

# **Project DISC**

## **Food Education Project in Uganda**

**A project to combat hunger by developing innovative school food education: empowering more than 1,000 children with practical experience in cultivating healthy, local food.**

### **Food & Taste Education Projects**

Slow Food's education projects assist both adults and children to make daily food choices that combine pleasure and responsibility, by creating awareness about where food comes from, how it is produced and by whom. Teaching children is a priority as they are the most at risk of losing contact with agriculture and regional food traditions, and they can also play a crucial role in persuading their families to eat locally cultivated 'good, clean and fair' food.

[www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

## **The Context**

### **Kabale, Kapchorw, Kasese and Mukono, Uganda**

Each year disasters from prolonged drought and flooding place over 1.5 million people at risk of starvation in Uganda. Food crisis is categorized in three levels: famine, acute food shortage and moderate food shortage. In early 2009, the Ugandan government stated that food shortages had reached the famine level, and 52 districts countrywide were facing food insecurity.

In addition, where food is available, it has become very expensive and is often inaccessible on the average person's income, which is equivalent to one dollar a day. In 2008, 57% of the Ugandan population suffered food shortages and 45% suffered water shortages for at least a part of the year. In some areas, over-reliance on cash crops, such as Arabica coffee, and poor soil quality mean produce is often imported from the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Even this food supply, however, is limited and as demand increases, so do the prices.

In Uganda, food cultivation has historically been used as a punishment for offenses committed at school. Accordingly, a negative opinion of food cultivation has been instilled in many young people and they have come to despise agriculture. Given the little economic return from food production, youth often resort to other forms of employment. Consequently, interest in, as well as understanding of, local foods has dropped drastically.

Today 17 schools and more than 620 school children across Uganda are part of a project with Slow Food Mukono convivium (Slow Food local chapter) to improve young people's relationship with agriculture and to develop innovative methods for long lasting food sovereignty.

# The Project

Project DISC (Developing Innovations in School Cultivation) began in 2006 with Slow Food Mukuno convivium leader and Terra Madre youth delegate, Edward Mukiibi, with the vision of improving children's attitude toward food production as a way to help reverse existing food shortages and preserve local food traditions (Terra Madre is a global network launched by Slow Food to unite small scale producers with cooks, academics and youth, working together to improve the food system).

The project restores young people's relationship with agriculture through the introduction of school gardens to grow local fruit and vegetable varieties using environmentally friendly, traditional methods. Through their experience in the garden and related educational activities, the students develop an understanding of local food and their flavors and traditional uses, thus learning to favor good, clean and fair foods.

In 2009 the project began a collaboration with Slow Food International in order to develop 17 school gardens and to integrate a new taste and sensory program into the school curriculum. Over the school year, the project gained great attention from the local communities involved, as well as across the country. Expressions of interest from schools who wish to join the project have been so great that not all can be accepted at this stage. In 2010, 14 more schools and communities are joining Project DISC.

Edward, a University Graduate in Agricultural Land Use and Management, works with each school to plan, construct and care for their garden. He designs each one to deal best with the local climate challenges in an innovative way – taking into account issues such as extreme drought and erosion.

Project DISC volunteers and teachers assist the students in the garden and present food and taste education themes in the classroom and during extracurricular activities. Produce from the gardens is used in the school meal programs, and extra produce is sold at local markets to sustain the projects. A few schools have started growing larger amounts of some crops in order to transform the harvest into preserves and jams that can be sold to raise some funds to further support the project.

The Project DISC school curriculum and activities cover both practical and theoretical components to cover a range of themes, including: agricultural techniques, garden planning, composting, why it is important to eat locally cultivated foods, nutrition and food sources, ecological and sensory literacy, and how to prepare garden produce and local crops for consumption.

## Project Coordinator

Edward Mukiibi, leader of the Slow Food Mukuno convivium in Uganda

## Social Impact

Project DISC has already empowered more than 600 school children and their communities to take an active and influential role in promoting their own food sovereignty. Children's nutrition is improving through the consumption of produce from the gardens in school meals, and many students have also started home and community gardens that help to feed families and encourage others to participate in

local food cultivation. In addition, these activities promote growth in the local economy through new market access and the diffusion of knowledge to solve complex community nutritional problems.

Previously the students were only taught shallow nutrition lessons, but through this project they are introduced to fun taste education activities that encourage deep discovery of local foods, develop sensory capacities and build greater understanding of healthy food.

The project is celebrated each year with a Spring Fruit and Juice Party during which children prepare fresh juices and eat fruit harvested right from their own school gardens. Parents, teachers, local leaders and representatives from the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) join the celebration.

Following the great attention that Project DISC has received across the country, Edward and some of the children were invited to present at the National Agriculture and Trade show, which brought together farmers and agriculturalists from east, south and central Africa. Project DISC students have also begun collaborating with the Bugisu Young Farmers' Community and the Ugandan Minister of General Duties has visited the project.

## **Beneficiaries in 2009**

620 students

Over 3,000 indirect beneficiaries (families and community members)

## **Partners in 2009**

17 primary schools

Slow Food Mukono convivium

Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute, Kabanyolo (MUARIK)

Professional Practicing Agriculturalists (PROPA)

## **In their words...**

"These days my children do not want to miss school because they don't want to miss the fruits given out at lunch time from their school garden."

**Mrs. Viola Kato, Bunyama village resident**

"Since our school joined Project DISC, we have seen an increase in school attendance, especially for agriculture class, and interest amongst the children has increased."

**Mr. Kyobe John, agriculture teacher at St. Balikuddembe Senior School Mukono**

"I tasted gooseberries for the first time today, and I have now decided to plant an even bigger garden at home than the one at school!"

**Nalweyiso Jovia, pupil at St. Andrew's Primary School**

"My son surprised me with a *Luwombo* (traditional sauce made from steamed chicken in banana leaves) – a dish he learnt to prepare at Sun Rise Pre-School during the Project DISC workshop."

**Ms. Nakiberu Flavia, parent**

"I just want to thank Project DISC and Slow Food for thinking about the future. We are getting old and children do not want to produce food. Then who will feed them and their children? Thank you for teaching these boys and girls to control food production. At least now I know they will have food."

**Mr. Eliazari Magala, grandfather**

# Objectives for 2010

To increase access to good, clean and fair food across Uganda by providing children with the practical knowledge to cultivate produce in their local community;

To greatly increase in Uganda (as in other neighboring African countries) the number of young people interested in local food production;

To create more partnerships for the promotion of local agriculture models to strengthen effectiveness in combating Uganda's widespread hunger;

To raise awareness among the media and other stakeholders on the benefits of local food consumption.

# Activities for 2010

Manage gardens in all 31 Project DISC schools;

Collect local seeds from all Project DISC school gardens to create a seed bank and preserve local seed varieties;

Supply 4 local dairy cows (starting with 4 schools) in order to study local animal husbandry and dairy production, and provide fresh milk to the children at these schools;

Deliver sensory education workshops, equip classrooms with kitchens, and give lessons on how to 'home-compost' to increase production of organic fertilizer for children and teachers in all Project DISC schools;

Introduce 4 annual field trips (2 each semester) to visit producers, food communities and agricultural fairs for groups of students interested in furthering their agricultural studies;

Initiate a research project to document traditional Ugandan foods and edible insects which are at risk of extinction;

Establish and manage a Community Food and Agriculture Library at Kisoga Central village in Mukono District;

Offer film nights on the theme of food and agriculture for students, teachers and parents of all Project DISC schools;

Organize a Project DISC seminar on traditional foods, targeting stakeholders in biodiversity conservation, schools, local producers, local institutions, and other organizations;

Hold a Annual Schools' Food Exhibition to celebrate the harvest season with fruit and juice parties at all participating schools to interact more with the students and promote the project with the local media and authorities.

# Expected Outcomes 2010

Project DISC will be present in 31 schools in Uganda:

Buiga Sunrise Pre School Banda - Banda kyandaaza, Kyabalogo  
St. Stephen Primary School – Banda Bugenderaddala, Kyabalogo  
Nazigo Seeta Primary School – Nazigo, Kyabalogo  
Sir Apollo Kagwa Senior Secondary School – Nazigo, Kyabalogo  
Jesus Alive Primary School Banda – Kiyoola, Nakisunga  
St. Kizito Primary School Bbanda Bugenderaddala – Kiyoola  
St. Andrews Primary School Kisoga – Kisoga, Ntanzi  
Horizon Junior School Kisoga – Ntanzi  
Horizon High School Kisoga – Ntanzi  
Progresive SS School Kisoga - Ntanzi  
Rasa Model Education Centre Kisoga Branch - Ntanzi  
St. Balikuddembe Senior Secondary School Kisoga – Ntanzi  
St. Balikudembe Primary School Kisoga – Ntanzi  
Ntenjeru Parents High School – Ntanzi  
Mpumu Primary School – Mpumu, Ntanzi  
Ihango Primary School – Ihango, Bwera  
Bunyama Central primary school – Bunyama, Bugoye  
Bugoye Primary Schools - Bugoye  
Nezikokolima Primary School Kisoga Branch, Bulonda, Ntanzi  
Helm Senior Secondary School, Kisoga, Ntanzi  
Kiyoola C/U Primary School, Kiyoola  
Kings Way High School Kituuza - Saayi  
Namakwa S.S - Namakwa  
Sipi Secondary School - Kapkwirok  
Kiyoola High School - Kiyoola  
Tuteese Primary school - Kisoga C, Ntanzi  
Oasis of Love Primary school - Kisoga A, Ntanzi  
Crane Bow Foundation Pre School Kabale - Kitumba  
Mpumu Secondary School – Mpumu, Ntanzi  
Kojja Secondary School – Nsanja  
Seeta Nazigo Primary School – Seta, Kyabalogo

The number of participating students will increase by 77.4%, to 1,100 students;

Produce sourced from the school gardens will lower food costs, thus benefiting each school's budget and resulting in lower school fees for families;

Nutrition among families and communities with students involved in the project will improve as children share their knowledge of food cultivation at home and families benefit from school food basket donations;

Teachers will receive practical and theoretical training in order to deliver the Project DISC curriculum activities while students will learn how to prepare meals using local fruits and vegetables;

Communities and local authorities will become more aware of the potential and importance of local food production, increasing its value;

As the profile of the project increases, schools from across Uganda and neighboring countries will express interest in joining the project, which will increase the number of students involved.

### **Beneficiaries in 2010**

Over 1,000 students

5,000 indirect beneficiaries (families and community members)

### **Partners in 2010**

31 schools (both Primary and Secondary)

Slow Food Mukuno convivium

Makerere University Land Managers' Association (MULMA)

Global Village network (GVN)

Access for Action (ACFA) Uganda

Youth Initiative for AIDS prevention (YIAP) Uganda

Buiga Sunrise Community-Based Organization

Mukono District Farmers Association (MDFA)

Uganda Environmental Education Foundation (UEEF)

## Project Budget

The cost of implementing the project in 31 schools in 2010 is **\$ 39,000** according to the following breakdown:

<b>Project DISC Budget: Classroom, Garden and Community Education Program</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Upkeep and equipment for 31 school gardens	\$ 4,600
Equipment for kitchen classroom, sensory workshops and film showings	\$ 2,500
Educational materials for kitchen classroom, sensory workshops and film showings	\$ 2,500
Seed bank at Nazigo and Buiga schools	\$ 5,000
Supply 4 local dairy cows and their annual maintenance	\$ 3,200
4 annual field trips to food producers, partner projects and agriculture shows	\$ 2,800
Research project to document traditional Ugandan foods and edible insects	\$ 4,200
Kisoga Central Farmers' Community Food and Agriculture Library	\$ 2,200
Annual Project DISC workshop and seminars on traditional foods	\$ 1,400
Project DISC fruit and juice parties and Annual Schools' Food Exhibition	\$ 2,400
Communications and community awareness activities	\$ 1,700
Local support staff and facilitation	\$ 1,400
Project coordination	\$ 3,400
Operational support	\$ 1,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 39,000</b>

Help us continue this  
project in 2010!

Please contact us for further information:  
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# **Slow Food envisions a world in which everyone has access to good, clean and fair food**

Through the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, we build the capacity of food producers and defend biodiversity and food traditions by creating new economic models that are being put into practice all around the world: 300 Presidia – sustainable food production – projects, 800 Ark of Taste products and Earth Markets.

**[www.slowfoodfoundation.com](http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com)**

Through the worldwide Terra Madre network, we give a voice to small- scale farmers and food producers and bring them together with cooks, academics and youth to improve the food system collaboratively. Meetings are held at the global, regional and local levels and resulting projects are promoting knowledge exchange around the globe.

**[www.terramadre.org](http://www.terramadre.org)**

Our pioneering taste and food education projects help people understand where food comes from, how it is produced and by whom, creating awareness, new markets, and positive social change. With our membership we organize events and programs from the international to the local level that showcase sustainable agriculture and artisan food production, and connect consumers to producers.

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