



COMMUNICATION

ACTION SITARU

PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK

2016

hello@littlebigafrica.org

 [Little Big Africa](#)

www.littlebigafrica.org

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UK registered Charity no. 1138994

POST

Post, both to and from overseas normally takes about 10 days – 3 weeks, although it can be anything between 5 days and 5 months. An airmail letter to the UK/US costs around 72p/\$1.

You can receive post while on project through the LBA postal address. The address for post is:

Your Name
Your University
Little Big Africa
PO Box 660
Mbale
Uganda, East Africa

The Post Office charges around 60p/\$.90 for handling incoming parcels. Some parcels are opened by the post office and it seems anything that appeals to them is removed. This is not always the norm, but just be aware before asking someone to send out some prized possession which you have forgotten.

It is worth asking your most reliable friend(s) and family members to send you a small letter, even if it's just a postcard saying the cat says hi, as it's very exciting to receive post on project and it can really lift your spirits when everyone else around you is reading their letters. Get friends to send out letters early on as it takes a while to get there. Every year, volunteers give this as a piece of advice to next year's volunteers: Get people to write to you. LBA collects post and brings it to placement when they come to visit.

TELEPHONE

Ugandan Sim cards are very cheap and easy to buy and sms overseas are 500/= (approx. £0.14//\$.19) so if you are planning on keeping in contact with loved ones it is worthwhile buying a Ugandan sim card. You will need to ensure your phone is unlocked (£10 from many phone shops in the UK). If you have an old handset, you may want to lower the temptation for anyone to pinch your handset by bringing that one instead. It is certainly recommended that at least two people per group have a mobile phone to ease communication and in case of emergencies. You may find yourself climbing anthills or standing halfway up a tree to get network on your phone in the village as coverage in some areas is not 100%. You can also buy a handset in Uganda for about £15-20. Micro and Nano sim cards are not easily accessible and therefore we would not recommend bringing a phone that needs either of these.

For people calling you in Uganda, there are many calling cards you can buy online or you can call through the internet to your mobile (no landlines will be available to you). Rates really vary so it is worth shopping around. Calling the UK costs approximately £0.25 per minute so if you plan to call home regularly, you need to budget for this.

Please note, there are some overseas networks which the main and most available network in Uganda is not compatible with. These people will be able to send you sms but you will not be able to reply.

Volunteers planning on keeping in touch with loved ones also need to remember that you may not be able to access network at precise times, and therefore arranging to receive calls at certain times of the

day may prove to be disappointing or frustrating when calls don't go through. It can also worry those on the dialling end. The second point to remember is that you are VERY unlikely to have electricity on placement, which means you will not be able to charge your phones very often. International calls use up a lot of battery, so you are better off using sms as a means of communication. You can turn your phone on a couple of times a day to receive sms, which go through on less network than calls need.

EMAIL

There are several internet cafes in Mbale, which charge approximately 100/= (about 4p/5c) per minute, depending on if they are using a generator. You WILL find it **frustratingly slow** coming from the UK/US. Frequent and unexpected power cuts can also cut short your internet session. It is important for people who are likely to worry about you to know that you will not be on the internet often. During training you will have limited opportunities to access to internet, though not every day, and during mid-placement and once project has finished you will have opportunities to access it. You will most likely not be able to predict exact days and times you will there. Be careful not to arrange to meet, for example, on a certain day, because if you find yourself attending the headmaster's wedding, in a broken down taxi or there's a power cut, you could have people on the other end panicking. From experience, this is something that is easier to explain whilst you are still at home as opposed to people thinking it is some lame excuse you have invented as you have better things to do. Many internet cafes do not have the capacity to handle the new Beta (Yahoo/Hotmail) accounts, so it is worth switching back to the old Yahoo/Hotmail before you arrive. Hotmail and AOL can also be VERY temperamental in Uganda (and it seems particularly in Mbale) so it may be worth setting up a Yahoo/Gmail account before you come or using your university email account over the summer. Facebook can also be very slow to load, and uploading photos can be even slower or (virtually) impossible. There are a couple of Western-style cafes that have wifi so you may want to bring a device that you can access wifi on (although this will only be for a very limited number of days when in Mbale).

It is also essential to inform people that you may not be able to access email during your first few days of training. LBA will ensure that you have the opportunity to access internet at some stage during training though. LBA will have emergency contact numbers for all volunteers so the saying 'no news is good news' really does stand. We always post on both Twitter and the Facebook page to say volunteers have arrived safely. It should however be possible to access sim cards within the first 48 hours.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

LBA's emergency numbers for whilst you are in Uganda are +256 722 977 226 and +256 774 111 000. These emergency numbers are for your parents for when you are in Uganda and are **only to be used in cases of EMERGENCY**. This must be made very clear to those you leave it with. These numbers will not be turned off when you are in Uganda, but due to poor network in places, there may be occasions when the numbers are temporarily unavailable. For non-urgent enquiries (including prior to the project), parents can contact us by email (debs@littlebigafrica.org) or through the LBA Facebook page.

As volunteers, you will be given the numbers of all staff, and told which member is your first point on contact, as well as the roles of individual staff. You will of course have emergency numbers as well, and LBA will assist you in all emergencies in whichever way, from their experience, they feel is best.