



**WELCOME TO THE**

**LITTLE BIG AFRICA**

**ACTION SITARU**

**PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK**

**2016**

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This handbook aims to help prepare you for volunteering in Uganda with Little Big Africa (LBA). It is prepared by LBA with input from previous years' volunteers. It consists of 6 parts:

- 1) The Introduction (this part)
- 2) The Project
- 3) Before You Go
- 4) Communication
- 5) Kit List
- 6) Money

## INTRODUCTION

Little Big Africa first began hosting international volunteers in 2005. We have since hosted over 300 volunteers from all of the world.

There is a lot of information in the pack, but year after year, in feedback to LBA, volunteers always remark that LBA should **"Make the volunteers read the Pre Departure Handbook as it has so much useful advice."** We can't make you, but you stand advised!! This much information may be slightly daunting, but it will all be useful before you head off to Uganda. Things will change, but this should be enough to get you started, and rest assured you'll get all the training and advice you need from LBA when you are in Uganda.

## LITTLE BIG AFRICA ONLINE

Make sure you like the "Little Big Africa" Facebook group and follow us on Twitter @littlebigafrica, where you can get the latest updates from LBA and more insight into the project. Your project coordinator should also invite you to join the specific Facebook group for all volunteers coming to Uganda with LBA on the Action Sitaru Project so you can share ideas and questions before you leave.

You may well have already had a look at the LBA website ([www.littlebigafrica.org](http://www.littlebigafrica.org)). There are a lot of pre-departure resources on there to help you with preparing for your time in Uganda. You can also read the blog from previous Action Sitaru volunteers.

Enjoy the preparations and we look forward to hosting you in Uganda.

Debs and Bikie Isharaza

**What you have signed up to do is no small task: it will be a challenge, but it will be a fun challenge, and an experience you will never forget. The best you can do for yourselves now is open your eyes wide, forget all your expectations, relax and enjoy every second of it.**

## UGANDA

Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa. It is very beautiful and a lot greener than the typical impression you get of Africa. Uganda shares its borders with Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, DR Congo and Rwanda. It is home to the largest fresh water lake in the world, Lake Victoria, and also hosts the Source of the famous River Nile.

**Population:** 36.35 million

**Area:** 241,038 sq km (93,072 sq miles)

**Capital:** Kampala

**Major towns:** Jinja, Mbarara, Gulu, Mbale

**Head of State:** President Yoweri Museveni

**Languages:** Many different languages are spoken throughout the country. English is the official language, and can normally be used as the language of communication, although it is rarely spoken as a first language, coming second (if not third or fourth) to local tribal languages.

**Major religions:** Roman Catholic (41.9%), Protestant (42%), Muslim (12.1%), Other (4%)

**Life expectancy:** 52.4 years (men), 54.54 years (women)

**Main exports:** Coffee, fish and fish products, tea, tobacco, cotton, corn, beans, sesame

**GDP:** US\$19.88 billion

**Major Industries:** Coffee, sugar, brewing, cotton, tea, textiles, tobacco

**Time Zone:** GMT +3 (i.e. during summer months Uganda will be 2 hours ahead of the UK and 7 hours ahead of Florida)

**Electricity:** The same plugs (voltage & frequency) & socket shape as the UK are used. They are: Voltage 240V, Frequency 50 Hz, Plug type G (the British 3 pin rectangular blade).

## PROJECT AREA

The projects are based in **Manafwa District**, in the foothills of Mount Elgon, an extinct volcano in Eastern Uganda. Training takes place in **Mbale**, a lively local town, with plenty of character and things to do.

Manafwa has a sub-tropical climate and lies between 1,299m and 4,321m above sea level. Rainfall can reach up to 1,191mm per annum and temperatures, in comparison to the rest of Uganda, are quite moderate. The area is densely populated. 92% of the population lives in the rural areas, with a household population average of seven people. The literacy rate across the region is 64% for men, and 49% for women. Land is very fragmented and land ownership is based on customary tenure system<sup>1</sup>. 80% of the area's residents depend on agriculture, which is mainly practiced at subsistence<sup>2</sup> level due to shortage of land space. Safe water is accessed by 52% of the population, with less than 50% of water sources in the district providing safe water.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning land is collectively owned by the family or clan, and not individuals.

<sup>2</sup> Subsistence: using minimal resources as a means of survival

The main town in the area is Mbale town, approximately 20 miles from the project area. Mbale is a busy and reasonably sized town, with lots of character. The backdrop to Mbale town is the beautiful Wanale Ridge, which reminds many people of Table Mountain overlooking Cape Town. Mbale town has a variety of shops, restaurants (serving local and Western foods) and bars. It has a market, a nightclub, a swimming pool (attached to a hotel but open for public use), regular transport to Jinja and Kampala, a post office, and several banks (including an ATM with VISA services). There are hundreds of colourful bodabodas – bicycle taxis – waiting at every street corner to transport people around town.

## CULTURE

You will be mixing both your own culture and Ugandan culture from as soon as you arrive in Uganda, and will notice the contrast between the two even more so when you are in the village. This is an exciting and interesting part of the programme. You will have the opportunity to learn so much about another culture, and people will also ask you a lot about yours. For those of you who haven't been to a developing country, you will probably be struck by the level of poverty, especially in the villages. What may also surprise you is how much one's gender plays a big determinant of one's roles and responsibilities in everyday life.

Women have huge responsibilities, in comparison to men, towards both bringing in money for the household as well as family and home responsibilities. However, despite all these responsibilities, women access and control very little (about 20%) of family income. You will also find children (again, especially girls) have a lot of responsibilities within their homes, which more often than not comes before school work, and definitely before playtime. Despite hardships people in Uganda are generally quite happy and enjoy life. You will see more people smiling during your time in Uganda than you ever have done at home.

Ugandans know that you come from a different culture and that women hold a different position within society and within the home. People will be amused at how you collectively, as foreigners, do things, such as girls doing what they perceive to be boys' jobs, or boys doing what they perceive to be girls' jobs. However hard you try, and however much you feel you master some techniques, the way you wash your clothes, cook your food, collect your water etc will always be a source of amusement to people in the village. It is all meant with good humour though and many placement communities in the past have recalled how they learnt team work from the volunteers, and how actually it is possible for men to do "women's work" and vice versa.

## LANGUAGE

The official language in Uganda is English, and it is very likely that most places you find yourself, you will be able to find someone who speaks English, for example all the teachers at school and some local leaders will speak fluent English. Although children learn English in school, the standard of English amongst a class, and even amongst the population in general, is hugely varied. This means that you will encounter a wide range of English from those who speak only one word to those speak fluent English. When you are speaking English it helps to speak very clearly and use a more basic English that will be more easily understood. There are so many Ugandan English phrases that you will adopt in no time, and probably not even realize you are saying them.

Although you can use English most of the time many locals will really appreciate it if you try and speak some of their language, which in the project area is Lugisu. Even just a simple “hello, how are you?” will help to break the ice and make everybody more relaxed. You will be taught some basic Lugisu during training but the best place to learn it is by talking to people in your community. Here are some Lugisu phrases to get you started.

English	Lugisu	Pronunciation	Emphasis
Hello	Mulembe	Moo-lem (as in lemon) – bay	Lem
How are you?	Oriena	O (as in orange) – ree – en - na (as in henna)	En
I am fine	Bulai	Boo – lie – ee	Lie
How are things?	Kamahuwa	Ka – ma – hoe –wah	Hoe
I’m cool	Kasira	Ka – seer – rah	Seer
Thank You	Wanyala	Wan (rhyming with pan) – yah – la	Ya
White person	Muzungu	Moo-zuung-goo	Zuung
White people	Bazungu	Ba-zuung-goo	Zuung

LBA has also put together a Lugisu phrasebook, which you can download from the LBA website, and is working on a Lugisu podcast to help you learn Lugisu. When it is available it will also be on the website for download.