

Part II - Grant Services and Experience (Continued)

8. Please briefly describe your grant activities to date, addressing the following topics where relevant:

Whether your core professional activities are what you expected based on award book description and pre-departure information you received
The degree to which your grant activities are going as you had originally planned
Relations with colleagues at your institution(s)
Your teaching assignment (e.g., number and level of courses, number and preparation of students, etc.)
Whether facilities and resources you need are available at your institution
Any other factors which have played a major role in either hindering or facilitating your grant activities

This has been a precious time for me, and I am grateful to Fulbright Program, CIES, and my institution for making it possible.

http://nihrecord.od.nih.gov/newsletters/2008/02_08_2008/story2.htm

By being here on the ground fulltime, I've been able to build on and expand the various projects I was already doing here -- beyond my imagination. I've been able to follow my nose to new partners and pathways for projects. For example, the MedlinePlus African tutorial on malaria project www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/africa is now being tested in Mifumi village in Eastern Uganda (after students carried out a baseline survey on knowledge of malaria.) As a result of our work, Mifumi has been added to the –Based Education and Service Program (COBES) at the Faculty of Medicine.

The tutorial concept is going to be integrated into the work at Gulu medical school which I visited this week - formerly the center of the 20-year war in Northern Uganda. Their interest is in mental health and post-war trauma.

In addition to the tutorials, we've been doing a lot of training and outreach with the Albert Cook library. We've worked on taking library resources out of the library and into the classroom or proactively bringing classes into the library for workshops. What an invigorating **four-hour workshop we did last weekend** - doctors, researchers, nurses, the whole nine-yards from several of the well-funded programs at the medical school - yet they didn't know about many databases, how to get fulltexts, etc and were hungry to know!! We could have gone on all day but were wilting in the heat.

I've also taken a small team to assist the newly formed Kabale University in Western Uganda. We advised in IT, library science, counseling, and outreach.

We've created a number of new partnerships here – Makerere University-Walter Reed Project, Makerere University-Johns Hopkins University, Mifumi Project, and Gulu medical school in addition to Health Promotion and Education at the Ministry of Health.

I've worked hard to put together local teams and build capacity here. My core group of students are incredibly bright and take initiative easily. They are interested in the research I'm doing and have taken it as their own: Can an IT intervention make a difference in the morbidity and mortality of malaria in Mifumi village?

All of this goes on in the shadow of the old antennae we/Satellife set up in 1992 - how things have changed!

I am thinking about next steps and what form my return to NLM will take. In my Fulbright application, I said that one output of this year will be to help NLM put together a clear approach for international outreach in Africa. I think that training in searching databases is key to researchers, clinicians, and health professionals here - they are by default not part of the international world of medicine and research if they cannot do this. The librarians need to be supported and encouraged to be proactive, to come out of their cages and go to where the need is, rather than waiting for people to come to the library. All of these folks need to understand first hand what people in the communities believe about disease and find creative ways to reach them as well as new partners (such as newspapers) which can help them to this in a way that's cost effective.

Re institutional liabilities: I came self-contained with some support available from my institution for my work here.

Re institutional colleagues: I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to work on a regular basis with old colleagues and to meet and work with new ones.

Part III - Advice for Future Grantees

9. Reflect on your arrival in the host country and provide any advice on logistics and getting settled that would be useful to a future grantee considering a similar appointment. Consider including tips in the following areas:

- Living conditions, including the cost of living
- Money matters - such as how much to bring, what form is preferable (travelers checks, cash, etc.), whether a bank account can be easily established, etc.
- Air freight or other shipments and how to deal with customs
- Visa issues
- Arrival in airport and subsequent travel to destination
- Problems bringing any specific equipment or resources into host country
- Arrangements for family members - such as schooling for children, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- Any other recommendations related to logistics

LIVING QUARTERS:

Regarding living quarters and security, the Fulbright scholar is caught between the U.S. Embassy and the University.

When cleaned, painted, and repaired (all of which I contracted and paid for on my own), EEC Flat 2B was quite satisfactory. While the work was being done, I was fortunate in that my family and I had a place to stay with friends who also pointed me to good contractors. Had this not been the case, I'm not sure how I would have gone about getting reliable people at an affordable price or how I would have financed the two weeks for four people. The Fulbright already in residence in another flat (a Ugandan now in the US), who kindly paid for cleaning supplies so that my flat could be cleaned, reported that the place was a mess, that had I seen it, I would have gotten on the plane and gone home! The Embassy says the University is responsible for all repairs, but my advice to the Fulbright scholar is not to depend on the University or the Embassy for anything.

My flat is roomy and airy and sunny but noisy on the street side (living room/dining room and one bedroom) during the day and at night. Some furniture and the curtains are new and quite nice. The other furniture is quite beat up and looks as if it was dragged out of college students' apartments – ragged, threadbare chairs for the dining room, etc. I got most of this quickly refinished, so it was presentable. I needed to purchase all cooking and kitchen equipment, china and cutlery, linens, towels, etc (the latter were quite expensive, so Fulbright scholar should bring them from US.) I also broke down and bought a dryer as I was tired of the wash hanging all over the house. There is an ancient dryer in the place which I paid twice for repairmen to try to fix. My judgment is that it is old and irreparable and should be thrown out, but the Embassy will not allow me to do so. Most wash is done by hand, although there is a washing machine in one of the Fulbright flats that was purchased from a prior Fulbright.

There is no storage bin available to Fulbrights, even though there are rooms with locks on them off the foyer. So be prepared to use your suitcases and trunks as furniture or as storage cabinets.

From occupancy on, I continued to get electric bills for all the Fulbright flats with threats to turn off the electricity. Each time, I contacted the University, who was supposed to be paying, and the Embassy to no avail. Finally, after six months, the problem was resolved by the cultural affairs advisor at the Embassy, and I received an official letter from the Second Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University, saying that the University was responsible for electric bills. However, the next day, the electric company cut off my electricity. The happy ending is that it was quickly restored.

COST OF LIVING: Oddly enough, it is not cheap to live here when one considers the cost of paying the mortgage and bills back home as well as the expenses here (see especially the cost of Internet below.) I did not want the hassle and expense of packing up everything in my home outside of Washington, so I rented it at a very low rate to a Fellow who would be at my institution for the year. I'll have to run the final numbers to see whether or not this was cost-effective. (Heating bill for last month was \$600.!)

Pizzas, tomato sauce, and all those American staples are expensive here. Items like towels, sheets, furnishings can also be had at a high price without much choice. Electronics are often poor quality *and* overpriced. (By the way, be sure to bring a suitcase full of adapters and transformers.) Grocery stores (large and small) are not really competitive and “sale” items are not common as they are in the U.S. It hasn't been my experience to find that prices vary very much store to store. I have not bought any new clothing since coming here but pick up good second hand items in the market.

Produce is cheap and fresh and delicious! Markets are fine, but one must be sure to hang onto one's belongings and be ready to bargain. Coping with “muzungu price” is a constant in life!

Labor is cheap – whether you are having your house cleaned, your parasite treated, seeing a medical specialists, or getting your hair cut.

Given expenses in the U.S. and the costs here of Internet access and transport/fuel, I have found it necessary to subsidize my 10 months here. Of course, it is very much worth it, but unless your activity is confined mainly to walking to teach one class a day and going to shop a couple of times a week, it is my experience that the Fulbright funds do not cover the reality.

MEDICAL SERVICES: We use Dr. Dick Stockley at The Surgery for most ailments. His words of wisdom are: Don't drink and drive, use seatbelts, and keep your knickers on!

For a shoulder problem, I have used specialists from Mulago Hospital in their private practices. It is easy to get appointments, and they are very good.

No matter what anyone says, one should take preventative measures against malaria (the field I work in). In addition to taking a prophylactic, close up every night at dusk and use a mosquito net. If you're going to be outside at night, use repellent and/or wear covering clothing. A note here: screens at the top of windows in 2B need to be repaired as they have holes which let in mosquitoes (the windows do not close off the top where the screens are located.)

SECURITY: I have not felt concerned for my personal safety or that of my son. We take the normal precautions. Petty theft and corruption, however, are rampant on all levels. A man who was helping me with chores inside and driving was stealing from me from Day 1 – well over \$1,000. After firing him and getting my key back, I changed the lock on the front door. The new lock seems much more secure than what was originally there. I would feel better if the front door to the flat building was locked but permanent residents are not keen on it.

CAR: To have or not to have. We decided to take the plunge as my work requires daily travel to various locations in town. On some occasions, I make an out of town trip and use my own vehicle. There is also the safety factor. Sidewalks are often nonexistent, and road accidents (inside and outside of vehicles) are all too common and, too often,

deadly. With the advice of a Ugandan friend, I purchased a vehicle from one of several places that imports used cars from Japan. I paid 11 million for a 1996 Toyota Caldina which I am allegedly going to be able to sell back to the dealer for 9 million. I have replaced tires, shock absorbers which go quickly on these bad roads, and various other bits. Fuel is incredibly expensive (every time I fill up, the cost is around \$85) and has gone up with the strife in Kenya. I bought an insurance package from AIG which has been useful. Recently, I purchased an alarm from Integrated Security Solutions, a good company used by the American agencies. And then there is the cost of the driver as I would not advise driving oneself.

Security outside the flat at night is a private guard. I have had my side mirrors stolen three times and my parking lights stolen once. And yes, they have been bolted and engraved – and the security system was on for the most recent theft. I must now deal with the person who hired the guard as I believe it is an inside job. I am told the guard prior to this one was provided by the police and was part of a theft ring. I reported my initial theft to campus police and city police and filed reports – I don't even bother now.

HELP: I highly recommend Christine Nambi (256 (0)782038937) to everyone coming to these flats. She is a wonderful person, hard worker (cleaning, washing, cooking), goes above and beyond, has good insights and initiative, is genuinely helpful and is honest. She has worked for Fulbrights in these flats for a long time. I'm sure all of us give her high recommendations.

VISA: We had no problem with visas. I went to the Ugandan Embassy in Washington, DC and got them directly.

WORK PERMIT: Contact Irene Kauma at the Ministry of Internal Affairs – 0772425117. Bring a cover letter from your local institution in Uganda, requesting that you be granted a work permit; passport; 3 photos; and the Fulbright award letter. I was issued a temporary permit within 24 hours.

SCHOOL: The International School of Uganda is a good school with excellent facilities and a number of extra opportunities. The campus is lovely, perched atop a hill in Lubowa, off of Entebbe Road. It is the only international school on the American system, and as my son was returning to the US for his senior year, this was important to us. It is listed on the State Department's website and receives funding from the State Department; however, the tuition is above the Fulbright allowance. Thankfully, we were allowed the extra funds required, so that my son's tuition was paid in full. The school bus (very safe and well monitored) does not stop near the university, so it is necessary to get him to and retrieve him from the bus stop daily.

MONEY: Everything surrounding money can be difficult. Uganda has a cash economy, so credit cards are useless, except at ATMs (but watch, you may be charged \$40 for the transaction, once all the fees are added in!) and at big Kampala hotels. I recommend a cash card from your bank – mine is Chevy Chase Bank debit card and works on all ATMs here that accept Visa. I have also opened a Barclay's account as a fallback – be

sure to get a savings account (from which you can still withdraw but not be charged \$8 month, even when the money is just sitting there). The account takes bureaucracy to set up, including a “letter of recommendation” from someone who has been a customer for a year. The only advantage Barclay’s may have is in the realm of international transfer. Traveller checks seem to be not useful at all. Wiring and transferring funds seem to be expensive. I have not used the Embassy’s check cashing services but have heard they are useful as long as amounts are and not larger than \$500 (?) within certain hours on certain days.

Short story: Take your bank’s debit card with Visa compatibility and withdraw as you need it. All the big banks participate, and they all have ATMs, even outside of Kampala. There are limits on amount that can be withdrawn daily.

There is no particular advantage that I’ve seen to having dollars here.

I don’t have a small safe, but it wouldn’t be a bad idea. I have recently purchased a filing cabinet which has a lock.

AIRPORT/ARRIVAL: I was met at the airport by friends, so I can’t comment on arrival or travel to destination. I have never had problems with entering Uganda. We had no problem bringing in our luggage which included two laptops.

CUSTOMS/SHIPMENT: My institution had shipped my large laptop, printer, peripherals. Computers come into Uganda duty free; however, equipment, even used, is subject to duty. Fedex was completely unhelpful in this regard. I ended up having to spend a half day at customs, finally paying duty to extricate a used printer. Since then, however, I have found Fedex useful – I have the name and cell phone of a delivery man

MAIL: The Embassy does not accept mail for us, so I have had to make arrangements for a colleague at the University to accept my mail coming from the US. Often it goes to the department secretary where it seems to live in limbo for quite a while before it gets to my colleague. My phone bills have been delivered to my flat door by a delivery service.

PHONE and INTERNET: There are no easy recommendations here. There are five providers, all wanting to woo you!

I brought my own cell phone which had been enabled for international use. In Uganda, it is necessary to take it to a shop to “unlock” it, then purchase a sim card from your provider of choice. Or you can buy a cell phone for use here – MTN has a low model for 40,000 shillings (about \$25) which includes a sim card and even some air time.

I pay for my cell phone calls by the month (charged by the call) which is much more convenient for me than constantly buying phone cards or being cut off mid-sentence. This service also allows me to keep track of this expense. I use MTN and find the customer service and the phone service to be fine. (One caveat: I find cell phones difficult for anything but the most rudimentary conversation – at most, I understand only

about 5 out of every 10 words. But texting can be great!) Of course, it is best to keep your own files of receipts, as I just had to visit MTN's main office when one of my payments had not been credited and I had been overcharged by 199,000 shillings. Still, the error was quickly rectified.

My phone service does not allow me to call overseas. For these calls, I use my son's phone with phone card, which can call anywhere till the units run out, for quick calls. We use Skype on Internet for longer chats.

My "broadband" Internet service is provided by UTL and costs over \$100 a month. It is essentially a dialup service but not as clunky as the dialups some of us remember from the early days of the Internet. I recently upgraded to the over \$200 a month level (there are only 3 levels) – so far, there are far fewer outages, and this level allows me to use Skype. Be warned: Although I am used to traveling in developing countries, the access is very slow when used on a daily basis (even at this price!) I would like to get MTN's broadband service which appears to be superior and cheaper with a guaranteed kbps; however, there is no line of sight from the University flats to the nearest MTN tower.

Of course, these are huge investments which need only be made if one's work is phone and Internet dependent.

EMBASSY: I have not had an emergency which required the Embassy's help. On items of lesser importance to them but great importance to me, I have not found them particularly helpful. More often than not, the few requests I have made which draw on their expertise, were met with an unsympathetic attitude and loads of bureaucracy which served to discourage rather than help. I am not the only Fulbright who has felt like a second class citizen vis a vis the U.S. Embassy.