

FAVL support for African village libraries:

FAVL-managed libraries, FAVL-supported libraries, and support for related library activities

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As FAVL evolves, the nature of support to village libraries will change. This document presents some key aspects of FAVL support for libraries as of 2007. FAVL generally divides its support (whether financial or technical) into three broad but sometimes overlapping domains. Direct assistance to libraries is divided into assistance to FAVL-managed libraries and FAVL-supported libraries. Indirect assistance to libraries comes in the form of programs and activities that encourage reading, promote culture, the arts, and civic engagement, and make information available to village residents.

FAVL-managed (FM) libraries are village libraries where FAVL has taken an active role in initiating or restructuring the library and where FAVL continues to have a significant role in managing library operations. FAVL representatives assume a large role in setting priorities and guiding the regular activities and programs of the library. FAVL representatives are in frequent contact with library staff, and FAVL support depends on monthly reporting of statistics and accounts. Staff members of FAVL-managed libraries participate in regular FAVL trainings and staff meetings, and much or most of their salaries and benefits are determined by FAVL. FAVL representatives write performance evaluations of librarians and library functioning, though final determination of employment and library policy may be shared with other entities. FAVL is committed to a long-term relationship with and substantial support for the libraries, though with the expectation that the intensity of the commitment will decline as each library matures and develops a community of users, volunteers, donor and government partners, and experienced library staff that can assume greater management and financial responsibility for the library. There will be a variety of FAVL-managed libraries, some with 100% FAVL management and others where management is shared with local NGOs, community groups, or government entities (such as schools). FAVL fundraisers will encourage explicit donations earmarked for FAVL-managed libraries, with the understanding that once an endowment target has been attained further donations will be allocated to general FAVL accounts, according to the budget plan agreed upon by the FAVL board of directors.

In 2007, FAVL-managed libraries are the following:

- Burkina Faso (5): Bereba, Koumbia, Karaba, Sara, Dohoun
- Ghana (2): Sumbrungu, Sherigu
- Uganda (1): Kitengesa
- Tanzania (1): Mvumi

In 2007, FAVL has plans to fundraise for and establish two more FAVL-managed libraries, one in Burkina Faso and one in Ghana.

FAVL –supported (FS) libraries are community libraries that have been initiated or are currently operated as public libraries by non-FAVL entities, whether local community groups, international NGOs, or government structures. FAVL-supported libraries operate independently of FAVL, and are expected to submit only annual reports to FAVL. FAVL takes no role in their management, and assumes no responsibility for their staffing or expenditures. FAVL-supported libraries and library staff

- are public libraries (open to the public and not-for profit ventures)
- have no conflict-of-interest or self-dealing between library management and library operations (e.g. library does not pay excessive rent or salary to library managers)
- are committed to transparent and accessible bookkeeping practices.

FAVL plays a positive role for FAVL-supported libraries in being able to offer occasional support, and also in facilitating occasional verification of library quality. FAVL may act as a broker or partner for donors that wish to support village libraries but lack the expertise or local staff to implement a library-support program. FAVL may initiate and invite participation in programs that disburse grants or provide training (e.g. workshops). There is an expectation that programs will include a vetting component to assure that participating

FAVL-supported libraries may include libraries supported through an affiliation with a particular fundraiser, donor, or donor group that wishes to support a library in a particular village location but does not wish to have FAVL assume management responsibility (often because the donor does not want to commit to raising or donating an endowment substantial enough to permit effective FAVL management for an extended period of years). In these cases, FAVL will work with the donor to establish clear procedures and guidelines for expenditures of funds donated to FAVL and earmarked for a FAVL-supported library. In particular, a specified percentage of donated funds will be allocated to the general FAVL budget. Each case will be unique. The percentage will vary according to the expenses likely to be incurred in ongoing oversight, accounting and donor management expenses and effort, and library quality assurance (e.g. through site visits by FAVL representatives). FAVL will generally not establish an affiliation with a donor and library location that is far away (in terms of travel cost and time) from existing FAVL structures (presently in Burkina Faso, northern Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda). In general, donors wishing to donate to fund a newly established FAVL-supported library will agree to a threshold endowment: if total donations do not reach the threshold, funds will not be disbursed, and will, after a specified period of time, revert to the FAVL general fund. FAVL discourages one-shot donations to communities to establish libraries when there is no plan for continued support and quality assurance.

In 2007, the bulk of FAVL-supported libraries are in Uganda, where FAVL co-director Kate Parry has helped organize the Uganda Community Library Association and received grant funds from the Embassy of the United States to organize workshops for Ugandan community libraries and disburse grants to eligible community libraries.

FAVL may also from time to time undertake library-related activities that do not directly involve supporting libraries. These include production and publication of appropriate books in local languages, evaluation and analysis of functioning and impact of public libraries in villages, and promotion of reading, culture and the arts, and civic engagement in the context of village libraries.