

# people and places: responsible volunteering

## SUPPORT PLAN FOR WORK OF VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS AND WITH TEACHERS IN THE GAMBIA 2025

This plan describes ways in which volunteers can help this project to develop their aims and goals and gives examples of ways in which volunteers have contributed in the past.

Comments are based on the work of volunteers in the period up to December 2024, and are derived from questionnaires completed by the projects and reports written by the volunteers. New aims and actions, if any, are shown in **green** and these have either been identified from requests made by the projects or have arisen from the work done by volunteers. Any completed aims or actions are shown in **blue**.

AIMS	ACTIONS AND COMMENTS	WORK DONE TOWARDS THESE GOALS
<p>1. To work remotely as an e-volunteer with the Principal of Futures Training Foundation and staff at Mary's Little Lambs, to provide ongoing support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could work remotely with the Principal of Futures Training Foundation to produce presentation and written materials for training courses within the Gambia.</li> <li>• Volunteers could hold regular online meetings with specified members of staff to mentor them in various aspects of their work.</li> <li>• Volunteers could read stories or demonstrate craft activities on video, to be used by teachers at Mary's Little Lambs in their lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two e-volunteers have helped to produce two major pieces of work – one a training course for a new early year's curriculum and the other a parents' training manual, both of which are now national resources for training.</li> <li>• One volunteer joined MLL staff on Zoom for weekly meetings, using videos prepared by another volunteer, to provide training about techniques for learning through play.</li> <li>• During the 2020 lockdown a number of volunteers sent videos which have been reviewed by MLL teachers and slotted into their curriculum for use in the classroom. These videos have included stories, activities and a video about growing plants.</li> </ul>

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<p>2. To help the teachers to plan lessons based around a variety of child-centred activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers have demonstrated different methods and techniques to provide variety and give the teachers ideas for new approaches to learning (e.g. stories, games, songs, art and craft work). Future volunteers could continue this approach and extend it to further classes and schools.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help with classroom management techniques, showing the teachers how to manage a variety of simultaneous activities within the classroom.</li> <li>• Volunteers could work with teachers to implement the idea of free play, and this would be a priority for future volunteers.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help the teachers to produce more focused lesson plans which make better use of time.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help to ensure that every day has at least one learning objective and that both children and teachers know that this has been achieved.</li> <li>• A volunteer with appropriate skills could help to develop a system of assessment for the nursery classes based on observation of children over time and the collection of a portfolio of evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One volunteer focused on practical activities in Maths and Science lessons, demonstrating simple experiments. Another volunteer emphasised that the idea that a child learns through play was a bigger learning curve for the teacher than the children. A recent volunteer demonstrated ways of working with slow learners to improve their focus and ability to learn. Another worked as a teaching assistant to provide slow learners with one-to-one help.</li> <li>• One volunteer provided furniture for the nursery classroom in the school where she worked to facilitate the organisation of different activities.</li> <li>• One recent volunteer focused on outdoor play, providing materials for sand and water play, which was very popular with the children. An experienced nursery teacher based her whole placement around the development of outdoor play, helping to develop the outside area to demonstrate a wide range of strategies to encourage imaginative play.</li> <li>• One volunteer helped with time management, helping the teachers she was working with to structure lessons to fit into the allotted lesson time.</li> </ul>
<p>3. To help the school to develop their thematic approach so</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers with appropriate knowledge could focus on particular learning areas or subjects e.g. numeracy, science, and work with the teachers to develop new ways of teaching this subject. The thematic approach is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers so far have covered work in different subjects, especially maths. A recent volunteer taught IT to the older children, introduced new games into PE</li> </ul>

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<p>that they cover effectively all learning areas/subjects</p>	<p>relatively new and future volunteers could help teachers to implement this successfully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers could work with the teachers to further develop their method of theme-webbing so that a greater variety of ways is shown in which the different learning areas can be covered.</li> </ul>	<p>lessons and had a lot of fun creating and demonstrating new Arts and Craft activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A volunteer with appropriate language skills taught the children French (during the long-term absence of a local French teacher) and produced resources and assessment materials to support learning in this subject</li> </ul>
<p>4. To help to train the teachers in early reading including Jolly Phonics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers with appropriate experience could continue to reinforce the teaching of reading using the Jollyphonics method.</li> <li>Some volunteers have brought some Jolly Phonics resources but these are not available in the majority of schools so will be unfamiliar to most teachers attending workshops. Volunteers could teach the children and the teachers where necessary the Jolly Phonics songs so that they can implement this method of teaching even without CDs, books and posters.</li> <li>Volunteers with appropriate experience could support the teachers in the use of other methods of teaching early reading, such as word recognition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers with appropriate knowledge and experience have worked with the teachers in some schools to develop the Jollyphonics approach to learning, explaining the reasoning behind this method of language learning, and it is in use in both schools where volunteers are likely to complete their placements. Some limited training has also been provided within the Gambia.</li> <li>A volunteer helped to assess children struggling with reading and writing, and by use of phonics flashcards identified that a catchup course in phonics is needed to support these children. A later volunteer planned and taught daily phonics sessions alongside the Head Teacher to children throughout the school who had been identified as needing additional support in reading and writing</li> <li>A volunteer planned and taught daily reading &amp; writing activities for the 6 year groups</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A volunteer organised the school library into age and ability level, so that each classroom now has a box of appropriate level books for children to read.</li> <li>• One volunteer held a 'story club' three afternoons a week to read and discuss stories with children throughout the school.</li> </ul>
<p>5. To help the teachers find or make teaching and learning aids to supplement the children's learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers have begun to work with the teachers to identify areas of their teaching where they would benefit from having teaching aids. A recent addition to the curriculum is the requirement for all schools to have a garden so teaching aids linked to this would be particularly relevant.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help the teachers to think of ways these resources could be made from local materials (e.g. bottle tops, shells from the beach, local fruits), and help to produce them. Future volunteers should continue to help the teachers supplement their resources for learning.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help to find ways of converting internationally available books and resources into a form more applicable to The Gambia – for example producing flashcards for 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' to show foods eaten in The Gambia.</li> <li>• Volunteers could help the teachers to find ways of storing these materials safely so that they can be used again in the future, and encourage teachers to use them regularly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A training course led by a volunteer included a practical section on making teaching aids from local materials - For example, one volunteer showed how painting numbers onto plastic balls immediately turned them from toys into fun learning aids. Another volunteer held a workshop on how to use plastic bottle-tops as classroom resources. Designing and making teaching and learning aids is a key priority for future volunteer placements.</li> <li>• One volunteer showed teachers how to make their own playdough using flour and water and showed them how to use this to encourage fun ways of learning for the children.</li> <li>• One volunteer has helped several schools to organise their Dream Corners and distribute the resources effectively to different classes. Another volunteer worked with MLL teachers to sort and categorise the resources they have to make them easier to use effectively.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A volunteer made a series of posters to support learning</li> </ul>
<p>6. To work with Lisong and Michelle to develop training materials for workshops and to help run them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could help to produce training materials to address needs identified by the teachers in the schools and needs identified by Lisong and Michelle in their work with the teachers (e.g. hands-on teaching techniques, classroom management techniques, development of teaching aids, special educational needs, development of creative arts). A volunteer able to run workshops on dyslexia would be particularly welcome.</li> <li>• A volunteer could run a workshop on computer skills – the school has some computers but no experience in how to use them with children, or knowledge of appropriate software.</li> <li>• Volunteers could run workshops in areas in which they have expertise e.g. active learning techniques</li> <li>• Volunteers could help to run a workshop with heads and deputies to help them decide on areas where they would</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One volunteer helped to prepare and run a day's course on the 'greenie project'. Another ran workshops for the teachers at her school on using stories for literacy, phonic work and numeracy.</li> <li>• An e-volunteer has helped to produce a training course for the new Gambia early years' curriculum and a series of training videos on learning through play, linked to different areas of the curriculum. The same volunteer went to the Gambia in 2022 to deliver this training to 19 local teachers, and the teachers are continuing to share images on WhatsApp of activities they are doing in their classrooms which they learned on the course. The volunteer then helped to write a manual containing all information and strategies from the course and returned to the Gambia in 2023 to get it printed and distributed to course participants so they can use it in their own schools.</li> </ul>

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	<p>like further training e.g. leadership skills, education management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could help train teachers in the use of IT including the use of IT to create teaching aids and accessing useful teaching materials through the Internet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One volunteer ran a training session on child protection and behaviour management, based on areas in which parents had requested support. A recent volunteer ran a further workshop on safeguarding and led staff discussions on recognising signs of abuse.</li> <li>• A volunteer ran a workshop on learning through play – this involved many active learning opportunities for the teachers which they thoroughly enjoyed.</li> <li>• A recent volunteer ran a workshop for the teachers on autism awareness – <b>the school would welcome further support on how to support and teach autistic children</b></li> <li>• <b>One volunteer held a workshop on how to create a classroom word bank to support literacy.</b></li> </ul>
<p>7. <b>To help develop and implement extra-curricular activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Volunteers could work with the house heads and the volunteer gardener to sew and plant appropriate vegetables and fruits in rotation for harvesting throughout the year, to maintain the children’s interest.</b> The garden is not currently in use as the area was needed for a new classroom – however some plants are being grown in pots and there is space to reinstate the garden in future.</li> <li>• Volunteers with practical building skills could help improve the built environment of the garden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The garden was started from scratch in February 2019 – a volunteer worked with the school to prepare and plan the garden – she worked with children and staff and volunteers to identify the best design for the garden and an initial crop rotation plan, using local resources and methods, with particular emphasis on fun and learning for the children. A further volunteer helped the children plant seeds.</li> <li>• <b>A volunteer worked with the principal of MLL and some teachers together with Swim for life and Joint Officers Mess on swimming lessons - taught 50 students on how to swim – further volunteers with the ability to teach</b></li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could help design and implement a syllabus that would create cross curricular learning between the children's hands-on gardening and the classroom</li> <li>• Volunteers could build on work already done by a previous volunteer to identify indigenous plants and appropriate horticultural methods to ensure the garden is sustainable and appropriate for The Gambia</li> <li>• Volunteers could develop a programme to teach the children water safety and swimming skills to begin to address the issue of the large number of children who drown in the sea</li> <li>• Volunteer could work with teachers to develop and implement a programme to teach road safety</li> <li>• Volunteers with appropriate skills could help develop activities for the children in the areas of arts and crafts</li> </ul>	<p>swimming are needed to develop this programme throughout the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The same volunteer showed the nursery teachers how to dispel fear of the water through games in a paddling pool.</li> </ul>
<p>8. To use practical skills to train local craftsmen to build materials to improve the school environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A volunteer with skills and experience in building could work alongside local craftsmen to build a playground for the prep school children containing play equipment that is age-appropriate and safe to use – the school has some equipment in storage but training is required to make it safe to use</li> </ul>	
<p>9. To help with long-term strategic planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could help with strategic planning, including costings, to expand Mary's Little Lamb Nursery (currently run by Lisong as a model nursery) so that it can also take grade school (primary) pupils. This aim has been achieved, but strategic planning is still needed to help the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One volunteer with experience in social work helped the school devise a questionnaire for parents to assess their parenting needs. With the school's operational manager she visited families to deliver the assessments,</li> </ul>

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	<p>school plan for future expansion and to deal with the implications of success and good reputation, which means there will always be greater demand for places than can be offered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could help with long-term plans to formalise her teacher training programme, meeting the requirements of the national Education Policy for 2015-2030 which enables private institutions to deliver teacher training courses.</li> </ul>	<p>and this will form the basis for a database to be used to help identify families most deserving of sponsorship.</p>
<p>10. To build the managerial and organisational capacity of Futures Training Foundation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers could share education management techniques</li> <li>• Volunteers could share IT, graphics and web design skills</li> <li>• Volunteers could share Human Resource management skills</li> <li>• Volunteers could share book-keeping skills – this is an important priority</li> <li>• Volunteers could share report writing and funding application skills</li> </ul>	