packing (cont.)

**RECOMMENDED ITEMS:**
- Water: sachet, bottled. Sodas are OK.
- Food (non-perishables are best):
  - Gatorade powder/drink mix
  - Granola bars
- Microtowel
  - Quick drying, can be bought at REI and other outdoor stores)
- mosquito net
- water purifier
- sunblock (30 to 45 spf)
- fisherman hat
- Permethrin (at least 20% DEET treated)
- bug repellent
- baby wipes
- hand sanitizer
- Mini first aid kit
- Antibacterial (purell)

**ELECTRONICS:**
- Flashlight
- Digital camera
- Universal adaptor

**ENTERTAINMENT:**
- Books
- Journal
- Mp3 player
- Magazines
- Textbooks (MCAT, class)
- Cards/Dominos/Board games
Dress Code (is there one?)

- There is no dress code as a volunteer. However, some things to consider:
  - City people wear jeans, t-shirts, and shorts to accommodate to the hot weather.
  - Village people wear the same, but you’ll often see those dressed as Muslims in their garb.

- MEN:
  - Tops: t-shirts, button up short sleeved, and polo shirts are the best way to dress.
  - Bottoms: Shorts, loose and light pants (not Jeans, unless you want to), khakis, running pants are good ideas, too.
  - Footwear: Thick soled sandals, running shoes, trainers, and hiking boots are good footwear. There are some roads that are very bumpy. Some paved roads are rocky, so you can imagine what flip flops will feel like if you were to walk for miles in them.

- WOMEN:
  - Tops/Bottoms: light shorts/pants and dresses (below the knee preferred), t-shirts, button up shirts, etc. are good in terms of weather conditions. Again, the key is to dress light, as you will be sweating profusely outside. Make sure to wear hats, put on plenty of sun block, and wear sunglasses, if possible.
Arrival in Ghana

- You will be arriving at the Kotoko International Airport which is located about 20 minutes away from the Telecentre.
- Make sure that you have confirmed your arrival date and time with your UFS Coordinator before your trip.
- You will be picked up after going through customs and immigration. Some Ghanaians at the airport will try and help you with your bags. Do NOT allow them to help. Politely decline. They expect a tip from you.
- Banks:
  - Standard Chartered and Barclays.
  - They are usually the only banks that can exchange traveler’s checks (most Ghanaian banks will not accept traveler’s checks).
- Telecentre:
  - You will be brought to the Telecentre Guest house in Accra, where you will be able to rest and attend the UFS Ghana orientation. You will also receive a cell phone. Food is usually served at the orientation and you are checked into the guest house for rest before traveling to Tamale.
One of my first pictures taken when arriving at the Kotoko Airport in Accra, Ghana. A Ghanaian mentioned to me that the Kotoko Airport used to be a military base airport, named after a well known General before Ghana gained its independence.
Arrival in Tamale

- You will go to Tamale with Dr. Wanye, Unite For Sight’s Northern regional Ophthalmologist.
- 9-10 hour trip (starting early morning)
- Vehicle: truck/minivan
- Road conditions: paved, dirt
- Stops will be made periodically for food and rest.
- Be ready for a long and bumpy ride!
Living Arrangements

- Dr. Wanye will arrange your accommodations at the volunteer house near downtown Tamale.

- **Guest house:**
  - Equipped with a kitchen, dining room, living room, garage, four bedrooms, two toilets, and two showers.

- **Local stores and shops:** internet café, pharmacy, gas station, and general goods.

- Be careful about buying food from vendors. It is not known where or how the food is prepared, so it could possibly make you sick.

- **Internet Café:**
  - Rate: 6000-8000 cedi/hour, which is about $0.60-0.80/hour.

- **Laundry:**
  - Hand wash (DITY!)
  - Washing supplies (wash basin, detergent, clothes pins) are widely available at the market in town.

- **Food:**
  - A caterer will be arranged to cook breakfast, lunch, and dinner at a rate of about $3-4/meal.
The Food
The Children

“Once one comes, they all come!”
The Children (cont.)

Children from local villages and primary secondary schools.
Aerial View of TTH. Hospital where University of Developmental Studies Medical Students study. Includes Emergency, Maternity, Pediatrics, Surgery, Lab, Radiology, ENT, etc.
A Day in Surgery
A Day in Surgery

Dr. Wanye at the Operating Theatre at Tamale Teaching Hospital

Dr. Clarke at Crystal Eye Clinic in Accra
Post-Op Cataract Patients
The Tamale Teaching Hospital eye clinic is supported by Swiss Red Cross.

Swiss Red Cross Staff:
- Two main Red Cross coordinators arrange outreach screenings in neighboring villages.
- Coordinate the days of screening and plan when outreach for each village. The Swiss Red Cross will send Red Cross volunteers, who will accompany you to those villages.

Ghana Health Service Staff:
- Ophthalmic nurses, an optometrist, nurse trainees, and a small clinical staff in administration, finances, and maintenance.
- Tamale Teaching hospital drivers who will escort the UFS outreach team to villages and hospitals in the Northern region.

Weekdays: outreach team will travel in two trucks to villages and schools 1-15 miles from Tamale.

Hours: Screening is from 9am to 2pm.
Volunteering

- 2 Teams (Group A and B):
  - Group A: visits school and screens children (primary, secondary)
  - Group B: visits nearby village and screens infants, children, adults, and elders
  - mobile unit, transporting all equipment (glasses, charts, etc) to each location.

- Team Members:
  - Consists of 1-2 ophthalmic nurses, 1-2 ophthalmic nurse trainees (occasionally), the UFS volunteers, a Ghana Red Cross volunteer (occasionally), and the Tamale Teaching hospital driver.

- Team duties:
  - At each eye care site, comprehensive eye exams (case history, visual acuity, ocular health and refraction if necessary) are provided to each patient. Reading and/or distance glasses are also distributed to patients as needed. Referrals are made for patients needing more extensive care (cataracts, etc.).

- Supplies:
  - Ophthalmoscope/pen light, refraction kit, sunglasses, eyeglasses, E-charts, Snellen charts, blank sheets of papers, 20 ft long rope, and pens.
Visual Acuity Station

- **Materials needed:**
  - pen light, e-chart, snellen chart, chairs, occluder, 3x5 note cards

- **E-Chart/Snellen chart:**
  - Look for a chair, wall, tree, or any other object that can hang or hold the Charts. Another way to efficiently see all your patients is to set up multiple charts with a volunteer conducting visual acuity tests at each chart. Translation:

- **2 Stations:**
  - Eye screening (You)
  - Eye Exams (Ophthalmic nurses)

- Translator may become necessary as some villagers speak their own dialects other than Twi or Dagbani. For each patient, obtain this information on a 3 x 5 sheet of paper:

- Direct each patient to the ophthalmic nurse or optometrist, who will do the eye exam (and refraction).
Eye Examination Station

- The ophthalmic nurse or optometrist is trained to do a thorough eye exam. They should find a dark location. Usually a classroom or village hut will do. The eyes should be checked for any significant abnormalities seen on the surface.

- Areas of importance: checking the lids, the eye orbital region, inside the lids, especially the eyelashes for endotropion (inner curling of the lashes inward indicating possible Trachomatous Trachiasis) and the surface of the eye (conjunctiva, iris, and pupil).

- Refraction: the optometrist dispenses the eyeglasses. Bring eyeglasses in 0.5 increments (for example, +1.0, +1.5, +2.0, etc.) in prescription size.

- The optometrist or head ophthalmic nurse in the team should be able to teach everyone to set this up and take an accurate visual acuity. Ocular health and refraction generally take place at this stage; each optometrist will probably have a certain way of setting things up to his/her liking.

- Triage:
  - Schools: teachers and staff should be seen first.
  - Villages: priority of older age and urgency of problem (someone with an object in their eye or someone in extreme discomfort).
Outreach Eye Screening/Exams
Outreach Eye Screening/Exams
Activities

- **Tamale:**
  - VRA has a public swimming pool located near Norrip village area
  - Internet Cafes are found throughout the downtown area
  - A used bookstore is located on a side road between the downtown area and Norrip village

- **Accra:**
  - University of Ghana
  - Downtown
  - Market place (great for souvenirs)
# Useful Phrases in Tamale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dagbani</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Des pah</td>
<td>Good morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An te ray</td>
<td>Good afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah noo lah</td>
<td>Good evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nah Tu ma Pom!</td>
<td>Thank you very much!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ka ooh lah</td>
<td>How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nah…</td>
<td>I’m fine.</td>
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