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# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**HEALTH-AID ONLUS**

**Italian-Ghanaian Project for the Rural-deprived in Saboba District**



**HEALTH-AID**  
sharing knowledge for better lives



By Dr Diego Manzoni

Last update: 01/02/2018

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# Introduction

*One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things - Henry Miller*

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The following information may be helpful to anybody interested in the Project, either for having an idea of the activities carried out by the staff or for a direct participation as an expat volunteer.

The information in this trip details document has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change. While it is our intention to adhere to the experience described below, there is a certain amount of flexibility within the project and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable to make alterations. Ultimately, our goal is to provide the community with better health care and you with the most rewarding experience.

The trip is all about immersing yourself in the local culture and truly experiencing rural Africa, through interacting with the communities you visit, seeing amazing and unique wildlife up close, or just getting out there and taking in the great activities of HEALTH-AID.

Please read through the whole description accurately and feel free to contact us for further information or more details.

## AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the Project is to provide better health services and education to the local population and villagers of Saboba, in the Northern Region of Ghana. Activities are carried out both in Saboba Town and in the faraway District and Sub-district villages. Together with the local staff the expats will be involved in all the activities promoted twice a year (in July-August-September and December-January) when visiting the faraway villages of the District (Outreach Services) or organising activities at the HEALTH-AID headquarters (Indoor Activities). Expats are required to take part actively in the activities, health care and education, suggesting ideas and bringing their own innovations in whatever field of education and health care.

**Physical demand:** You will have to get around on your own, up and down steps and carry your own bag. Light walking that is suitable for most fitness levels. Bicycle riding. Temperatures and humidity may be challenging in summer and will require you to rest frequently.

**Culture shocking:** extreme. Saboba is one of the few places in the world where life is still basic. Much effort is needed to understand the African culture and a large amount of patience is fundamental.

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# Activities

*A journey of thousand miles must begin with a single step - Lao Tzu*

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Expats (either health workers or not) will be involved in caring for people during Outreach Services to the villages and Indoor Activities in the Compound.

This, depending on the individual's experience, may involve:

1. Consultation (Patient-Health worker).
2. Education on malaria, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS ...
3. Giving talks on tropical disease conditions, nutrition or public health in general.
4. Distribution of drugs, clothes and other materials.
5. Nursing and wound care.
6. Translations and support.
7. Teaching students (Informatics, sewing, games, etc.) and sport activities.
8. Accounting for the microcredit programme or the project budget.
9. Cooking and cleaning.
10. Other roles according to actual needs (driving, shopping, etc).



*Dr. Michael and Interpreter consulting patients in a village (ACTION 8, 2005)*

## DAILY ACTIVITIES

Expats work six days per week. Each morning wake up is between 6:00 and 7:00am. Breakfast is prepared on rotation by the expats themselves. The teams organise the supplies, fuel the pick-up truck, and split up into groups for Outreach Services. Each group travels to a different village either on the pick-up truck, on motorbikes or bikes. The drive takes anywhere from 15 minutes to 2.5 hours, depending on the distance of the day's villages. Upon arrival in each village, volunteers and medical staff greet the Chief and Elders of the village and introduce themselves to the villagers.

The day is divided into two parts. The first part is **education**. Volunteers take turns talking about hygiene & sanitation, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS. The talks are translated by a member of the local staff and are directed toward the entire village. The villages range in size anywhere from 30 to 500 people. The talks can last from 15 minutes up to 2 hours, depending on the amount of information the volunteer feels is important to present, the size of the group, the number of questions asked, the co-operation of the audience, etc. Sometimes the villagers are very outspoken and enjoy participating in the discussion; at other times they are quiet, and listen patiently without asking many questions.

When the education is finished, the translator organises the community into a queue behind the consultants for the **mobile clinic**. They screen and treat patients one at a time, usually giving priority to sick children. While the consultants are treating patients, volunteers can be doing a number of different things. Most of the time, volunteers listen to the screening and diagnosis, learning about the different medical conditions, then count and dispense the drugs according to the instructions. Other times, volunteers can be more active participants by partaking in the screening of patients, listening to the signs and symptoms of illnesses, leading the doctor/patient dialogues, assisting with diagnoses, or recording the patients' information for statistical analysis.

If the volunteer is capable of simple nursing duties and the supplies are available, they can set up a **wound care** station to clean and dress wounds. Many of the villagers have cuts and sores on their legs, feet, or arms that have not been properly cared for and have become dirty and infected. Several hours can be spent washing, disinfecting and bandaging these wounds.

Sometimes it is fun just to **relax and play** with the children. Unfortunately, the language barrier makes it difficult to interact with them at times. It is therefore useful to bring certain tools to facilitate interaction. Some good examples are: colouring books or paper with crayons or markers, children's picture books, simple games or toys suitable for groups.

The workday can last from 4 to 5 hours, depending on the size of the villages and the distance to the villages. At the end of the day, the chief usually thanks the visitors with a gift of yams, groundnuts (peanuts), chicken, guinea fowl, or a goat before the group sets off for home. Upon arrival at the guesthouse, (anywhere between 12 and 1 pm) lunch is prepared by the cook.



In the afternoon Indoor Activities at the Guest House and Youth Centre are organised for students, children and other sick people. These include:

- Educational courses for HEALTH-AID YOUTH CLUB students
- Library activities
- Computer School
- Sports and swimming pool
- Mini-club for kindergarden kids (in the morning)
- Consultations for patients
- Wound Care



*Alessandra giving educational talks to Youth Club students (ACTION 10, 2007)*

In the evenings at 8 pm there is a **general meeting** and briefing when anybody can discuss their own activities and plan the day after. Usually on Wednesdays there is a singing prayer/meditation and on Saturdays there are group games. All the foreign volunteers are encouraged to teach their own favourite games. The rest of the evening is free time, expats can read, sing, watch movies, chat or relax. They can also take this opportunity to read or write on the *RED BOOK*, which is a collection of volunteers' thoughts over the years.

In addition to working in the field, other activities and events are planned throughout the duration of the program. Sometimes primary and secondary schools are visited to give educational talks, show educational videos, or distribute toys. Occasionally HEALTH-AID is invited to attend and participate in celebrations and ceremonies (i.e. World AIDS Day, Disaster Day, Marches). A small amount of time is spent in the office or at the hospital, observing or performing whatever duties are required at the time.

Every Sunday is a day off. It is a very relaxing day that can be spent as you wish. It is possible to travel to Yendi (1.5 hours) or Tamale (3 hours) to buy food, water, or use Internet. Sometimes private transport is available, but often public transport is the only option (tro-tros and pick-up trucks).

## DAILY SCHEDULE

7.00 am	Breakfast
8.00 am	OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
1.00 pm	Lunch
3.00 pm	INDOOR ACTIVITIES
6.00 pm	Study time
7.00 pm	Supper
8.00 pm	General Meeting and Briefing on next-day planning
9.00 pm	Movie, music or Games

## LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Everyone is welcome in Saboba where they can experience life in a rural and deprived community. According to one's special desires and requirement we can organise different activities and programs:

- TOGO MARKET across the river by boat (on Mondays)
- MARKET DAY
- CHURCH SERVICES of different congregations (on Sundays)
- SABOBA MEDICAL CENTRE TOUR (meet Dr. Jean)
- DAVID'S FAMILY (Experience the african family atmosphere)
- TRADITIONAL FOOD (at your own risk!!!) cook with Linda
- THE CHIEF'S GRAVE (suggested donation GHC 2)
- TRADITIONAL DANCE (to be organised in advance)
- MAGIC RITUALS (arrange with David)
- FISHING (arrange with Michael)
- WALK TO THE RIVERSIDE (with Dr. Diego for a talk)
- A DRINK AT SABOBA'S BAR

## PERIOD OF ROTATION

Each rotation lasts 3 to 8 weeks, during the chosen period of our medical actions, but we can accept also shorter (minimum 2 weeks) or longer periods depending on the volunteer availability. The best period to visit Ghana is during the dry season (when almost no mosquitoes are around). Working during the rainy season may be tough but challenging. Efforts will be made to ensure an international atmosphere allowing different countries to be present at the same time.

**Your Fellow Travellers:** As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of traveling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and are likely to be of a variety of ages too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

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# Rules for the compound

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- Only volunteers and staff are allowed inside the **GUEST HOUSE** premises.  
Patients and students are allowed in the **CLINIC** and **YOUTH CLUB** only.
- IN/OUT status for each expat and local staff must be updated on board at all times.  
Local staff are also required to sign in and out on a separate sheet for per diem salary.
- For security reason always take a fully charged phone with you when you leave the compound and make sure your phone number is written in the contact list.
- English is the official language for everybody (Italian and Likpalpalm are restricted).
- Opening hours (ring bell) for activities at the CLINIC and YOUTH CLUB are:
  - **8am to 1pm** for MORNING activities (Outdoor and Indoor)
  - **3pm to 6pm** for AFTERNOON activities (Indoor).
  - The gate opens at 7am and closes at 7pm

- Meals are provided to international expats according to schedule. The cook will announce by radio (and wind bell) when the food is ready. Tea break is at 10am and 5pm. Aperó is at 5pm. No eating in the house is allowed out of these times.  
Local staff willing to stay for lunch are required to write their names for each day on the board and inform the cook. Exceptions are not permitted.
- Sachet water is free. Bottled water is paid by expats. Soft drinks are for sale.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol during working hours and in the community.
- Always save WATER and ELECTRICITY. You may experience shortages at all times.
- Wi-fi will be available on Wednesdays and Sundays or for emergency needs. A computer with internet access in the office will be available for expats during leisure time.
- The pick-up must be available for expats at all times during ACTION. Movements must be always announced by radio and validated by the Head of Mission (HoM).
- Bikes are personally assigned by LogCo and are available for renting by staff only.  
Any fault or broken part is everyone's personal responsibility.  
The following rule applies: if you break it, you repair it! A deposit fee is requested.
- Keep the place clean and tidy, do not throw rubbish around the compound.  
Security staff must collect and burn garbage every day.
- Do not take anything from the project's properties without permission.  
Beware of thieves at all times even amongst expats and local staff.
- Stealing, fighting or aggressive behaviour is not tolerated and will always result in permanent expulsion from the project.



# Arrival and Transportation

*Tourists don't know where they've been, travellers don't know where they're going - Paul Theroux*



*Dr. Paola assisted by Moses at hotel in Accra (ACTION 11, 2008)*

Arrival is by plane at KOTOKA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (ACC) - Accra.

**TIMEZONE :** Ghanaian time = GMT + 0 (LONDON)

Someone from the HEALTH-AID staff will be there to welcome you and find you a place to lodge for the day/night (*SUE'S INN* is quite convenient and recommended, approx € 20 per night - Achimota Lapaz Motorway +233 20 8123 874 - [smileinsues@yahoo.com](mailto:smileinsues@yahoo.com)).

The next day you will leave by Bus to TAMALE (Northern Regional Capital) or YENDI. This usually takes 12-16 hours. The bus ride is long and arduous: it is hot, cramped and over twelve hours in duration. There is, however, an air-conditioned bus that is more comfortable and approximately twice as expensive (approx € 20). If you take a daytime bus, bring a lot of reading material, and if you take a nighttime bus, be prepared to meditate. The bus stops three times in areas with food and toilets. A flight (EUR 80 one way) is also available for booking in the internet (African World, Antrakair, Starbow).

In Tamale the trip continues by pick-up, minibus or tro-tro to Yendy (2 hours) and then to Saboba (2 hours). Car troubles are common, so be prepared. Good Luck!

**Arrival Complications:** We don't expect any problems, and nor should you, but if for any reason you are unable to meet the local staff at the airport please contact the emergency number at +39 338 2905699 (Dr. Diego Manzoni).

## UPON ARRIVAL IN SABOBA

1. Clean up the place (inside and outside the Guest House).
2. Switch on electricity in the Guest House, a generator is also available.
3. Clean and switch on the refrigerator.
4. Hang the Italian and Ghanaian flags to the poles (this is the sign that an ACTION is taking place with expats); if you come from a different country and would like your flag to be hung please make sure you bring one (medium or large size), we would really appreciate.
5. Fill the upper and lower water tanks (adding chloride tablets) with the water from the well.

## BEFORE LEAVING SABOBA

1. Clean up the place and make lists of available items for the next ACTION.
2. Pump water up to the tank and keep it full (adding chloride tablets).
3. Disconnect and clean the refrigerator.
4. Switch off electricity inside the Guest House.
5. Cover all beds and close all windows.
6. Remove the flags and put them in the office.

## SHOPPING IN TAMALE

The Admin in charge will make sure the following items are bought in Tamale because they are not available in Saboba: spaghetti/short pasta, rice, tomato sauce, jam, milk, milo, Nescafé, biscuits, vegetable cans (beans/peas), fruit cans, tunafish cans, curry, oil, soap for dishes, water (bottled), chicken, meat, fish, pineapple, papaya, bananas, watermelon, bread.

In Tamale there is also chance for exchanging foreign currency into New Ghana Cedis (GHC) but we recommend to change at the Airport Exchange Bureaux in Accra upon arrival.

## CURRENCY

(as per 1st February 2018 rate of exchange)

1 € = 4.5 GHC

1 \$ = 4.3 GHC

1 GHC = 0.25 €

# Food and Lodging

*The first condition of understanding a foreign country is to smell it - R. Kipling*

All the expats will be hosted at the HEALTH-AID Guest House in Saboba, where 4 multiple bedrooms with toilets plus a kitchen and a living room are available throughout the period. The office is just next to the guest house. Electricity and running water is available but

sometimes we are cut off because of shortage. Be prepared to face also these shortages.



The day will be spent in a community style, working in teams and sharing both duties and leisure time. Breakfast will be prepared by the expats themselves, while lunch and dinner will be served by a dedicated cook (Mercy). Agreements on specific diets or preferred meals will be made by the group upon arrival.

**Alcohol and Tobacco:** it is HEALTH-AID policy not to permit alcoholic drinks or cigarettes in the Guest House during the day, especially in front of children. Only after 9pm sometimes the group hangs out and share some beers.

## FOOD AND WATER

There is a very limited variety of food available in Saboba. It is, therefore, advisable to bring any additional products that you might enjoy having (within reason). There is a fridge to store things once they have been opened, but non-perishables are recommended. Canned fruits and vegetables are good to bring since there are no vegetables and only certain fruits. It is wise to bring food that would make a suitable packed lunch i.e. peanut butter & jam. Most items are available in Accra and Tamale and it is possible to buy them on the way to Saboba.

There are a few small shops in town, and market day is every eight days. You can buy canned tuna, sardines and beans, bread, eggs, spaghetti, tomatoes, onions, oranges, watermelon, bananas and popo (papaya) on a regular basis. Otherwise, almost nothing else is available.

Bottled water is expensive in Saboba. There is a limited supply of sachet water. It is imperative to stock up on drinking water before arriving in Saboba. HEALTH-AID asks a contribution to buy bottled water for expats because it can be quite expensive (€ 10 per person per week).

## CLOTHING

During the dry season Saboba is extremely dry and dusty. While traveling to and from villages each day, it is helpful to have certain articles of clothing to protect yourself from the dust and dirt. Specifically, light coloured clothing gets filthy, a scarf or bandana is useful to cover your head and hair, and sunglasses are good for protecting your eyes. The temperature during the day is very hot. However, at night it gets cold enough to need long sleeves and long pants (which are also useful to protect from mosquitoes). During rainy season is hot and humid and you will sweat a lot. Health-aid T-shirts are available for all. For women, pants or shorts are more appropriate for riding on the pick-up truck and the motorbikes than skirts. It is useful to bring baby wipes, wet napkins, and/or antibacterial lotion to clean hands and face when in the field. People are very liberal in Saboba, and women can feel relatively free to dress how they like. The breast is not as sexualised as the thigh and buttocks. Wearing short-shorts or short-skirts is not advisable. It is nice to wear some of the local clothing. Be advised that Tamale is a predominately Muslim area, and while stopping over in this city, it may be wise to dress accordingly.

**Laundry:** Laundry is offered by our local staff for a small tip at the end of the period. Please put your laundry in the box in the morning and collect it in the afternoon. There will be times when you may want to or have to do your own laundry so we suggest you bring non-polluting/biodegradable soap.

## COMMUNICATION

**Telephone:** mobile telephones operate in roaming in Saboba and they are quite expensive but texting is also possible and it is a good way to keep in contact with families and friends. The HoM also has a satellite cell phone for emergencies (+39 338 5332030) and it is important to carry it during outreach where network is absent.

**Internet:** it is possible to use internet on Wednesday evenings and Sundays. But we cannot guarantee coverage and sometimes the whole system is down.

## MEDICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Always eat cooked food (avoid to eat fresh vegetables and not peeled fruits).
- Drink pure water or soft drinks only. Avoid drinks not made with mineral water or shaken with ice like fresh fruit juice or milk-shake.
- Wear shirts with long sleeves, trouser and socks, especially after sunset when mosquitoes appear. Use mosquito-nets during the night.
- Bring anti-diarrhoea drugs, intestinal disinfectants, antibiotic drugs (large spectrum) ORS (oral rehydration salts), needles for injections, gloves, bandages, anti-micotic lotions, shampoo against lice, medical equipment.

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# Money

*One must be poor to know the luxury of giving - George Eliot*

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Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others (drinks other than water are for sale in our kitchen) while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. In Saboba there will not be many opportunities to spend money on drinks or souvenirs but please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping.

Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip:

- ☑ All meals are included in Saboba but not in Accra or Tamale.
- ☑ Please consider donating € 10 per week for bottled water.
- ☑ **Tipping:** It is customary in several countries to tip service providers. HEALTH-AID local staff have no salary and depend exclusively on donations by supporters. You will have the chance to see how committed they can be when working with foreign volunteers and how strongly they try to make your experience the best possible. Tipping is an expected - though not compulsory - component of your experience and an expression of satisfaction with the persons who have assisted you on your program. Although it may not be customary to you, it is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your stay. Usually at the end of the period envelopes with names will be used as an opportunity to tip the local staff. You can include this tip in your Personal Expats' Budget form before ACTION. Recommendations for tipping staff (12-15 people) would range from € 30-50; ask your HoM for specific recommendations based on the circumstances and culture.
- ☑ **Emergency Fund:** Please also make sure you have access to at least an additional € 200 (or equivalent) as an 'emergency' fund, to be used when circumstances outside our control (ex. a natural disaster) require a change to our plans. This is a rare occurrence!



# Language

The official language is English but LIKPAKPALM is the local dialect in Saboba. It is advisable that all expats try to learn as much as possible of the foreign language as a sign of respect for that culture. Translators will help you when needed.

## GLOSSARY OF WORDS

<u>WORD</u>	<u>USAGE</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
KONKOMBA		The name of the people in the Saboba/Chereponi district
LIKPAKPALN		The name of the language that Konkomba people speak
LAFEBE	Used as a greeting or as a response to any of the following greetings	I'm well/good health
NNAH	Also used as a greeting or as a response to any of the following greetings, including LAFEBE	Same meaning as LAFEBE but more casual, quick
DOPWAH	Greeting to one person	How are you?
NDOPWAH	Greeting to a group of people	How are you?
APWAH	Greeting used for the first time you are seeing that person that day. (Not to be said to anyone older or in a more senior position than you.)	Good morning, good afternoon, good evening...
ANOOWEE	Greeting	Good afternoon
KUJOPWAH (KUJO)	Greeting	Good evening
SEFWHEN		Goodnight
ANELETULN	To one person	Thank you
NNELETULN	To a group of people	Thank you
BEYISEKENYEH	Question	What is your name?
BEYIMI	Answer	My name is...
NIMO(R)		That is sweet/nice
NIMO(R)MI		I am happy
OKANJA/OKAMPI		White man/woman
UNIBON		Black person

## *Your further steps after selection*

1. book your ticket to Accra, as soon as possible.
2. get an entry Visa to Ghana, which is compulsory to enter this Country.
3. Complete the online MALARIA AWARENESS TRAINING CERTIFICATION (<https://www.travax.com/malariavisa>) and send your certificate by e-mail to [healthaidonlus@gmail.com](mailto:healthaidonlus@gmail.com)
4. Obtain your vaccinations and fill all medical forms

VACCINES	COMPULSORY	RECOMMENDED	OPTIONAL
YELLOW FEVER	X		
HEPATITIS A		X	
TYPHOID FEVER		X	
TETANUS		X	
HEPATITIS B			X
MENINGOCOCCUS			X
RABIES			X
MALARIA (MEFLOQUINE 1 WEEK BEFORE OR MALARONE)			4 WEEKS AFTER

5. get your own TRAVEL INSURANCE, because no insurance is provided by HEALTH-AID. Travel insurance is optional but strongly recommended to participate on our ACTIONS. When selecting a travel insurance policy it is advisable that you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation, personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.
6. Fill in the EXPAT PERSONAL BUDGET FORM for water, bus/plane ticket, hotel fees, tips and give it with money to the HoM.

## Evaluation

Before leaving the project, fill the End of Mission Report, any handover to the expats following you and other evaluation forms. This would be highly appreciated and it will help us improve more and more. Please don't forget!

## Contacts

For any further information you may contact:

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