

The Anmchara International School Volunteer Manual

Sega, Ghana

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in volunteering in Segga, Ghana at the Anmchara International School! Making the decision to travel to this rural community may be overwhelming for some; therefore the purpose of this volunteer manual is to provide the information you need in order to determine if this is the right volunteer position for you. With that said, the Anmchara International School and the community of Segga welcomes all – even those individuals that have not yet had an international experience.

Throughout this manual, you will be introduced to the headmaster of the Anmchara International School and the school itself. You will also be able to obtain some information about Segga as a community. Furthermore, there is information on how you as a volunteer may be of service here in Segga, a section dedicated to cultural sensitivity to prepare you further for the experience and answers to the most frequently asked volunteer questions.

We hope that you will read this manual thoroughly and find the answers to the questions that you may have. This manual was created for volunteers *by* volunteers in order to address important issues prior to coming to Ghana, however the important issues are not limited to what is included in this manual. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask.

Greetings from the School Headmaster

My name is Godwin Agudey and I am the headmaster of the Anmchara International School. I am also the Volunteer coordinator and a host family.

I sincerely welcome you to the Sega volunteering program. This program has personally blessed me and many others.

My passion is to give back what I got from society and my compassion is to help others realize their life goals.

If you please to join me to improve the lives of people in Sega and offer the children of this community the opportunity for quality education - welcome on board! Your life will certainly not be the same, and the community here will embrace you with open arms.

Godwin Agudey
School Headmaster, Volunteer Coordinator

About Sega, Ghana

Sega is a beautiful village located approximately 60 km southeast of Ghana's capital, Accra. It is a small, rural community which is accessed by a gravel road full of bumps and potholes. Despite the bumpy ride, Sega is made up of an incredibly friendly, warm and welcoming group of people. It has a population of an estimated two thousand people who depend mainly on farming for income and sustenance. The major crops are cassava, maize, peppers, tomatoes, okra and watermelon. Sega is located in the Ada part of the Greater Accra Region. Its people are from the Ga/Dangme ethnic group. Although all schooling is done in English, the language of Sega is Dangme (you will find a brief Dangme language guide near the end of this manual). The friendliness of the people of Sega is contagious and you will find yourself waving at, greeting and laughing with the local population constantly throughout the day!

The Anmchara International School

The Anmchara International School was founded in January of 2003 by a Ghanaian man with a passion for teaching and a desire to live a life of meaning. Godwin Agudey worked for the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in the city of Tema for 2 years prior to the founding of the school. When he attended a funeral in Sega one day, he took note of all of the children running around the village with nothing to do. Although the desire for education was there, the opportunity was not. Immediately Mr. Agudey set up a meeting with the village chiefs to discuss the possibility of providing education for the children. He then resigned from his position with the Ministry of Agriculture, despite much resistance on their part, relocated to the small village of Sega, and began to teach. The 9 students that came on day 1 quickly grew to almost 100 within the same month, January of 2002. The house he was using for his lessons was no longer sufficient, and he was provided with a plot of land on which to build a small school, consisting initially of only a few classrooms made of dried palm leaves and wood. Little by little, with a lot of determination and incredible support from the local community, the school grew to what it is today and continues to grow daily. The Anmchara International School now consists of a permanent, 3 classroom nursery structure, a primary school for classes 1 to 6 and a Junior High School. By the time the current students graduate from the JHS, Mr. Agudey hopes to also have a Senior Secondary School in place. A library has recently been set up as well. Mr. Agudey believes passionately that poverty should not have the power to stop children from acquiring education. This passion and dedication has rubbed off on the local community, making anything seem possible in this small, humble village.

How Volunteers Can Help

The Anmchara International School is predominantly in need of volunteers to teach. Along with teaching, there are other duties that most volunteers become involved with including, but not limited to:

Clerical duties

Tutoring the children after school

Organizing/managing the library

There have been several volunteers that have applied their areas of specialty during their stay beyond these suggestions. For example, a former volunteer that specialized in ecology planted mango trees around the school compound and managed a plastic recycling project. Another volunteer was gifted with artistic talent and offered to do some drawings on the walls of the primary school area. We've had volunteers create sex education and HIV/AIDS awareness programs as well.

In order to make the most out of your stay, and allow the school community to benefit fully from your gifts, we welcome you to communicate with us about your ideas, talents and passions. We encourage you to come and share with us anything that you feel you have the experience and knowledge to co-ordinate. The idea of sharing your knowledge is very much in line with the motto of the school – *Share the World* and will enrich your experience ten-fold.

Cultural Sensitivity

For most volunteers, living and working in Sega is something completely new, unlike anything they have experienced before. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, try new things and begin to understand a whole new way of life. It can also be a challenging, sometimes frustrating, transition. There may be times when you offend someone unknowingly or feel offended when there is no hurtful intention. You will probably find yourself in many situations that you do not quite understand, and it may take some time (along with many questions and answers!) to get used to. There will be aspects of this culture that you will love, embrace fully, and want to keep with you and share with others throughout your life. There will also be cultural norms that you will disagree with.

It is important to realize that every society has its positive aspects as well as its negative aspects. As volunteers, and guests in a new place, it is important that we do not come and place judgement, but that we simply allow ourselves to be in a new environment and try our best to understand both the bad and the good. And sometimes the things that are initially difficult for us to deal with are transformed into things we will embrace with a simple change of perspective and understanding. But we must be patient with ourselves and with those around us as we adjust.

There are some things that we may never see in a positive light, as every culture has its problems, and that is okay. Sometimes the problems of cultures other than our own are blown up in our minds because we haven't had a lifetime to become accustomed to these problems as we have for those in our own respective societies. As volunteers we are not here to fix societal problems, but simply to share the gifts that we have and to accept the gifts offered by those around us. It is through this that we may build relationships of mutuality, enabling ourselves to learn and grow alongside those around us.

It is important to be aware that volunteers are not necessary for the functioning of the school, which has been created and established locally, although they are greatly appreciated. We believe that having volunteers here from various places is a wonderful way to bring new ideas and perspectives into the Anmchara school, share the wisdom and knowledge that is here with others throughout the world, and build understanding and awareness of other cultures among the volunteers, students, teachers, and larger community.

When we experience a new culture for the first time, the multitude of things we do not understand can sometimes have a tendency to ignite anger within ourselves. This anger may be directed toward ourselves, the society from which we come, the new people and way of life we are encountering or a combination of these among others. It is important to recognize this tendency toward anger as a place of vulnerability within ourselves, without blaming ourselves. It stems from our desire to understand: to understand ourselves, the people around us, the places we have come from, the place we are at, as well as the larger world around us and how it all fits together. At the same time as we are trying to figure this all out, we are in the midst of adjusting to a new language, new foods, a sometimes drastic climate change, and a lack of the comforts of home. It can be quite overwhelming and confusing! While at the same time it is an incredible opportunity to learn, grow, challenge ourselves, and become more aware of the world around us. And despite the challenges we do have fun doing it! Patiently allowing ourselves to make and learn from our mistakes, it is not important how many we may make, but that at all times we do our best with where we are at. And as we seek for those around us to understand us for who we are, we also learn to look more deeply into others and understand them in the same way.

Please come with an open mind, expecting to teach and be taught, be warmly welcomed by the community, learn and grow in countless ways, build relationships that will abide in your heart long after you leave this beautiful place and have fun! With a positive attitude, acceptance for those around you, patience with yourself and others, an open mind and a good sense of humour, this could easily be one of the most rewarding, nourishing and growth-enhancing experiences of your life.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do I need previous teaching experience in order to teach at the Anmchara International School?

No, the Anmchara International School does not require teachers to have formal teacher training or previous teaching experience. You must only have completed high school. Throughout Ghana, teachers are eligible to teach in primary schools with only a high school education.

2. Will I be provided with some kind of volunteer teacher orientation?

There is no formal orientation, as new volunteers are coming in and out all the time, although volunteers are given the opportunity to sit in and observe classes for as long as necessary until they are ready to teach. There is also always somebody around who is willing to answer any questions, give advice, or help out in any way.

3. Will I be provided with a syllabus?

Yes, there are curriculum books for every subject that you will be permitted to keep with you throughout your stay in order to prepare for and conduct lessons. You are expected to bring your own supplies, such as pens and notebooks that you will need for preparing your lessons, as the school cannot afford to provide teachers with these means. Chalk is provided in every classroom.

4. How should I dress in the school and community?

There is no set dress code in the school, although all teachers are expected to dress appropriately (ie. no miniskirts or revealing clothing). In the community, most women wear traditional dress. Men wear jeans or other long pants and T-shirts or traditional shirts. You are not expected to wear traditional clothing, although may choose to have clothes made once you are here. Skirts to the knees are appropriate for women as well as tank tops. Long pants and capris are also becoming more and more common for young women and are appropriate for volunteers. Shorts are appropriate for hanging around the house or playing outside with the kids. The climate is quite hot year-round, so bring light clothing, as well as at least one pair of warmer clothes for cool/rainy days.

5. What can I do when I'm not teaching (ie. afternoons and weekends)?

After school you are free to do whatever you please (please see next question). On the weekends you are welcome to stay in Sega for a deeper experience of village life, but are also free to travel and experience different parts of Ghana.

6. What is a typical day like for volunteers?

The school day begins at 8am (7am in the Junior Secondary School), so volunteers normally wake up between 5am and 7am, eat breakfast and bathe in the house, and then head to school. Depending on your responsibilities, your work-day may last from 1 to 6 hours. School closes at 2pm (3:00 in the JSS), at which time you are free to do as you please. Some volunteers prefer to go back to the house for a rest, while others spend their afternoons playing games with the children in the community. You may wish to go for a walk to find some solitude, visit or get to know nearby communities. You may also take the opportunity to visit your students outside of school, meet their families and see what their home life is like. Many volunteers spend their time outside of school learning to carry water, weave mats, pluck peppers, prepare Ghanaian foods and become actively involved in everyday village life. You may also use this time to travel to the Internet café in a nearby town.

7. What kind of living accommodations will I be provided with?

Most volunteers live with Mr. Godwin Agudey (volunteer coordinator/school headmaster), in Sega. As a volunteer you will have your own room (or may share one with a friend), with a comfortable bed and a private shower. These rooms all have locks and keys. The house also has electricity, running water and a satellite TV in the living room. When this house is fully occupied the volunteers will reside in another volunteer house in Sega. They will have their private room (or share one with a friend), with a comfortable bed and a desk. This house has electricity although volunteers will need to use a shared shower room and a bucket.

Upon request you may also choose to live with a host family in the community (please contact Mr. Agudey if this is your wish). All volunteers are provided with 3 meals a day. The food served is a combination of local and western cuisines, and is prepared daily in

a meticulously clean environment. You will need to buy your own drinking water (this is very cheap).

8. How will I be able to communicate with my friends and family back home?

There will be a phone in the house in which you are staying (or at least nearby), that your contacts back home may call you on at any time. You may also buy phone minutes and use this line to call out. There is currently also internet connection in Segá.

9. Do I need to bring a mosquito net?

No, mosquito nets are provided for volunteers so you do not need to bring one from home. If you prefer to have a treated net, or a specific type of mosquito net, you may bring one from home, but it is not necessary.

10. Do I need a Visa to enter Ghana?

Yes, you must acquire an entry Visa in order to enter Ghana. If you are a Canadian citizen, you will find an application for this in the **Consular Matters** section of the website for the Ghana High Commission in Canada. You will need to contact Mr. Agudey for an invitation letter to send along with your application.

There are 2 different types of Visas that you can choose from: a single entry 3 month Visa, or a multiple entry 1 year Visa. We advise you purchase only a 3 month Visa, regardless of the amount of time you plan to spend in Segá. When you reach the airport, the customs officers will only allow you 2 months on your Visa before you have to have it renewed, no matter how long your government has given you. It is cheaper to pay for the short-term Visa in the first place, as you will have to have it renewed anyway.

11. How will I get to Segá from the airport in Accra?

Mr. Godwin Agudey, the school headmaster and volunteer coordinator, will come pick you up at the airport with a driver and car that will take you directly to Segá. The cost of this service is \$60 US, which you will pay for. If you do wish to come to the village on your own, you may do this, although it is more time-consuming and quite complicated if you have never travelled here before.

12. What resources are available to the teachers and students at the school?

Teachers are provided with curriculum books for every subject and each classroom is equipped with a chalkboard and chalk. Teachers must supply their own pens for marking and preparing notes, as well as any other resources they feel they will need. Students are all asked to buy 2 notebooks for each subject, one for taking notes and one to use as an exercise book, and to provide themselves with pens, pencils and any other supplies they need.

Dangme Words/Phrases

This section will introduce some common Dangme words and phrases that you will encounter upon arrival and for the duration of your stay in Segha. Please do not be overwhelmed; learning these words and phrases will come naturally with time. The adults in the village are very patient and the children are more than eager to teach you. The purpose of this section is to simply help you become familiar with the basic terminology used so that your first few days will be more comfortable, rather than to expect that you memorize these words and phrases prior to your arrival. Keep in mind that Dangme is a tonal language, so you cannot learn simply by reading, but by hearing and with practice.

- You are welcome here
Mo-ye (the second 'e' is stretched)
- Response:
Yee (pronounced as 'yey')
- How are you?
Onye saminya lo (onye is pronounced as 'onga')
- Response:
Aee (pronounced as 'eh')
- How are you doing as well?
Mo hu onye saminya
- What is your name?
Ke atse mo ke (atse is pronounced as 'atche')
- My name is...
Atse mi ke ...
- Where are you going?
Je o yaa
- I am going to...
I yaa... (the 'I' is pronounced as an 'e') home school
wem **skul**

- I don't understand
I nui sisi
- Well done/good work (you would say this anytime you see somebody working)
Ayekoo (the 'oo' is pronounced as 'oh')
- Response:
Yayee or ayee
- Thank you
Openo
- Foreigner (white person particularly, but said to anyone that is not African)
Blerfono (the 'r' is silent)