

KASIISI PROJECT

PROJECT 1: SCHOOL AND VILLAGE HEALTH

Project Summary

In 2025, Kasiisi Project and its Ugandan partner, the Kibale Forest Schools Program (KFSP) will partner with Laidlaw Foundation's Leadership in Action (LiA) program on a project that works to improve school and village health in rural Uganda. This project is part of Ugandan-led work around Kibale National Park that has been ongoing for 27 years. Currently, the school health program focuses on improving handwashing hygiene to reduce respiratory outbreaks in schools, teaching about important health topics such as puberty and proper nutrition, and training students to make reusable menstrual pads to help keep adolescent girls in school. LiA Scholars will support this work as well as our mobile clinic that provides medical services to remote villages around the national park.

Kasiisi Project's Mission

Kasiisi Project was founded in 1997 as an extension of the Kibale Chimpanzee Project, and aims to improve educational opportunities for children residing along the densely populated western border of Kibale. Initially focused on improving infrastructure of existing schools, the effort quickly transitioned into comprehensive support, ensuring schools could provide the highest quality education for their students. Kasiisi Project focuses on three strategic programs—Education, Health, and Conservation—to strengthen schools and create a new generation of Ugandan conservationists. This work now benefits 16 primary schools and 9,000 children (aged 4-14) and their communities each year.

We take a holistic approach to school support. We have learned over the years that for children to succeed in school they need to be healthy and well-fed, have happy and well-trained teachers and safe and comfortable classrooms, have access to proper school supplies like books and pencils, and have the chance to enjoy extra-curricular activities. We also address barriers that lead to high absenteeism in girls, like poor-quality latrines and lack of menstrual supplies. We also fund scholarships to help children continue their education beyond primary school. Finally, we share with students the importance of safeguarding the environment and provide hands-on opportunities for them to get involved in local conservation efforts.

Our approach has resulted in Kasiisi Project schools outperforming peer forest-edge schools by a statistically significant 20%. Today, our scholars are graduating from university and colleges. We have teachers and lab technicians, electricians and plumbers, nurses and doctors as graduates and many are coming back to help us with our mission.

What to expect?

1. *A new and challenging environment:* Our project is located in rural western Uganda in the foothills of the beautiful Rwenzori Mountains. This is a stunning landscape and home to some of the world's most iconic wildlife, like chimpanzees and elephants. It is also home to the Batooro people, a Bantu ethnic tribe, who are mainly subsistence farmers and are known for their unique cultural practices, such as the Empaako (pet name) naming system. Poverty here is widespread and most people do not have power or running water and have limited access to healthcare and educational opportunities. LiA Scholars will be living in simple but comfortable accommodations at one of our schools where there is electricity but no running water. In addition, internet access can be intermittent. Work will be in school and community settings, including in very remote areas.
2. *Cross-cultural exchange:* Over 6 weeks, LiA Scholars will work under and closely with our Ugandan leadership, which will allow for cross-cultural exchange of ideas. This

project also involves interviewing local experts and stakeholders, collecting data, and interacting with kids in schools and adults in community settings. At the end of the summer, the students will present their work to the larger community including our staff, parents, government officials and researchers.

3. *Make a difference:* LiA Scholars will be working on real-world problems affecting people living in this part of Uganda and conservation issues affecting Kibale National Park. Therefore, their work will contribute to Kasiisi Project's long-term efforts to improve health in schools and communities and to conserve the park.
4. *Develop and Demonstrate Leadership Skills:* LiA Scholars will participate in workshops with local leaders to understand what leadership means in Uganda. They will then use this cultural information along with the leadership training that they have received through the Laidlaw program and implement their training with each of the communities that they are working with as part of their projects.

Laidlaw Attributes Developed During This Project

- *Collaboration and team working:* builds relationships and networks; works collaboratively and across boundaries; uses emotional intelligence to achieve this; capitalizes on the power of diversity
- *Social and cultural intelligence and awareness:* able to navigate new and foreign situations; uses this to build relationships and networks

Project Objectives

1. Work closely with our Ugandan team to implement health programming in schools such as after-school education on topics like puberty and nutrition and training students to make reusable menstrual pads for adolescent girls and handwashing stations;
2. Conduct interviews and produce a promo film to highly the impact of our girls support programming;
3. Assist with running the Mobile Health Clinic;
4. Assist village health workers with developing new training handbooks

Other Requirements and Things to Be Aware Of

- Uganda is a multilingual country where dozens of languages are spoken, but English is widely used.
- Students traveling to Uganda are required to be vaccinated against yellow fever. Students should consult with their doctors to get vaccines or boosters recommended for travel in Uganda, such as typhoid, MMR, meningitis, tetanus, and polio. Students are also required to take an antimalarial while in the country. Students will be provided with boiled and filtered drinking water and they should avoid eating uncooked and/or unwashed raw fruits and vegetables. It is recommended that students bring medication for travelers' diarrhea with them. We will provide a thorough list of other over-the-counter medications and supplies that are recommended.
- In terms of safety, Uganda is generally a safe country for visitors. Students will be given a thorough orientation which outlines any specific risks and expectations. The major concern is road safety and as a result we do not let our students drive, nor are they allowed to ride on the back of motorcycles. Other issues addressed in our orientation are the high rate of HIV infection in Uganda and political issues in recent years.
- As for cultural considerations, the students will not only be supervised by Dr. Emily Otali (a Ugandan woman), but they will also be appointed to teams that are run by our Ugandan staff. These staff members all have significant amounts of experience working with foreign undergraduates in general and LiA Scholars in particular. The students will therefore have a lot of guidance in dealing with local customs.

KASIISI PROJECT

PROJECT 2: CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Project Summary

In 2025, Kasiisi Project and its Ugandan partner, the Kibale Forest Schools Program (KFSP) will partner with Laidlaw Foundation's Leadership in Action (LiA) program on a project that provides important conservation education in rural Uganda. This project is part of Ugandan-led work around Kibale National Park that has been ongoing for 27 years. In 2025, the conservation education program will deliver a Conservation Careers speaker series to inspire members of after-school Wildlife Clubs and host activities to celebrate World Chimpanzee Day, among other activities. LiA Scholars will support and lead on aspects of this planned work by engaging with students and community members.

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3. *Make a difference:* LiA Scholars will be working on real-world problems affecting people living in this part of Uganda and conservation issues affecting Kibale National Park. Therefore, their work will contribute to Kasiisi Project's long-term efforts to instill a conservation ethic in schools and communities and to conserve the park.
4. *Develop and Demonstrate Leadership Skills:* LiA Scholars will participate in workshops with local leaders to understand what leadership means in Uganda. They will then use this cultural information along with the leadership training that they have received through the Laidlaw program and implement their training with each of the communities that they are working with as part of their projects.

Laidlaw Attributes Developed During This Project

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- *Social and cultural intelligence and awareness:* able to navigate new and foreign situations; uses this to build relationships and networks

Project Objectives

1. Work closely with our Ugandan team to deliver conservation education programming for schools including a Conservation Careers speaker series for students;
2. Lead a World Chimpanzee Day celebration with schools and the Kibale Chimpanzee Project;
3. Support other conservation activities with after-school Wildlife Clubs and monitoring and evaluation

Other Requirements and Things to Be Aware Of

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