

## Uganda / North Carolina Schools Project

### **Objectives:**

- To engage Asheboro and Ugandan students and teachers in the development of an exciting “model” program which will promote an understanding of global interrelationships relative to their own lives.
- To establish a strong link between the programmatic relationships of the Zoo, Asheboro City and Chatham County and Cabarrus County Schools as part of the larger Regional Partnership and Central Park initiative.
  - Through interdisciplinary, cross-curricular projects developed by the Zoo and the partner school systems, students in both countries will explore the connections between cultural, economic, social and environmental issues. These explorations will result in their increased capacity to think, learn and process information.
  - Teachers will improve their ability to facilitate student-centered, inquiry-based investigations and utilize technology as a tool for enriching the learning environment. By arming students with these essential lifelong learning skills, they will be empowered to consider global perspectives in making choices regarding their own and the planet’s future.
  - Ultimately, students will be better prepared to make choices about how to protect and manage the finite natural resources on which the economy and their quality of life depend.

### ***Background Information:***

The NC Zoo began working in Uganda five years ago and in that time we have come to know the country and its people very well. The basis of the Zoo's program in Uganda has been helping local communities develop environmentally and economically sound sources of income. As a result of early training workshops, a group of our Ugandan partners formed the Ugandan Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) in July 1998. We have been one of the principle funders and strongest supporters of this indigenous non-governmental organization. This milestone in the Zoo's field program has created one of the best hopes for improving the lives of rural Ugandans and preserving Uganda's wildlife habitats and natural resources.

In a very short time UCOTA has expanded to 39 communities and over 2000 members from all parts of the country. UCOTA training workshops offer an excellent opportunity to establish grass roots conservation and education programs that go to the heart of the underlying causes of environmental destruction. Uganda is one of the biologically richest countries in Africa and is home to more than half of the world's last remaining mountain gorillas.

Uganda is also one of the economically poorest nations on Earth. Poverty fuels environmental destruction by reducing the opportunities poor rural people have to make a living and encourages ever-expanding farms to provide subsistence and what little money the people can make. We have been working to aid the development of crafts for sale to tourists and for export and the development of small-scale ecotourism facilities.

The expanding tourist and crafts markets have become an important source of income in this country with an average yearly income of only \$250. Selling baskets and other crafts are especially important for women who have few other opportunities for making money in isolated rural communities. The community groups are re-investing their profits from craft sales and ecotourism into the construction of

schools and medical clinics in the remotest parts of the country. Women who have never had an income of their own are now able to send their children to school, and sometimes, even build the schools themselves from the money they make from craft sales.

Based on the Zoo's five years of experience in Uganda, the strong commitment to education from the Ugandan community and the fact that Uganda is currently one of the most technologically advanced countries in Africa, we feel confident that the time is right to embark on this effort to link Uganda and North Carolina schools. The project has the potential to benefit students and teachers globally as technology changes the way students learn about the world.

Meetings have been conducted with the Superintendent of Asheboro City Schools and the Technology Coordinators and Principals of McCrary and Lindley Park Elementary to familiarize them with the Zoo's field efforts in Uganda and discuss interest, feasibility and commitment to the Uganda / North Carolina Schools Project. These educators strongly support the potential of this program as a means of enriching the curriculum through quality teacher training and as a motivational medium for students. They are honored to have been selected to partner with the Zoo in this effort. We are confident that the objectives of this project will be accomplished and the program will serve as a model for similar international partnerships.

### ***Phase I – Local Component***

- A cohort of 12 teachers, including participants from McCrary and Lindley Park Elementary Schools in Asheboro, have been selected to participate in the initial phase of the project.
- Cohort members have attended training sessions facilitated by Joy Hamlin, Curator of Education and Mark MacAllister, Coordinator of On-line Learning Projects on June 4 and 5, 2001 as well as the LEARN NC/Inquiry and Technology Integration Workshop at the Zoo (July 9-13 or July 16-20, 2001). Cohorts visited the School of Environmental Studies, a 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade magnet school in Cabarrus County dedicated to the implementation of a thematic, interdisciplinary, inquiry-based approach to learning.
- In cooperation with Darlene Ryan - Coordinator of Science Education for Chatham County Schools and an instructor for the LEARN NC Workshop – cohorts will build relationships with mentor teachers from Chatham County who were involved in curriculum development for the elephant and red wolf websites. This relationship will further develop the effort of building a regional partnership within the Central Park area.
- Additional work/consultation sessions have been scheduled as needed.
- The cohorts are working to:
  - Identify cross-curricular priorities which could be enhanced by participation in the Uganda Schools Project. [Cohorts will explore issues such as: *What do we want our students to **learn**? What **skills** do our students need to improve? Map reading? Narrative writing? Basic computation? How do these skills relate to environmental literacy?*]
  - Explore commonalties between local and Uganda curricula. [*Of the skills identified above, which of those must Ugandan students also learn? What else are both local and Ugandan students required to accomplish?*] The Uganda curricula will be obtained via Elissa Williams, the Zoo's liaison in Uganda.

- Identify multi-disciplinary strategies relative to environmental education objectives appropriate for addressing these needs. [*Given these commonalities, what strategies can we develop that help them learn, preferably by working collaboratively?*] Strategies will be student-centered, will draw on critical questions, will require development of products, and will be extensible via technology resources.
- Research, gather data, compose information and develop creative, inquiry-based lessons applicable to the Project and aligned to both the North Carolina and Uganda curricula. Enter these lesson plans into both an online database and into paper-based formats so that they may be shared with classrooms worldwide.

### ***Phase II – Uganda Component***

- Dr. Randy Fulk, Joy Hamlin, Mark MacAllister and three teachers will travel to Uganda in Winter 2002 to meet with the community groups, conservation researchers and schools currently involved with the Zoo's Uganda outreach projects. While there, they will work with Ugandans to determine additional methods for integrating Uganda and US curricular materials, and for involving Ugandan students and teachers in meeting the objectives of this Project. An exchange of teaching strategies and methods will be facilitated.
- Randy, Mark, Joy and the teachers ( Darlene Ryan, Cheryl Perkins and Dee Duncan) will meet with:
  - Leaders of the community groups (John Tinka, Azoli Bahati)
  - Headmasters and Teachers
  - Conservation Researchers
- **Objectives of Ugandan visit:**
  - Determine community needs relative to education
  - Identify the interrelationships between environmental, cultural, economic and social issues (US & Uganda) of importance to project participants
  - Predict future needs, both in terms of curriculum and material resources, for continuing this project
  - Determine technological feasibility
  - Facilitate curricular explorations similar to those conducted with Asheboro teachers

### ***Phase III – Technology Component***

- One of the goals in making the trip to Uganda will be to determine if email, text, small photos, and other resources can be shared electronically on a consistent basis. Assuming they can be, the following tasks would need to be accomplished
  - Train Ugandan teachers to use cell phone and laptop as Internet communication device (if necessary)
  - Train Ugandan teachers to use relevant software for downloading and uploading email, datasets, word processing documents, etc. (again, if necessary)