



Laidlaw Scholarship
Conservation Education
Leadership learning points

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Yi Xi Kang

This report serves to complement the earlier report on the activities conducted by the Conservation Education (CE) team as part of the 2023 leadership-in-action Kasiisi Project. This report focuses only on the leadership aspects of the project, and what I have learnt from the 6 weeks spent in Kasiisi, Kabarole district, Uganda.

There were 2 main aspects of leadership which I developed and learnt: firstly, that a leader should seek to understand the people they are working with and for in order to truly help them; second, leadership is often more about the small acts rather than large, significant acts by people in positions of power.

Regarding the first point, it is crucial that a leader trusts their people, and more importantly, that the people trusts the leader. Throughout the 6 weeks, we had to closely work with the staff of KFSP and the teachers, and we also interacted a lot with the kids in Kasiisi Primary School. One way which I built up trust with the staff was to show that I was serious in my work and quickly completed the tasks they asked me to do. I also offered suggestions as to how they could accelerate certain processes. I also made sure to spend extra effort to get to know all the KFSP staff, students and teachers, by engaging in everyday conversations such as finding out about their families, how far they have to travel everyday to reach school or the workplace, and questions about local Batooro or Bakiga culture. I made it an effort to learn Rutooro as fast as possible, picking up the simple greeting phrase 'Oli ota' (How are you) even before I reached Kasiisi. Since I come from a vastly different background compared to the local staff, I felt that it was extremely important to show respect to the locals' culture and learning the language is one of the best ways to show my sincerity. This closely links to my next point, which is the importance of everyday small activities.

The CE team only consisted of another scholar and me, so we were quite direct with each other and open in our working styles. We were also under the supervision of the KFSP staff, so we were not in traditional 'leadership' positions. However, even then, I got to practise my leadership skills through all the small acts. One such example was volunteering to teach the staff the basics of Google Drive and Google Calender, to assist them with the digitisation of their workflow. This definitely increased their trust in me and they would openly ask me questions if they needed help with regards to technology. I also actively sought to understand the rationales behind some of the projects and what KFSP has done in the past. I also took initiative to help the staff with simple things such as carrying groceries from the vehicle to the kitchen and replacing the water bottles in the water cooler. The other scholars gradually started taking initiative and helped the staff too. Most of the time, leadership is not about the big decisions, but rather the small acts that encourage others to follow suit. This really showed me that action speaks louder than words, and that a leader has to be keen to do banal and basic tasks if they expect the people to do it too.

Overall, I am more confident in my leadership skills and have learnt a lot from the 6 weeks spent in Kasiisi. I will continue to work as a leader who strongly believes in building trust between the people I work with and always help others when I can.