



Mission Statement

The EDGE Project is designed to provide University of Wisconsin students with a platform to engage actively in issues of sustainable international development, project management, leadership, and the realities of life in developing nations by connecting students with the resources necessary to research, create, and implement small-scale community development projects.

Vision

Using EDGE Project-Uganda as our model, EDGE Project hopes to expand its University of Wisconsin operations, and replicate its organizational framework and goals at universities across the United States. We hope to engage college students across the nation in an effort to create a student movement committed to global leadership and empowerment.

History of the EDGE Project

Marissa Mommaerts, Michelle Mazzeo, and Farha Tahir, all graduates of the University of Wisconsin, began EDGE Project while interning in Washington, DC in the Fall of 2007. As part of the University's DC Semester in International Affairs, the women were consistently exposed to issues of diplomacy, foreign policy, poverty alleviation, and conflict resolution. Studying development-related issues in their academic coursework, the three women saw a gap in opportunities for undergraduates in the field and decided to fill the void themselves.

In December 2007, the EDGE Project was born. Recognizing the difficulty of beginning and maintaining a successful organization, the three women turned to pre-existing organizations for guidance and support. Upon returning to Madison to complete their studies, Marissa, Michelle, and Farha connected with David Lippiatt, the co-founder and Executive Director of a social justice organization called WE International. The organization was critical to the formation of EDGE, as well as in connecting EDGE with the resources and partners it needed to operate successfully.

EDGE LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of EDGE Project consists of the founding members of the organization as well as those individuals who have played an integral role in the operational and strategic interests of the organization. The current Board of Directors consists of the following individuals:



Michelle Mazzeo



Marissa Mommaerts



Kelsi Hines



Farha Tahir

Executive Board

Each semester, EDGE Project elects a board of individuals tasked with running campus operations as well as our work in Uganda. These individuals oversee the planning and execution of the projects currently underway, while also guiding project development in new areas. The board consists of two Co-Directors of Operations, an Assistant Director of Operations, Treasurer, Secretary, Communications Chair, Public Relations Coordinator, International Outreach Coordinator, and Research Coordinator

Spring 2010 Board:



Fall 2010 Board:



Team Leaders

Team Leaders are charged with overseeing research related to their particular discipline: presenting a semester plan, mid-semester research, abstracts, and final project proposals. Team Leaders organize and head bi-weekly team meetings, and submit bi-weekly team reports to the Research Coordinator.

Student Researchers

Student Researchers are the backbone of EDGE Project. The organization would be unable to function without their commitment and dedication. Spending countless hours researching conditions in Lingira and the projects that would be most effective uses of our resources, the Student Researchers submit detailed project proposals that are crafted into our final community development projects.



EDGE TEAMS

Agriculture

By providing individuals with the skills and resources necessary to grow their own produce, they will be better able to provide their families with nutritious and secure diets, generate income to pay school fees and purchase necessities, and feel empowered to take control over other aspects of their lives. As such, the Agriculture Team attempts to identify sustainable techniques for farmers to help increase production through the efficient use of resources. The team also looks into other sustainable and conservational techniques to improve this staple livelihood.

Education

The Education Team collects and gathers information for both students and teachers to enhance and broaden the method and quality of education currently being provided in Lingira. Many resources are available through the government are not reaching students of Lingira. The Education Team attempts to create a link between schools on the island and those on the mainland. Other things they look into include:

- English Second Language (ESL) Program
- Gathering School Supplies
- Visual Aids
- Global Studies Program
- Early Childhood Education
- Increasing access for women and girls, particularly those susceptible to prostitution and other forms of trafficking

Health and Nutrition

The Health and Nutrition Team seeks to understand the current state of disease and its relation to the other deficiencies in the Lingira community (clean water, sanitation issues, etc.). It also crafts means of educating community members on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, family planning, and nutrition issues.

Empowerment

Countries in which women are empowered socially, politically, and economically, tend to do better overall. The Empowerment Team looks at the other projects through the lens of gender mainstreaming, attempting to incorporate women's unique roles in Lingira into our projects. As such, projects are critiqued through a gender-sensitive lens to ensure that women's empowerment is a stated goal throughout our efforts. This year, the team has expanded to male empowerment, creating a manhood campaign and identifying means of integrating broader community goals into its efforts.

Environment

The environment team was created to address some of the island's biggest environmental problems, as well as to instill a sense of stewardship for the environment among the islanders. The team is currently focusing on an environmental education program for the primary school. The curriculum discusses the importance of trees on the island, and gives a general overview of what the environment is and why the children should want to care for it. The team is also collecting data for a reforestation program to be implemented starting in the summer of 2011. Children from both the primary and secondary schools will be central instigators of the reforestation program.

2009 TRIP IN RETROSPECT

EDGE Project-Uganda Implementation

Over the course of the Spring 2009 academic semester, our student researchers developed a number of projects for the Lingira community. That summer, a group of 11 student travelers implemented these projects. Committed to local initiative and the sustainability of our projects, EDGE has incorporated an element of flexibility within each project in order to incorporate local input and expertise. The projects themselves were designed specifically with the prerequisite of sustainability after EDGE leaves the island. As such, all materials used in the projects will be available for purchase in Uganda. Here are brief overviews of what was accomplished:



Lingira Girls Football Club (LGFC): EDGE has partnered with *Tackle Africa*, a UK-based organization that uses football to create HIV/AIDS awareness and promote healthy living. Together, we have launched a girls soccer team with that seeks to enable young girls in Lingira to dream big and empowers them to pursue those dreams.



Lingira Island Family Planning Initiative: Upon the request of the community itself, members of the Health and Nutrition team put together an informative guide and local committee tasked with spreading awareness and providing resources about family planning. The initiative works with *YWAM*, a clinic already present on the island.



Growing Together: Lingira Island Farming Association: EDGE worked with community leaders to create a farmer's association comprised of representatives from each of the four camps (Katonga, Lingira, Kyoya and Omolo) on Lingira as a means of knowledge-sharing in order to develop agricultural capacity on the island. The farmers association, known as *Basoka Kwavula Lingira Farming Association Group*, will also serve as a forum to host EDGE Project trainings, extension workers, and workshops conducted by community leaders.



Women's Craft Co-op: EDGE has created a women's craft co-op as a means of income generation for Lingira's women. The women make paper-bead necklaces and banana-leaf bags and mats. The co-op also serves as a platform for the women to discuss their interests and aspirations. The income they make helps feed their families and finance their children's educations. The items will be sold on fairtradeworld.org as well as auctioned off at our upcoming banquet in November.



Primary School: For two weeks, EDGE travelers assisted primary school teachers in teaching ESL through arts and crafts, music, and games.

Global Studies Program: EDGE created a program to inform students about world cultures, climate, foods, and traditions.

Secondary School Classes and Income Generation: Students were tutored in English and Math to supplement course material for their upcoming final examinations. EDGE also purchased land and an engine to establish a grain mill to grind sougham and maize in order to subsidize costs to the students and provide a means to generate income for the school.

Community Organizing and Leadership Seminars: EDGE sought to provide a foundation for emerging leaders to engage in projects that address community needs. EDGE provided information sessions and training workshops to begin a discussion of potential projects.

Girls Discussion Group: Secondary school girls were brought together to engage in discussions about their ambitions, aspirations, and futures.

In addition, thanks to the help of University of Wisconsin alumnus and close friend Tony Carroll, eight EDGE travelers as well as two additional EDGE partners were able to attend the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. The Forum is an annual event featuring several high-level officials from governments around the world and was even attended by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Since our first trip, EDGE Student Researchers have been hard at work identifying areas of improvement within our current projects and developing new projects for travelers going to Lingira this summer.



2009-10 IN RETROSPECT

Campus Activities

Co-Sponsorships

This year, EDGE Project was proud to co-sponsor several events on campus. These included:

- A Candlelight Vigil to raise awareness about the violence in Guinea (with the Human Rights Initiative, Action in Sudan, and WE International)
- “Social Responsibility and the Corporate Ecosystem: Perspectives from Global Food Entrepreneur Ashok Vasudevan,” a presentation in the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation’s Gilson Global Impact Series
- “Act for the World: Educational Forum on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals,” part of the Campus Forum
- “Global Financial Crisis and Local Response: Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure,” a presentation by Dr. Cornelia Flora (with UW Distinguished Lecture Series)



All-Campus Party

In April, EDGE Project set up a booth at the annual All-Campus Party. EDGE members spoke with attending students about our work and how they could get involved.



Kick-start Thanksgiving Drive

In Fall 2009, EDGE Project created Kick-start Thanksgiving, a cleat and supplies drive throughout the Madison area to collect materials for the Lingira Girls Football Club. Through the drive, EDGE received countless soccer balls, cleats, jerseys, shorts, socks, and other gear. Thank you to all the individuals and organizations who participated!

Global Health Symposium

Former EDGE Project co-director Shelly Lev-Er was invited to speak at UW’s Global Health Symposium in February. She presented on the various methods of birth control in Lingira, the geographical and cultural barriers of implementing a family planning project, and her own experiences on the island.

EDGE Project Banquet

In November, EDGE hosted its first annual banquet at the University Club. Nearly 140 EDGE supporters attended the event. EDGE members presented past and future projects, and discussed their hopes for the organization. A silent auction offered Ugandan art, EDGE merchandise, and photographs for attendees to bid on.



2nd Annual Benefit Concert

In April, EDGE held its second benefit concert at the High Noon Saloon. EDGE members, friends, and family came out to enjoy local musicians, socializing, and prizes. Several Madison businesses generously donated a variety of items for raffling. Between the raffle and ticket sales, EDGE raised over \$600 for its summer trip to Lingira.



2009-10 IN RETROSPECT



Lobbying for International Women's Day

EDGE Project co-founders Marissa Mommaerts and Michelle Mazzeo participated in the UNFPA Lobby Day for International Women's Day. Traveling to DC, the two met with over thirty staff members from various Congressional offices, asking them to support policies that would empower women around the world.

Clinton Global Initiative- University Conference in Miami, FL

EDGE Project Co-Director Alisha David and Assistant Director Livy Baldwin participated in the Clinton Foundation's third annual Clinton Global Initiative-University Conference, held in April 2010 at the University of Miami.

The conference was an opportunity for EDGE to meet with students and organizations from around the country. Alisha and Livy attended panels on water security and purification, community organizing, and grassroots campaigns. Attending CGIU allowed them to exchange contacts, tips and information with a wide variety of people. These resources will assist EDGE in successfully implementing its projects.



GlobalGiving Technology Innovation Challenge

In October, EDGE's Technology Team submitted a problem for GlobalGiving's Technology Innovation Challenge. A contest run through GlobalGiving in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation and InnoCentive, the Challenge offered the winning organizations the opportunity to outsource their problem to a series of scientists and provided a cash prize for the winning proposal. The Technology Team's description of the issues with water purification on Lingira was chosen as a participant in the contest, and EDGE received 96 proposed solutions to the water problem. The winning solution—a specially-designed ceramic filter—will be tested for sustainability and viability on the island this summer. Alongside the filter, the Technology Team designed discussion sessions for Lingirans on why and how they should purify water.



EDGE IN THE NEWS

[April 2010] EDGE Traveler Karla Lund featured in A Thousand-to-One, a new series about people positively transforming our world. Read about her experience [here](#).

[March 2010] EDGE featured in the UW Alumni Magazine, On Wisconsin. Click [here](#) to see the article!

[December 2009] UW Chancellor, Biddy Martin, mentioned EDGE Project in her speech to graduates during the Winter 2009 ceremony:

"...your generation is highly collaborative, team oriented, quick to adapt to new technologies, impatient with old business models and determined to change the world"...your desire to shake things up is not limited to starting businesses and making money. There are so many examples I could list of your entrepreneurial activity on behalf of social causes. A group of UW-Madison public affairs students, for example, started a group entitled EDGE Project, to do international community development work in Uganda. They built a grain mill, created a farmers' co-op and started a girls' soccer team, and all of these projects were major developments on an island that is all but forgotten by its own government. That's just one example of your initiative and your humanity."

[December 2009] Lingira Girls Football Club documentary featured on SocialJusticeJournalism.org

[November 2009] EDGE featured in the University of Wisconsin-Madison [newsletter](#) and the University of Wisconsin school newspaper, [The Badger Herald](#).

[October 2009] Co-founder of EDGE Project, Farha Tahir, is featured in the [student profiles](#) at University of Wisconsin La Follette School of Public Affairs for her involvement with EDGE Project.

[September 2009] EDGE's work with Lingira Girls Football Club is featured in the Uganda National Newspaper, [A New Vision](#). Also, click [here](#) to watch our latest film about the LGFC by Michelle Mazzeo.

[August 2009] Press Release: EDGE Project to Participate in The 2009 AGOA Forum in Nairobi Kenya. Click [HERE](#) for the Press Release . Click [here](#) to read about EDGE at AGOA, featured on the University of Wisconsin La Follette School website.

[May 2009] With your help, EDGE won a permanent spot on GlobalGiving.com, a fundraising-for-social-change network

[April 2009] EDGE is a featured project on Change.org, a social change/social entrepreneurship website that profiles non-profit organizations working for positive social change

[March 2009] EDGE Project featured on WYOU- Madison's local TV station- to talk about our [upcoming projects](#)





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<http://edgeproject.rso.wisc.edu/>

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