

# Manual for BFA Container Captains, Consignees, Recipients, & Volunteers



A step-by-step guide to receiving your BFA books  
& basic set-up of school libraries



\*Cover photo by Betty Press

---

# Introduction

August 2012

**The mission of Books For Africa (BFA) is to end the book famine in Africa.** We are the world's largest shipper of donated textbooks and library books to the African continent. More than 27 million books have been sent to 46 African countries since we began our work in 1988. Just last year, we sent 1.9 million books to 21 African countries.

This manual is to help prepare and guide the work of BFA container captains, consignees, recipients, and community volunteers. It provides checklists and instructions to help you prepare for the processing through customs; unloading of the BFA sea container and transporting the books; and setting up systems for operating a library.

**Please share and write in this manual!** The checklist is meant to be filled out as you go along, and to be shared with everyone involved in your project. The manual should be read in full as soon as you receive it. Also, while we have written this manual with school libraries in mind, it may also be useful to other recipients of BFA books.

To develop this manual, we talked with BFA volunteers and recipients of BFA books. For the suggestions related to library set-up and operation, we worked from two excellent documents: *Setting Up and Running A Small Library* by Nicola Baird, with the Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO); and *Libraries For All: How to Start and Run a Basic Library* by Laura Wendell, with UNESCO. More information on these publications is provided in this manual. We especially want to thank Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs students Christopher Nevin, Wycliffe Waganda, and Mary-Margaret Zindren for their valuable assistance in completing this manual.

Thank you for your work to strengthen the literacy skills of African children and the economic future of African communities. **As you work with this manual, please share your ideas for how to make it better.** Email us at [bfa@BooksForAfrica.org](mailto:bfa@BooksForAfrica.org), call 651-602-9844, or send mail to Books For Africa, 253 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55101 USA.

Sincerely,



Norm Linnell  
Board President



Patrick Plonski, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

# Checklist for Container Captains & Other Key Volunteers

## 1. Prepare for the BFA books to arrive

- Talk with people about the books and the library. Begin recruiting volunteers.
- Set up a Library Committee.
- Decide where the library will be located.
- Set aside money for expenses.
- Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries.
- Prepare the library space.
- Plan for storage options.
- Complete government forms.
- Gather what is needed to transport the books (i.e. truck, day laborers)

## 2. Unload the sea container & transport the boxes of books

- Bring the needed government forms to port to process the BFA container through customs.
- Assign roles and tasks to volunteers.
- Consider keeping the books inside their boxes.
- Transport the boxes to a warehouse or other large space to divide by recipient school, or transport the boxes directly to the recipient schools / communities.
- Keep the boxes safe, clean, dry, and organized.

## 3. Sort and organize the books & prepare them for use

- Keep the boxes grouped: 1) textbooks, 2) reference, 3) information, 4) fiction, and 5) books for young children.
- Group books for young children by reading level.
- Group information books by general subject.
- Put fiction books in order by author.
- Set up additional processes to organize and track books.
- Make posters and visual aids.

## 4. Set up systems for operating the library

- Identify volunteers who can help run the library.

- Protect the books from theft and damage.
- Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library.
- Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library.

## 5. Encourage use of the library

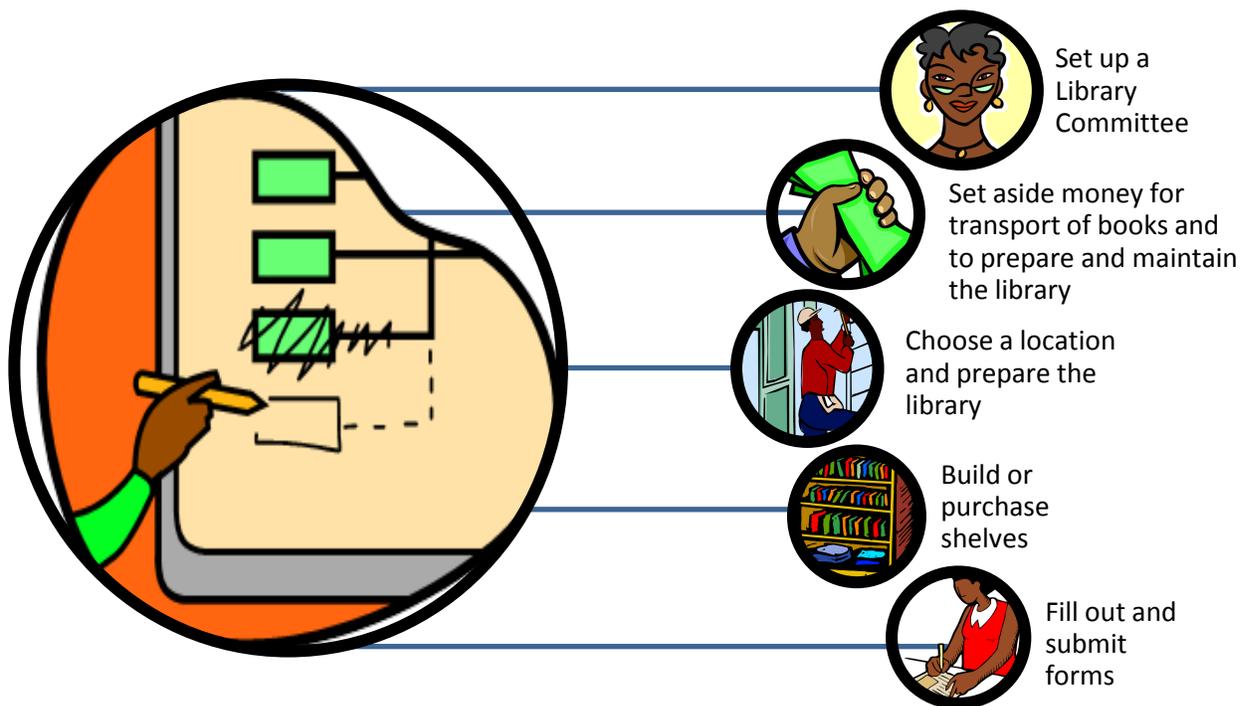
- Make the library a fun, interesting, and welcoming place to be.
- Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used.
- Teach students about the library.
- Show student projects and create displays.
- Share book recommendations.
- Read stories out loud.
- Support student efforts related to the library.
- Share your good work.



---

---

## Step 1: Plan for the BFA books to arrive



---

### To prepare for your shipment of books from BFA, you will need to:

- Talk with people about the books and the library. Begin recruiting volunteers.
- Set up a Library Committee.
- Decide where the library will be located.
- Set aside money for expenses.
- Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries
- Prepare the library space.
- Plan for storage options.
- Complete government forms.
- Gather what is needed to transport the books.

### Preparing now makes everything easier

No matter how many books you are receiving from BFA, it is important to think ahead and prepare for their arrival. Preparing well includes completing government forms, getting space ready for the

---

books, and talking with people in your community about how the books can help improve the literacy skills of local children and your community's development.

## Key roles for volunteers

There are several critical roles related to receiving, transporting, and organizing the BFA books. Sometimes the same person will need to take on more than one role. Make sure there is one person who agrees to fill each major role, and that a back-up person for each role is also identified. Key roles for volunteers are:

**Container Captain:** The container captain raises the money needed to pay for shipping of the BFA books from the United States to Africa, and sometimes for other expenses as well (such as for transportation of the books to their destination and for library set-up). This person works directly with BFA to get the project started and often plays the role of overall project manager. Most often, the container captain either lives in Africa or in the United States. Many of the container captains who live in the United States partner with community leaders and/or NGOs in Africa. The role of container captain includes responsibility for tasks like:

- Raising money and making sure payments take place on time;
- Talking with schools and community leaders about the preparations necessary for storage of books and library set-up;
- Making sure government documents are completed properly;
- Finding a central storage area where recipients can come to collect their books;
- Helping to arrange for transportation from the port to the central storage area and/or to the recipient schools;
- Working with other volunteers and organizations to make sure all other roles in the project are assigned and tasks are completed; and
- Sending comments back to BFA on how the project is going and how the books are being used.

**Consignee:** The consignee is the person from an organization registered with the government (and ideally with tax-exempt status) that is named on the shipping documents as having authority to sign for the BFA shipment at the port and to remove the boxes from the sea container. The consignee helps the container captain make sure the books get from the port of entry to the recipient school. Often the consignee will hire a port agent to facilitate the clearance process.

**Recipient:** Recipients are the people who represent the schools and sites where the books are to be used by students. Each BFA sea container often contains books for more than one recipient.

**Library Committee:** The library committee makes decisions about the books and the library at each specific recipient site. These decisions can include where books will be stored, how the library will loan books, how the library will be organized, and ongoing staff and volunteer roles. The committee should be comprised of community members, ideally with varied backgrounds and areas of expertise.

---

**Coordinator of Volunteers:** There are many tasks involved in receiving, transporting, and organizing your BFA books that are best done by groups of volunteers, such as preparing the library space for the books, moving the boxes off the sea container and into trucks, sorting the books by type, and labeling the books. For each major group task, a coordinator of volunteers should be identified.

**Volunteers:** There are volunteer roles for anyone who wants to help make your project a success. As you read this manual, think about how students, teachers, young adults, parents, community leaders, elders, and others in your community can help complete the tasks that need to be done. The more people from your community are involved in the project, the more they will see your growing school library as a source of pride. Volunteers will be needed immediately to transport the books and get your library organized. They will also be needed for months and years afterward to help maintain and grow the library.

## Talk with people about the books and the library

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients.*

No matter how small or large your allotment of BFA books, let people know they're coming! Talk with people in the community about the books and your school library. These conversations can focus on the importance of local children improving their literacy skills and the positive results these skills can have for the future of your community. Talking about the books is also a way to begin recruiting volunteers. You may want to make a special effort to talk with people who represent NGOs, churches, mosques, or local governments that share your goals. It is good for these organizations to be aware of your efforts – they could become potential partners in recruiting volunteers, helping make sure port processes go smoothly, and more.

## Set up a Library Committee

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients.*

Other BFA recipients have found it helpful to set up a library committee. A library committee is created to make shared decisions about the library (such as where it will be located and whether books will be loaned) and to set rules for how to use the library (including when the library will be open and penalties for lost or damaged books).

Encourage a wide range of current and potential leaders to participate on the library committee. If your school will have a paid librarian, she or he would be a good choice to lead the library committee. Other possible committee members would include interested teachers, school staff, student leaders (both girls and boys), parents, village leaders, and – at least for the first steps of the project – people with knowledge about port processes, transportation, and/or storage options.

When inviting people to serve on the library committee, be mindful of whom to invite or inform first in the process to make sure leaders and elders feel respected. Also, a library committee can be useful in keeping the community connected to the library throughout the year. For example, the committee could create events that link the library and its resources to traditional community celebrations.

Container captains can help a library committee get started and may want to rely on library committee members as links to the broader community. For example, the container captain can inform the library committee about developments in the project – such as when the fundraising

---

goal has been met, or the date when the sea container is expected to arrive – and ask committee members to share the news with those they know in the community.

## **Decide where the library will be located**

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients.*

Where is the best place to locate your library? It depends. If the number of books in your library is smaller – dozens of books – a library area within an existing classroom or school office may make sense. If your BFA shipment will cause your library to grow by thousands of books, you will need a separate room or building.

Easy access to the library for students during the school day is critical for the library to become a good learning resource. If you need to build or repurpose a separate building near the school for your library, make sure the location and the building itself are protected from flooding and other hazards. If the library will be open when the school is closed (during weekends or breaks), to be a resource for the community, consider a location that is both near the school and easy for others in the community to access. Members of the library committee should try to gather opinions and ideas from people who live in the community before deciding where to locate a library building.

## **Set aside money for expenses**

*This information is especially helpful for consignees and container recipients.*

While container captains are often focused on raising the money needed to cover the cost of sending the BFA books across the ocean, there are other important costs to think about as well. Fundraising goals should consider the decisions made by the library committee about where the library will be located (for example, the cost of building a new building, if necessary), the cost of drivers travelling to and from the port, and the cost of materials needed to get the library ready for use (such as bookshelves and supplies). When fundraising for BFA books includes several recipient schools, it may be necessary for each school to make its own arrangements for transportation and to cover the related costs.

Also, it is important for each recipient school to have a good plan for how the ongoing, day-to-day expenses of the library will be covered.

## **Seek out librarian training and connect with other libraries**

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients.*

Another expense to consider is librarian training. Some nations have special groups focused on library science and centers where new librarians can go to learn from each other. BFA recipient schools that have paid to send their librarians to trainings have found it to be a very good learning experience. Trained librarians also seem to feel more confident in teaching volunteers about library processes. If training is too hard to arrange, plan to cover the costs of your librarian visiting librarians in other communities. This way they can see how other libraries operate and learn from others who do similar work.

---

## Prepare the library space

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients.*

Depending on the kind of library space needed for your books, preparations may need to begin long before the books are shipped from BFA.

For detailed guidance on all aspects of preparing a library – from making library shelves from local materials, to guarding against theft and pests – there are two excellent resources to turn to for guidance:

- *Setting Up and Running A Small Library* by Nicola Baird, with the VSO (available at [://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/vsolibrary.pdf](http://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/vsolibrary.pdf)) and
- *Libraries For All: How to Start and Run a Basic Library* by Laura Wendell with UNESCO (available at [://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED521842.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED521842.pdf)).

The VSO guide includes drawings of simple buildings that account for humidity, security, and flooding, and plans for making adjustable-height bookshelves out of local materials that are low cost. It is very important for bookshelves to be raised off the floor to protect against water damage during rainy seasons and to be short enough for children to reach the books they are interested in.

There should be good air flow in the library, since books can be damaged by humidity. Also, depending on how the bookshelves are built, setting the legs of bookshelves in small pots of water or petrol can help protect the books from insects.

## Plan for storage options

*This information is especially helpful for consignees.*

If the preparation of your library space takes a long time, or if a bigger space is needed to hold teams of volunteers sorting and labeling the books (see Step 3), you will need to plan for a space to be available for use – a warehouse or other large, secure area.

Also, if the sea container from BFA contains books for more than one recipient, a warehouse or other large, secure, centrally-located building may be needed for storing the boxes for a short time and dividing them by recipient library. Often, the consignee arranges this space.

## Complete government forms & prepare to clear the container

*This information is especially helpful for consignees.*

Once the funds have been raised and BFA staff have provided an expected date when the sea container will likely leave the U.S., fill out all government forms needed to receive your BFA books and inquire with the port authority about the processes required to clear a container. Make sure the forms will be valid for the date when your shipment is expected to arrive. Add some extra time in case the shipment is delayed. (For example, in Nigeria, the critical form to complete is the Form M, shown at the end of this section. The Form M is only valid for six months, so care must be taken to clear the container in that time frame. Note that BFA must receive a Form M in order to put the container on the BFA shipping schedule.

Getting approval of government forms can be complicated. Common challenges include:

- 
- Delays at the port related to slow government processes or port officials who are hard to work with;
  - Port officials spending extra time looking at government documents or the contents of the sea container;
  - Economic problems that lead to port officials going on strike or taking other actions to show their unhappiness with the government; or
  - Bad weather that slows down all tasks.
  - Port officials requesting a list of the individual ISBN numbers of the books in the container (Note: in Ethiopia and Nigeria, BFA has special forms that can facilitate exemption to this request)

To help avoid some these problems, try to find a volunteer or NGO representative to act as consignee who has experience in port procedures and who has tax-exempt status to avoid paying government import duties. This person should be at the port when the sea container arrives. Very often, consignees choose to hire a port agent to facilitate the process. This agent should be hired well in advance of the container's arrival.

Also, make sure the volunteers who are meeting the sea container at the port have with them the contact information for other volunteers in case a change in plans is necessary. (The worksheet at the end of this manual is provided for this purpose.)

\*Special note on the ETA of the container: the estimated arrival time provided by the freight forwarder is indeed an estimate. Containers are often delayed by several days—even weeks—past the ETA date. Make sure container recipients and volunteers are aware of this, and flexible about the arrival date of the container.

## **Gather what is needed to transport the books**

*This information is especially helpful for container recipients and consignees.*

When you know the expected arrival date for the BFA sea container, begin to plan for the volunteers, vehicles, and supplies needed to transport the boxes of books.

Covered trucks are ideal for keeping the boxes safe and dry. If a covered truck is not an option, you will want to secure and protect the boxes somehow. The plastic used to wrap the boxes to keep them from moving around in the sea container (shown in the photograph below) may be useful in covering the boxes on the truck bed. (Since you will likely not have a forklift, the plastic will be unwrapped for individual unloading of the boxes).



For more sturdy truck bed covers that can be made in advance, [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com) provides instructions for several options, including:

- <http://www.ehow.com/how/7588582-diy-pickup-bed-cover.html>
- <http://www.ehow.com/how/4620708-make-truck-bed-cover.html>

In addition to the consignee who will sign for the shipment at the port of entry, other volunteers will need to be recruited to be drivers (to the port and/or warehouse and back) and to carry the boxes from the sea container to the trucks. You may wish to hire day laborers to accomplish the unpacking and transport of the boxes.

Make sure to recruit more volunteers for these roles than you actually need. The date the sea container arrives in port could change and you will want back-up options and a contingency plan in case volunteers who commit in advance are unable to make it after all.

Example of a Form M for Nigeria (Source: [www.hmlogistics.com](http://www.hmlogistics.com))

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**  
FOREIGN EXCHANGE (MONITORING AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) DECREE 1991

**FORM M**  
**APPLICATION TO IMPORT**  
(To be completed in quadruplicate)

VALID FOR FOREX? (Y/N)  ORIGINAL APPLICATION NUMBER: MF 1884035

\*Use capital letters in completing this form

1. Name and Address of Applicant's Banker (Authorized Dealer)

2. PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT  
 APPLICANT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ (P.O. Box is not acceptable)  
 TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
REGISTRATION/CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

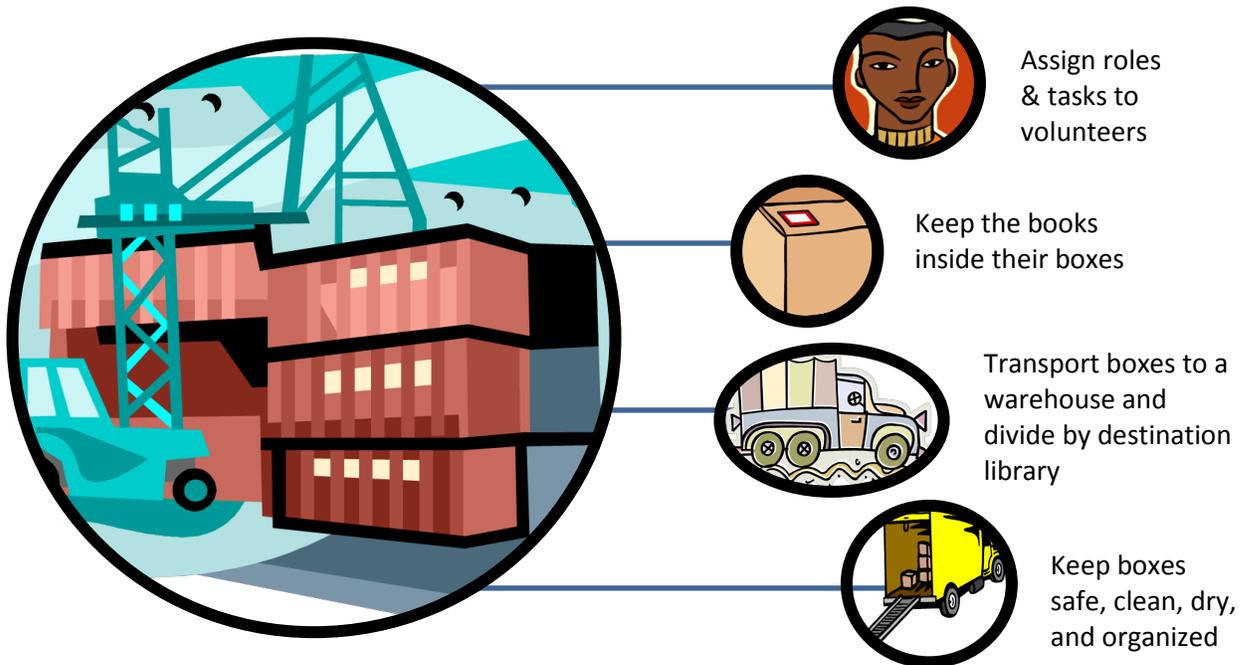
3. PARTICULARS OF BENEFICIARY  
 BENEFICIARY'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ (P.O. Box is not acceptable)  
 TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
 COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_ CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

4. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF GOODS (GIVE FULL PARTICULARS AND STATE IF GOODS ARE NEW, REFURBISHED OR SCRAPS)

Net weight/Size (e.g., Without packaging)		No. of Items reported (as per H.S. Codes)
ITEM NO. 1	ITEM NO. 2	ITEM NO. 3
H.S. Code	H.S. Code	H.S. Code
Actual Purpose Code	Actual Purpose Code	Actual Purpose Code
No. of packages	No. of packages	No. of packages
FOB Value	FOB Value	FOB Value
FOB Value (Words)	FOB Value (Words)	FOB Value (Words)
Description of goods	Description of goods	Description of goods
Freight Charges	Freight Charges	Freight Charges
TOTAL VALUE OF GOODS (in Foreign Currency)		
Total FOB Value	Total Freight Charges	Exchange Rate
Total Ancillary Charges	Currency Code	Preforma Invoice No. & Date
Total CAF Value (in figures)		
TOTAL CAF VALUE (in Words)		
Payment Mode (e.g. Remittance/International Letter of Credit or SB for Collection) Code:		
Transfer Mode (e.g. Telegraphic Transfer, Bank Draft, Mail Transfer etc.) Code:		
Country of Origin	Code	Country of Supply
Mode of Transport (e.g. Air, Sea, Land, Post etc.)	Port of Discharge	Post Code
5. DESIGNATED BANK Code:		
6. INSPECTION AGENT'S NAME Code:		
7. APPLICANT'S ENDORSEMENT <small>*Any false declaration will render importer liable for prosecution</small> Full Name: _____ Stamp, Signature & Date: _____		8. AUTHORISED DEALER'S ENDORSEMENT Full Name: _____ Stamp, Signature & Date: _____

---

## Step 2: Unload the sea container & transport the boxes of books



---

### To unload the BFA sea container and get the books to their destination, you will need to:

- Bring the needed government forms to port to receive the BFA sea container.
- Assign roles and tasks to volunteers.
- Keep the books inside their boxes.
- Transport the boxes to a warehouse or other large space to divide by recipient school, or transport the boxes directly to the recipient schools / communities.
- Keep the boxes safe, clean, dry, and organized.

### Organization is key to fast, effective transfer of your BFA books

As with any project where you are moving a large number of heavy items, planning in advance is important to reducing the time and cost involved. This step in the process is best handled by a group of volunteers, led by one coordinator who is organized, able to deal well with unexpected problems, and good at working with people to keep them focused.

The container captain, consignee, or coordinator should be given the responsibility of gathering the contact information for anyone who will be helping with getting the books from the port to the

recipient schools. The worksheet at the end of this manual can be used for this purpose. This same contact information should be shared with everyone involved in the process, in case there are unexpected problems or delays.

## What to bring to port

In getting ready to travel to port, there are important items to bring and things to think about:

- The government forms needed to receive the shipment of BFA books (brought by the consignee who is authorized to sign off on the shipment at port);
- Funds to cover port & clearance fees (and other incurred costs, like storage fees. The port authority or your clearing agent can give a cost estimate);
- Transportation vehicles, such as trucks with a covered bed, cars for smaller shipments, or open vehicles that have tarps and tie-downs to protect the boxes of books;
- The list of volunteers and contact information (including information on the temporary warehouse, if one will be used); and
- Money for fuel, food, and possibly lodging (if the port or warehouse is a long distance away, or if problems arise).

## Assign volunteers to move and transport the boxes

Groups of volunteers are needed for this step to go well. For a smaller shipment, the consignee and driver(s) may be all the help that is needed. For large shipments of thousands of books, many more volunteers will be required.



The boxes of BFA books are heavy and are best moved off of the sea container by an organized, assembly-line process so that people do not hurt their backs. No more than two people should be assigned to be inside the sea container; those one or two people should pass boxes one at a time to other volunteers outside the container, one person to the next down a line, until the boxes reach the trucks. A coordinator should help arrange each person in the line and make sure the boxes are not opened or mishandled in the process.

Note: in many containers, pallets may be labeled for a specific recipient site. Care must be taken to keep these boxes together in the unloading process, as each individual *box* on the pallet will likely *not* be labeled for the individual recipient site.

If the sea container contains books for more than one recipient school, the boxes can be separated by recipient once at the warehouse/building.

Volunteers representing each school should be sent to retrieve their boxes at the warehouse or other large building that is in a central location convenient to all the recipient schools. Depending on the size of the allotment, a recipient school

---

may need to send additional volunteers to move the boxes from the warehouse/building to their final destination.

Note: boxes labeled “primary science” and “primary math” will often contain many copies of one single textbook. Thus, you may wish to give special care to the organization and distribution of these books so that one school does not receive more copies of a single book than they have use for. If upwards of 30 identical textbooks are discovered in the organization process, we recommend that they go to one school to be utilized as a classroom set.

## Consider keeping the books inside their boxes

Coordinators should consider keeping the boxes sealed until they reach their recipient school. If pallets are labeled by recipient location, keeping the boxes unopened may be beneficial for the following reasons:

- Keeping the books inside the boxes helps make sure recipient schools receive the books they specifically ordered;
- Unopened boxes are easier to stack and keep organized;
- Opening the boxes and trading books with representatives of other recipient schools can sometimes result in bad feelings and conflict, and volunteers may not know the needs of the school library or what books are more desired than others;
- Time spent looking through the boxes of books is time lost in the process, which could increase project costs (for example, extra food and lodging for volunteers or needing an interim storage building/warehouse for a longer period of time); and
- Opening the boxes for the first time at the recipient school can be part of a celebration or a community event.

The labels on each box provide important information you can rely on in separating the boxes, including the type of books each box contains (textbooks or leisure, which includes fiction and information/non-fiction) and the reading level of the books. In the case of textbooks, the label shows the subject. (See the label code key at the end of this section for more information.) If you choose to keep the boxes unopened, be sure to open a few boxes in each pallet to get a sense of what is in them.

## Transport the boxes to a warehouse or directly to the recipient schools

Again, depending on the situation, a warehouse or other interim storage area may be needed. Sometimes there isn't enough time or space to separate the boxes by recipient while at the port, or the port is not a good central location for all the recipient schools. Even if all the boxes on the sea container are being sent to one recipient school, an interim storage option may be needed as a place to organize the books and get them ready to bring into the library.

BFA ideally recommends that, when possible, school administrators/teachers open the boxes before distribution to students. This is because a book like *Harry Potter* may be acceptable for a 12 year old in an urban area, but not an 8 year old in a rural area, or in a religious school.

## Keep the boxes safe, clean and dry

---

Often, BFA container captains plan for the sea container to arrive in seasons of dry weather. However, if rain or other bad weather could be an issue, make sure to allow for extra time at port; extra money for fuel, food, and lodging for drivers and other volunteers; and longer use of an interim warehouse/storage building.

The more you can do to make sure the boxes are kept clean and dry, the better. Also, boxes should be secured whenever possible to prevent theft. Warehouses/buildings should be locked when not in use and trucks should be kept in sight when volunteers take a break during transport.

### **Label Code Key for Boxes Shipped from BFA**

The following codes show the reading level of the books in each box:

**P Jr** = Younger primary ("Primary Junior")

**P Sr** = Older primary ("Primary Senior")

**S** = Secondary

After these reading level codes, you will see the type of books included.  
For example:

**S / Math** = Secondary math textbooks

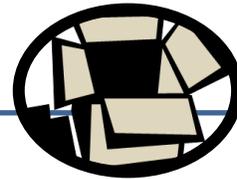
**P Jr / Sci** = Younger primary science textbooks

**P Sr / Leisure** = Older primary leisure reading books (fiction and information/non-fiction)

**Make sure to look at the codes carefully.** Boxes of books meant for adults (being sent to college, university, or community libraries) are often shipped in the same sea container as boxes meant for primary and secondary schools. The boxes of books for adults often show the label code "**PS**" for "Post-Secondary" (for example, PS/Bus & Econ = Post-Secondary Business and Economics).

---

## Step 3: Sort and organize the books & prepare them for use



Sort the books by type



Divide information books by general subject



Put fiction books on shelves by the author's surname



Make posters to show where to find books and to share library rules

---

### To make the books easy to find and keep track of, you will need to:

- Sort the books by type: 1) textbooks, 2) reference, 3) information, 4) fiction, and 5) books for young children.
- Group books for young children by reading level.
- Group information books by general subject.
- Put fiction books in order by author.
- Set up additional processes to organize and track books.

### Make the library easy to use for students, teachers, librarians, and helpers

Setting up a library involves organizing the books and creating systems that make it easy for everyone to find what they are looking for. Even if your library is small, there is value in applying the ideas presented here.

---

Community members and students can get very excited about the arrival of books and may push for the library to open quickly. We recommend taking the time necessary to set up your library well before it is used, and encouraging enthusiastic library supporters to help with the tasks of library set-up, such as unpacking the books from the boxes and sorting them.

## Sort the books by type

One of the first and most important tasks is to sort the books by type. There are five basic types of books to consider:

- Textbooks (most often used by students and teachers as part of formal lessons);
- Reference (such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauruses, and atlases that are not loaned out of the library);
- Information (also called “non-fiction” – books that explain facts and concepts about the current or historical world);
- Fiction (stories of various lengths); and
- Books for young children (children who are still developing their most basic reading skills).

## Group books for young children by reading level

Books for young children – early primary school – are sometimes called “picture books” because there are often more pictures than words on the pages. These books are best grouped by reading level (rather than by information and fiction). Because young children tend to look at many books and to not be able to place them on a shelf precisely, it is unnecessary to place the books on the shelves in an exact order. At most, you may consider further grouping the books by the first letter of the author’s surname (the author’s “last name” or “family name”). Try to have “face out” shelves for children to select books by the cover art before they can read.

## Group the information books by general subject

Information books for older children are best grouped by subject. The smaller the library, the more general these subjects can be. For example, a small library might group all the books about science and the natural world together. In a large library, it would be best to further group together books about plants, books about insects, and books about the solar system, for example.

The documents from the VSO and UNESCO, referenced in Step 1 of this manual, provide detailed options for categorizing information books. Both provide information on the Dewey Decimal system – the world’s most widely used and specific method of categorizing information books. This system uses numbers (often specific to the hundredth decimal) and letters to give each book a unique number.

The VSO document describes an alternative system, called the “Junior Color Code” approach, which may be the most useful for recipients of BFA books. With Junior Color Coding, books are categorized by color rather than number. The illustration at the end of this section, titled “The Colors of Our Library” provides an example of how this system can be applied to a poster that helps students find the kind of books they are interested in.

---

The VSO document provides details in setting up this system, including labeling shelves and books to reflect their color code and how to transition from a Junior Color Code system to the Dewey Decimal system as your library grows.

## Put fiction books in order by author

The fiction books for older children are best divided by the author's surname. If you have a large number of fiction books, place them on the shelves in exact alphabetical order; if you have a small number, it is fine to group them by first letter of the author's surname.

## Set up additional processes to organize and track books

There are a number of additional processes recommended by the VSO and UNESCO documents that can be very useful to keeping track of the books in the library and making it easy for everyone to find specific books. We recommend that the VSO and UNESCO documents be used to guide your efforts. These documents provide in-depth descriptions on how to:

- Keep a record of every book in your library, in general order of when the books were received, and note the source of the book (BFA or another source);
- Set up a lending system for a school library (how to keep track of the books that have been loaned, to sample posters explaining the lending process to students);
- Label the books, including a label on the spine, a label showing the book belongs to your library, and for books that will be loaned out a label to stamp or write the date when the book should be returned to the library;
- Make a card catalogue by title to help people find specific books easily;
- Make shelf lists to help identify missing books and make shelving easier; and
- Make posters and visual aids, such as labels for shelves and illustrations of library rules and processes.
- Decide how to dispose of any books you deem unusable or inappropriate for your audience.

Note for community libraries: The VSO and UNESCO manuals have additional information that you may deem helpful in setting up your community library that deviates from the information detailed here.





## The Colors of Our Library

**Black:**  
Philosophy & Religion

**Orange:**  
Economics & Transport

**Brown:**  
Grammar & Languages

**Yellow:**  
Weather, Rocks & Physics

**Green:**  
Plants & Animals

**Red:**  
Agriculture & Business

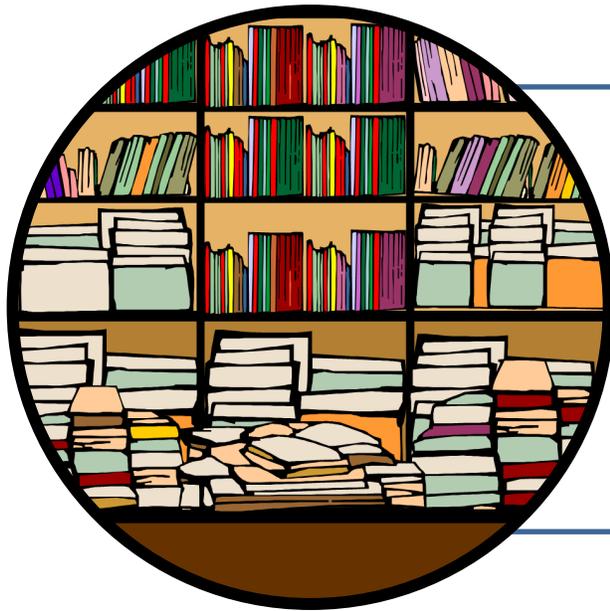
**Purple:**  
Art, Music & Sports

**Pink:**  
Poetry, Myths & Legends

**Blue:**  
History & Geography

---

## Step 4: Set up systems for operating the library



Identify volunteers to help run the library



Make lists of what tasks must be done regularly



Assign responsibility for making sure tasks are completed

---

### To keep your library in good condition, you will need to:

- Identify volunteers who can help run the library.
- Protect the books from theft and damage.
- Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library.
- Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library.

### Before opening the library, make plans for how it will be maintained

Setting up a library is a big project; keeping a library going is a daily effort. Before opening the library for use, it is helpful to set up systems for maintaining the library.

### Identify volunteers who can help run the library

Keeping a library running smoothly is more than a one-person job. Even large libraries with money to pay several staff often use volunteer helpers as well. Older students and parents are often interested in volunteering for school libraries. Volunteers can help with a wide range of tasks from putting books in order on the shelves to working with students on special projects. To find

---

volunteers, reach out to groups of parents, student organizations, community groups, churches and mosques – anyplace where people gather in your community.

## **Protect the books from theft and damage**

As this manual mentions in the first section focused on preparing for your BFA books to arrive, the library space should be set up to keep books safe and in good condition. The VSO and UNESCO documents both describe the importance of good air flow in the library, keeping the books on shelves several inches off the floor, and placing the legs of the bookshelves in pots of water or petrol to keep insects away. They also suggest ways to keep the library safe from theft, such as putting up bars or metal screens on windows, having a librarian / volunteer desk next to the door, and labeling the books with nameplates showing that the books belong to your library.

Also, the more that parents and community members know about the library and support it, the more likely that books loaned to children or found outside the library will be returned.

## **Make and follow lists of what must be done to maintain the library**

When a team of school staff and volunteers are working together to maintain the library, task lists can be useful for assigning responsibilities and making sure the work gets done. The VSO document includes lists similar to the following for routine upkeep of a library; you may want to add items to these lists based on your library's unique needs:

### **Daily task list:**

- Make sure the library is open at the times the Library Committee has set.
- At the beginning of the day, change the date stamp. (See the VSO document for details on how to use a date stamp as part of the book lending process.)
- Loan books to students and keep track of which books have been lent out.
- Put books that have been returned back on the shelves.
- Dust the shelves (moving the books as you dust) and sweep the floor.
- At the end of the day, lock the door.

### **Weekly task list:**

- Identify which students have borrowed books but not returned them by the due date. Ask volunteer helpers or teachers to remind those students to return the books.
- Repair books.
- Plan for visits from specific classes / forms to the library. (This is especially important to do at the beginning of the school year.)

### **Monthly task list:**

- Change the displays in the library (for example, posters, recommended books, etc. – see the next section for details).
- Organize activities, competitions or games.

- 
- If additional books are expected to be added to the library, check in on when they might arrive and plan for getting them ready for use.

**End of the term / school year task list:**

- Clean the library well and dust every bookshelf with extra effort and attention.
- Check for insects and use preventive insect sprays.
- Ask students and teachers to return all books to the library.
- Make a list of missing books. If they cannot be found, take the books off the library lists.
- Remove damaged books that cannot be repaired from the library.
- Thank volunteers, including student helpers, for their work during the school year and invite volunteers to help in the year ahead.
- Ask for ideas on how the library can be made even better.

**Make sure there are resources to support the ongoing work of the library**

Work to be creative and resourceful in keeping the library in good condition. Get to know people in the community who have the skills and materials needed to make repairs to the library. Make sure a yearly budget is set for ongoing library needs, such as paying library staff, buying supplies, and ordering additional books. Keep community leaders informed and involved – they can be helpful in strengthening the commitment of volunteers and securing additional local support to maintain and grow the library’s resources.



---

## Step 5: Encourage use of the library



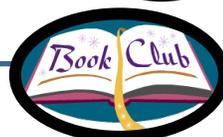
Change displays regularly to keep the library fun and interesting



Share recommendations from students, helpers, and teachers



Help children make their own bookmarks



Organize book clubs, hold writing contests, and other activities all year long

---

### To keep students interested in the library, you will need to:

- Make the library a fun, interesting, and welcoming place to be.
- Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used.
- Teach students about the library.
- Show student projects and create displays.
- Share book recommendations.
- Read stories out loud.
- Support student efforts related to the library.
- Share your good work.

### With a little creativity, you can make the library an active place of fun and learning all year long

Perhaps the most important purpose of a school library is to help students develop a love of reading. When children want to read and choose to spend their free time reading about subjects they are interested in, their literacy skills will improve. Holding creative activities in the library can also be a way of attracting children to the library, and many activities can be done for little or no cost. In addition to the ideas that follow, the VSO and UNESCO documents provide many more specific ways to orient children to the library and keep them interested throughout the school year.

---

## **Make the library interesting and welcoming**

Make it a priority for the library to be a place where learning is fun and children feel comfortable. Think about how you can add color to the space and place mats and chairs in a way that encourages spending time with the books. Flowers, mobiles, and posters can make a big difference to the feel of the library. Talk with student members of your Library Committee about what students are interested in and ask for their ideas and help in making the library a welcoming place to be.

We encourage you to set up a system for checking out books so students may bring books home. Establishing a clear check out system and set of rules for this process will make it easier for volunteers and library organizers to facilitate this process and for students to understand their duties as a book borrower.

## **Work with teachers and volunteers to make sure the library is well used**

Before the library opens, and before each school term, take some time to bring teachers and volunteers together in the library to talk about its purpose and discuss ideas for how library resources can support the work of teachers. There may be books that relate to the ideas teachers are planning to teach.

It is important that both volunteers and teachers understand how the library is organized and the library rules. Volunteers will often work with teachers to follow up on books that students need to return to the library. Teachers can help students and their parents understand the purpose of the library and how library books should be used and taken care of.

Teachers can be encouraged to develop library activities that are specific to their students. Library time can be set aside for different form rooms / classrooms to focus on tasks like researching answers to questions or gathering ideas for writing projects. Teachers and librarians working as partners can make the most of your library resources.

Also, make sure volunteers have a strong understanding of the purpose of the library and are committed to making it a fun and welcoming place for students. If volunteers are seen as too strict and are focused more on enforcing rules than on growing a love of reading, the library will be less of a resource for students.

## **Teach students about the library**

Meet with students in the library by form / class at the beginning of the school year and talk about how to take care of a book, how to find different kinds of books in the library, and the library rules. Help students understand the parts of a book and the meaning of the labels used in your library. Show students the posters that explain how books are organized and how books are loaned.

Teaching children good routines can help keep the library books in good condition. Hands should be washed and dried before touching library books, and children should not eat or drink near the books. These same rules should apply at home when children borrow books from the library.

Using bookmarks is also a good practice for children to learn early. A library activity could be to have children make their own bookmarks.

---

When talking about library rules with students, think about how quiet the library actually needs to be. A library where all talk is at a whisper level may be unrealistic. However, you can teach children a scale of 0-10 of noise levels, where 0 is silence and 10 is the loudest noise they can make. Determine what noise level will be acceptable in your library area during different types of activities (for example, times when stories are being read aloud and times when children are reading quietly) and help children practice talking at that noise level.

## **Show student projects and create displays**

Librarians, volunteers, teachers, and students can work together to develop creative displays that change throughout the year. Creating displays of student projects can help children feel welcomed, recognized, and important.

For example, you can hold a writing contest and display the top stories. You can have students of a particular age group create mobiles that can be hung from the ceiling. You can put together displays focused on current events or important people. Make sure to identify books in your library that relate to the projects and displays and set them out for children to look at.

## **Share book recommendations**

Another no-cost activity is for librarians to write short book recommendations and encourage students, volunteers, and teachers to do the same. The recommendations need only be a few sentences long, sharing what the reader liked most about the book. A recommendation can be displayed where the book is usually shelved or in a special display area.

## **Read stories out loud**

For young primary school children, one of the best ways to develop a love of reading is to hear stories read aloud. This is a good activity to hold in the library and a way for librarians and volunteers to connect with students. In addition to reading the words of the story out loud, point out interesting pictures in the book and ask children questions as you go along or at the end of the story.

Reading stories aloud in the library also models a good practice for parents to read to their children at home. Teachers can reinforce the idea of parents reading to children, and bookmarks sent home with loaned books can do so as well.

Another fun activity to connect the library to the broader community and to local cultural leaders is to invite storytellers to come to the library. Often BFA book recipients do not have many books that relate to their own culture or community. Children may enjoy hearing from a local storyteller, and older children could work together to create a book based on the story and display it in the library. You could have a local elder translate a book to the local language by putting the words next to the English words, or do a bi-lingual story hour.

## **Support student efforts related to the library**

It is best to not have all library activities developed by adults. Students often have good ideas for how to make the library a fun place to read and learn, while following the library rules. Student groups can organize book clubs, where they all read the same book and talk about what they think

---

about it and how it relates to their lives. Library clubs are also common, where students who choose to be in the club work with the librarian to develop posters, displays, and activities.

## Share your good work

You have worked hard raising money to bring books to the community. You have invested time and resources to set up a library. You have developed ways to make the library a fun and vibrant place for students to learn a love of reading. Why not tell everyone?

The more people know about the good work you are doing, the more community support you will have to continue your efforts. Make sure to keep community partners, regional governments, and NGOs informed of your progress at least once a year.

Also, please continue to see BFA as your partner. Tell BFA staff how your library is doing and share stories and photos of how the library is being used. Let us know if you are in the U.S.—we have special events in several cities each year!

## Thank you!

Thank you for all you are doing to support literacy among the children of Africa. If you have suggestions for how this manual can be expanded or improved, please email us at [bfa@BooksForAfrica.org](mailto:bfa@BooksForAfrica.org), call 651-602-9844, or send mail to Books For Africa, 253 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55101 USA.



## BFA PROJECT WORKSHEET FOR CONTAINER CAPTAINS & VOLUNTEERS

Fill in the most important information for each phase of your project (*for example, names, phone numbers, email, and physical addresses*)

<p><b>Raise money for BFA books &amp; expenses</b> (library building, shelves, maintenance). Common amount of time: <i>1 year or more</i></p>	<p>Container Captain (<i>fundraiser / project manager</i>):</p> <p>BFA contact:</p> <p>Library Committee contact:</p> <p>Other volunteers:</p>
<p><b>Send book request form to BFA.</b> BFA gathers books, prepares them for sea container shipment. Common amount of time: <i>1-2 months</i></p>	
<p><b>Sea container travels from USA to African port.</b> Common amount of time: <i>2-3 months</i></p>	<p>Date sea container is expected to arrive in port:</p> <p>Consignee (<i>signs off on paperwork at port</i>):</p> <p>Port contact:</p> <p>Other volunteers (<i>drivers, box movers</i>):</p> <p>Warehouse location &amp; contact person (if necessary):</p>
<p><b>Sea container arrives in port.</b> Unload sea container, transport boxes to destination library, or to warehouse to be sorted by destination library. Common amount of time: <i>3 days – 3 months</i></p>	
<p><b>Set up the library.</b> Divide books by type, shelve them, set up library operations. Communicate library rules and how the library works. Plan regular activities. Common timeframe: <i>3 months - ongoing</i></p>	<p>Library Committee contact:</p> <p>Community and student volunteers:</p>