

UNITE

Uganda and North Carolina's International Teaching for the Environment

What is UNITE?

The UNITE project establishes extraordinary partnerships between Ugandan and North Carolina schools to advance conservation education. International teacher exchange opportunities bring outstanding educators together to share and develop curriculum which explores cultural, economic, social and environmental connections between NC and Uganda. Participants engage in exciting activities that promote 'action-oriented' conservation projects, build critical thinking and technological skills, encourage cooperative attitudes and appreciation for cultural differences. NC and Ugandan students are inspired to learn about each other's lives, compare the biodiversity of their local environments and become good stewards of the Earth. UNITE motivates teachers and students to think globally, act responsibly and feel extremely rewarded by facilitating personal interaction with each other.

What has been accomplished and who has benefited?

2001

- An initial planning team of 15 NC teachers developed curriculum based on UNITE objectives. They attended an Inquiry, Technology and the Environment Workshop at the NC Zoo, visited the School of Environmental Studies in NC and successfully completed relevant projects within their schools. Much excitement was generated in support of a joint educational effort between NC and Ugandan schools.

2002

- A team of 3 NC educators and 3 Zoo staff visited rural and urban schools in Uganda, met with Ugandan educators and collaborated on determining the potential of establishing an international project.

2003

- A team of 5 NC teachers and 3 Zoo staff facilitated a UNITE professional development workshop at Crater Valley Kibale, Uganda. Ugandan schools hosted NC teachers in their classrooms. Hundreds of NC students eagerly followed the adventure via Internet.
- 20 Ugandan teachers and 1 Kibale Park Ranger attended the 2003 professional development workshop in Uganda. Activities were based on the identified needs of Ugandan teachers. Participants received word processors donated by AlphSmart, *Project Food, Land and People Curriculum Guides* and other basic teaching resources. Apple Computers contributed an iBook laptop to the project. For Ugandan teachers, this was their very first exposure to computers.
- For 8 weeks during the summer of 2003, a UNC-CH Environmental Studies student intern traveled to Uganda to visit classrooms of UNITE participants, offer advice and assistance with curriculum and evaluate progress. His travel was sponsored by the Morehead Foundation.
- Three Ugandan educators traveled to NC in October/November 2003 to visit classrooms, learn more about available educational resources, share their expertise about Africa, explore natural environments, learn about conservation issues and discover a new culture. The educators were hosted by local families and participated in curricular activities in 6 school systems, attended civic meetings, spoke to church groups, explored mountain, Piedmont and coastal environments, and visited parks and aquariums.
- Through generous contributions from NC schools, funds for construction of 2 classrooms and a library were donated to Bigodi Primary School in December 2003.
- Faculties from the 9 NC schools, 8 Ugandan schools and Kibale National Park in Uganda have been directly involved in development an/or successful implementation of project curricula. UNITE projects have been completed by students in single classrooms, across grade levels and through out entire schools. Some NC schools have contributed funds and materials to assist Ugandan schools. Wildlife Clubs in Uganda have eagerly adopted the UNITE vision.

2004

- A second team of NC teachers (2 additional NC schools brought on board) and Zoo staff facilitated the 5-day UNITE workshop at Crater Valley Kibale in January. Evaluative interviews were conducted with Ugandan participants to help determine the efficacy of the program. Zoo staff collected film footage for the production of 5 ZooFileZ television segments as well as a promotional video piece about UNITE. Enthusiasm for exploring cooperative efforts with the Jane Goodall Institute was established.

Additional schools and international exchange opportunities for teachers and students will be included as funding allows.

The Future - Criteria for Success (not yet funded)

Ugandan School Improvement Projects:

2004 - 2006

- Up to 10 schools in and around the Bigodi community will receive financial assistance to support the improvement of school facilities based on the most urgent needs, such as:
 - concrete floors added to existing classrooms (from 5 -10 per school)
 - furniture to accommodate 100+ students per class (from 5 -10 per school)
 - construction of additional classrooms (from 1 to 5 per school)
 - construction of toilet facilities to provide privacy for teenage girls (1 per school)
- Up to 10 schools will receive basic resource materials to support the implementation of required curriculum standards. The most urgent needs include:
 - textbooks (math, science, reading, geography)
 - basic learning supplies (paper, pens, pencils, rulers, maps, crayons)
 - science equipment (lenses, prisms, magnets, balances, compasses, thermometers, soil test kits, weather instrument, microscopes)
 - tools and materials to assist with school grounds improvement projects
 - field guides, journals and equipment to support field explorations
- Bigodi Primary and Secondary have been selected as UNITE model schools and will serve as resource centers for surrounding communities. Initial improvement projects will begin with these schools then branch out to others. The feasibility of establishing a Technology Center at Bigodi Primary will be explored and implemented as possible.

2007 - 2009

- Up to 10 additional schools in another deserving Ugandan community will be selected to participate in the project, needs will be identified and similar assistance will be offered. The project model of needs identification, teacher training, action planning and financial assistance will be implemented and evaluated over the next 3-year period.

2009 and beyond

- The model will continue to be revised and implemented in 3-year increments in other communities as the project expands in outward spirals.

Professional Development for Teachers:

NC and Ugandan teacher participants engage in professional development opportunities in both countries to:

- develop, share and evaluate curriculum which explores cultural, economic, social and environmental connections between NC and Uganda
- improve their abilities to facilitate student-centered, inquiry-based, cross-curricular investigations relative to conservation education
- link curriculum standards of both countries to strengthen implementation
- plan cooperative and/or parallel conservation projects
- serve as mentors to other educators
- prepare students to ‘think globally’ when making personal decisions regarding their own and the planets’ future

Opportunities for professional development are as follows:

- UNITE workshop in Uganda – held each February – available to 20 Ugandan teachers and at least 6 NC teachers, or more as funding allows
- Ugandan teacher exchange to NC – held each October – available to 3 Ugandan teachers, or more as funding allows (Ugandan teachers work cooperatively in classrooms with NC teachers)
- Inquiry, Technology and the Environment Workshop - held each summer in NC – available to 20 NC teachers
- UNITE/Project Food , Land and People workshop held each summer in NC – available to 20 NC teachers
- Zoo educators available to work one-on-one with NC teachers throughout the school year
- Environmental Studies Intern available to work with Ugandan teachers for 7-8 weeks during June/July
- Trained UNITE teachers are selected to lead and mentor other educators

Teacher participants commit to:

- the implementation of UNITE curriculum within their grade levels and throughout their schools, including student-centered, inquiry-based, cross-curricular projects
- utilization of the “Field Trip Earth” website www.fieldtrip earth.org as a curricular resource, as feasible (Field Trip Earth is \$250,000 IMLS grant-funded project)
- on-going communication between NC and Ugandan schools to facilitate student motivation to learn and care about each others cultures, environments and lives
- sharing of information about the project with others in their school systems and communities
- serving as mentors to other educators
- participation in fund raising to assist Ugandan schools

On-going communication among teachers is facilitated through teacher exchange opportunities, as well as technology-based methods. Opportunities for teacher/student team exchanges will be implemented as the project progresses.

Future collaboration with Conservation Through Public Health, a non-profit organization established by Ugandans, is planned. CTPH helps Ugandans by promoting an integrated approach to wildlife conservation and public health