



# **Laidlaw Scholars Conservation Education Project Report**

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# 1. Introduction

This report was developed by the third cohort of Laidlaw Scholars completing their Leadership in Action experience with the Kasiisi Project, a Laidlaw partner program in Fort Portal, Uganda. The Conservation Education (CE) Team is composed of the five authors of this report.

We spent six weeks working with the CE Team at the Kibale Forest Schools Program (KFSP), based in the village of Kasiisi, located in southwest Uganda. KFSP partners with sixteen government-aided primary schools all located within five kilometres of Kibale National Park's boundary.

The Kasiisi Project is the fundraising arm of the KFSP, located in the U.S., and is named after Kasiisi Primary School, the first school that the KFSP began working with when the organization was established by Elizabeth Ross in 1997.

The KFSP CE team's 2025 theme was "to inspire the young generation to aspire for conservation careers and connect them with prominent Ugandan conservationists." The theme was a guiding focus for the Laidlaw Scholars' work, which covered three main areas: 1) Community Outreach, 2) Educational Development, and 3) Professional Development. This work included coordinating events and activities for World Chimpanzee Day/Week, updating and developing curricula used by KFSP in schools, and upskilling the staff of KFSP through presentations and improved administrative and organizational systems.

This report will describe the work carried out by the Laidlaw CE Team. It will also detail the challenges faced by the team and their achievements. It aims to inform and guide the next generations of Laidlaw Scholars working with the KFSP and provide insight into future projects that these scholars may work on.

## 2. Community Outreach

### *World Chimpanzee Day Preparatory Visits and Celebrations:*

A large portion of our time with the Kasiisi Project was spent preparing for and conducting community outreach with the 16 KFSP primary schools and local communities around Kibale National Park. Our work within these circles was aimed at providing conservation education in an effort to protect the park and its endangered chimpanzees.



*Fig. 1: Chimpanzee conservation education*

We spent the first half of our project preparing for World Chimpanzee Week (WCW), celebrated during the week of July 14th (World Chimpanzee Day) at each of the KFSP's partner schools. World Chimpanzee Day (WCD) marks the first day that Dr. Jane Goodall arrived in Tanzania in 1960 to study the chimpanzees, honoring her legacy of research about these fascinating primates! The KFSP conservation education team uses this day as a way to educate students on chimpanzees and the human impacts that contribute to both their demise and their survival. As part of the celebrations, the wildlife clubs at each of the schools are asked to perform a skit, poem, song, or traditional dance, and to create educational posters, which are shared with their entire school communities on WCD.

The two weeks leading up to July 14th the CE team broke up into groups, visiting all 16 of the KFSP schools to share educational material and assess the progress of each school's celebratory performances. We graded the performances to

determine which primary schools would be visited by the CE team and special visitors on the 14th.

In preparation for the school visits, we spent the second week of our LiA creating all the necessary educational materials. We updated several of the chimpanzee-focused online presentations and added videos to make them more engaging. We also developed an educational poster about chimpanzees' use of tools, a flexible daily schedule, and a rubric for scoring each school's performance. Finally, we developed two games based on our presentations. One game aimed to teach students how chimpanzees use tools, having them work in teams to try and get honey out of water bottles using sticks, mimicking how chimps use the same materials to get honey out of trees. The other game, 'snare race', sought to teach students how snares decrease chimpanzee mobility and make finding food difficult. This game saw students whose movement was variously restricted (e.g., two students tied together, or one in a potato sack) race to get some bananas.



*Fig. 2: Tool-use game*

In the third and fourth weeks of our LIA, we visited the different schools and implemented our learning materials with their wildlife clubs, while also grading their performances, collecting their posters, and showing a short film, *Ajani's Great Ape Adventures*, which discussed the importance of young conservationists. This was done during after-school visits which typically lasted from 3pm to 5pm, and were led by some of the CE staff and Laidlaw scholars. We gave our chimpanzee presentations in English, while the CE team translated into Rutooro for clarity.

On July 14th, we visited our two top-scoring schools, Mituuli and Rutoma B., for the conclusion of World Chimpanzee Week. The day involved guest talks from a chimpanzee researcher, a park ranger, and a member of a snare removal team. The students also shared their performances and we spoke to them briefly about why we celebrate WCD. In our fifth week, we digitized the posters collected from each school to be printed and returned as educational material.

### *Career Day:*

On July 4th, we attended a career day at Iruhuura Primary School. As this event was primarily pre-planned by the CE team, our role was to create posters about chimpanzee related careers, as our guest speaker was chimpanzee and wildlife veterinarian, Dr. Peter Apell. Dr. Apell's challenge to students to start becoming conservationists from a young age, taking note of the world around them, inspired us to add an animal log activity to our new birds, bats, and butterflies curricula.

### *Improved Cookstove (ICS) Demonstrations:*

During our second week, we were given Improved Cookstove (ICS) training by the KFSP staff. During the duration of our LiA, we gave ICS demonstrations at two of the KFSP schools and the mobile clinic, presenting a slideshow that we updated followed by a step-by-step building of the ICS.



*Fig. 3: ICS training*

### *Mobile Clinic:*

On Wednesday, June 25th, we attended a mobile clinic in the village of Busiriba in the Kamwenge District. Here, our role was to deliver conservation-focused presentations to passers-by and patients waiting to be seen for their appointment. At the clinic, some of us shared a presentation about general conservation knowledge and strategies that we had created, while others helped check in patients. Language presented more of a challenge to us as scholars than usual, as many of the citizens in this more remote community had less understanding of English compared to other stakeholders with whom we'd worked. Later in the afternoon we gave an ICS demonstration, assisted the health team with data entry, and visited a local school with members of the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) to present the students with UWA-branded notebooks. The day was a significant learning experience for everyone, opening our eyes to the struggles that healthcare providers in developing nations such as Uganda face, and the overall impact of the Kasiisi Project's health initiatives.

### *Hive Checks:*

The Kasiisi Project owns and operates the Kasiisi Farm, which is home to fifty-eight African Honey Bee hives. The honey produced from these hives represents a source of income for the organization, while the bees also serve to keep elephants away from the farm's crops. In our time at Kasiisi, we conducted two hive checks with Valence, the bee specialist, and other members of the CE staff. We geared up with bee suits and smokers and helped record temperature and activity data about the amount of pollen and ratio of uncapped to capped honey.

The relationship between elephants and bees is a key theme stressed in the KFSP's elephant curriculum, providing a solution to elephant crop raiding, a common problem for farmers and families that live near Kibale National Park. Beekeeping represents a solution which does not include killing or injuring the hungry mammals.



*Fig. 4: Hive check*

### **3. Educational Development**

#### *Curriculum Development:*

Following on from previous cohorts of Laidlaw Scholars who worked with KFSP, we continued to revise, update, and expand on the various educational curricula that had been developed and were being implemented in schools. We began by improving the PowerPoint slides used to deliver this content, making them more engaging and relevant. After noticing that many curricula did not have any linked activity, we developed games for each curriculum.

In addition to revising pre-existing curricula, we also identified educational gaps which we aimed to fill. We devised three new curricula focused on the conservation of birds, bats, and butterflies. These topics allowed us to include more engaging, multimodal educational resources in our curriculum that were lacking in pre-existing curricula, specifically video and audio resources. We also developed a species identification poster accompanied by a logbook, to be distributed to schools when any of these curricula are delivered to Wildlife Clubs. To ensure students remained attentive and interested, we also developed a number of practical and fun games. In our final week, we delivered these curricula to various Wildlife Clubs.

The CE team aims to inspire the next generation of students to aspire to conservation careers. On this basis, we decided to focus on spreading awareness about these careers by creating posters focusing on conservation careers—both a wide-ranging general series of posters and a chimpanzee-specific poster made available to students for the career day. Alongside these posters, we also created a poster detailing tool-use by chimpanzees. This poster accompanied our tool-use game and worked to develop students' empathy for and understanding of chimpanzee behavior.

#### *Videography and Promotion:*

During our World Chimpanzee Day preparatory school visits, we got footage of our presentations and activities. In the week leading up to July 14th, we started work on a promotional video for World Chimpanzee Day. Our motivation for

creating this video was to promote the work of KFSP's CE team and to inspire future Laidlaw Scholars to apply for their centrally-offered LiA with the Kasiisi Project. We interviewed members of KFSP staff, including Directors Dr. Emily Otali and Dr. Tusiime Patrick, along with four other individuals from the conservation and health teams.

Amy Moore, Programme Director for the Laidlaw Foundation, visited us during the week and we were able to interview her about the Laidlaw-Kasiisi partnership. We completed and previewed the video to the staff on World Chimpanzee Day and given their feedback, finalised edits to the video over the following two days. The video is posted on the Laidlaw Scholars' Network and the [Kasiisi Project's social media](#). Additionally, we created a [YouTube channel and uploaded the video online](#) to make it more accessible. Hopefully, this channel will be used to promote the collaboration between Laidlaw Scholars and KFSP in the years to come.



*Fig. 5: World Chimpanzee Day video*

### *Trainings and Demonstrations:*

In our first few weeks working with KFSP, we attended a number of training sessions run by both the CE and health teams. We learned how to sew reusable menstrual pads (RUMPs), construct tippy taps out of jerricans and sticks to improve student hygiene, and build food storage racks and beehives. These training sessions equipped us with both practical and theoretical knowledge relating to the hygiene and ecological issues facing schools and their communities.

### *Collaboration:*

Another benefit of our work with KFSP was the flexibility of work between the conservation and health teams. Not only did we attend one another's training sessions, but we assisted the health team's data entry work at the mobile clinic, and one CE team scholar also became extensively involved with the health team's HIV/AIDS and STI educational curricula. Furthermore, one of KFSP's current focuses is on the concept of "One Health," the idea that the health of humans, the environment, and all living creatures is inextricably linked. As such, we found it important and necessary to work fluidly between conservation and health, rather than remaining separated.

## **4. Professional Development**

### *Upskilling Presentations:*

During our time working with the Kasiisi Project, several of us gave skills presentations to KFSP staff and the other scholars. The background to this lay partly in a recommendation made by a previous scholar, who said that it would be useful for us to think of what knowledge we could pass on to the team in Uganda.

Some presentation topics were created by scholars who identified skills which they thought the KFSP team might benefit from learning, including how to use Google Forms, and another on IT equipment. The IT session, for instance, came as a result of one colleague not knowing that a VGA cable and linked HDMI converter could be used in a projection system.

Dr. Tusiime Patrick, the director of KFSP, later gave us three suggestions for topics that he believed the team ought to learn, including graphic design, Google Drive, and Microsoft Powerpoint. Some of the scholars who had not yet presented took on these topics and devised their own sessions.

We believe that the presentations we gave to the KFSP team were key to fulfilling the exchange aspect of the Laidlaw-Kasiisi partnership, adding to our colleagues' human capital and providing a forum for mutual learning.

### *Administration and Organization:*

We were able to develop our professional skillset through our experience with administrative organization at KFSP. The novelty of working in an unfamiliar environment presented many unique opportunities to lead and learn in administrative and organisational decisions. These administrative and organisational 'moments' were diverse. At a glance, they could range from:

- Planning and inquiring about our tasks in good time to ensure we meet our deadlines.

- Delegating projects into constituent parts, having taken stock of our various strengths and weaknesses.
- Managing the procurement of IT equipment needed to boost our productivity.

In administration and organization, it is all too easy to make assumptions about what your colleagues do and do not know, and expect the smaller details to simply 'click' into place. You may have devised a good session for a wildlife club, but did you bring a charged Bluetooth speaker? Does the school want you to finish at 4pm sharp, or can you have an extra thirty minutes? It was questions like these with which we were confronted, and our time with KFSP has shown us the importance of being proactive and diligent in our professional lives.

### *Headshots:*

In addition to providing technological and administrative support to KFSP, we also organized a headshot session in our final week. We noticed that many of the staff, both those who worked at the office and at the guesthouse, did not have professional photographs nor had the resources to acquire one. As such, we decided to organize a headshot session using some of the high-quality cameras that we brought with us.

## 5. Challenges and Achievements

### A. CHALLENGES

#### *Differences in Work Ethic:*

A primary challenge was navigating different work ethics and approaches. Given the international composition of our team, sometimes it was unavoidable for people to hold different expectations on preferred work pace and decision-making styles. With most of us being citizens of the 'Global North', adjusting to the pace of work in Uganda represented a challenge. Technological, resource, and cultural differences from what we are used to in our home countries at times limited our productivity. It took patience and understanding for us to realize and overcome such difficulties.

#### *Communication:*

Miscommunication between ourselves and our team members was a challenge we faced throughout the project. While respectful cooperation and familiarity with each other and our work helped us improve our issues, working as a team always comes with communication difficulties. Among the scholars, we were sometimes challenged when everyone was not on the same page in regards to the progress of current work, leading to feelings of exclusion and frustration on different ends. With the conservation staff we also encountered issues of communication. While the KFSP staff all speak English, language was still a barrier for us, especially on school and community visits. Having the CE team around to translate and help us share information was immensely helpful in this regard. Communication comes with time and trust and as we developed this between ourselves and our team, other challenges became easier to face.

#### *Technological Issues:*

Technology presented significant difficulties, impacting the quality of our activities and working efficiency:

- During our earlier school visits, we had issues with the projectors/speakers, and at one point we had to resort to using two laptops to show a short film to over 70 students.
- The limited internet facilities at the KFSP office stymied our pace of work, making access to simple software (e.g. Microsoft Powerpoint, Google Drive) very poor.
- Three of the four desktop computers in the conservation office do not work properly. The fourth has some issues with software.
- Limited information amongst colleagues around IT.

## B. ACHIEVEMENTS

### *Revised and New Curricula:*

Our biggest achievements during the project included revising and developing the KFSP curricula, as discussed above. An example of our work is below (Figure 6), as part of our revision of the birds, bats and bees curricula.



*Fig. 6: Revised presentation on bees (before and after)*

### *World Chimpanzee Day Activities:*

As previously mentioned, we also created and implemented new games as part of the World Chimpanzee Day celebrations. We collectively visited 16 different schools in preparation for the day, presenting our revised chimpanzee curriculum, playing our snare race and tool-use games, and the "Ajani's Great Ape Adventures" film.

Another significant part of our World Chimpanzee Day work was the promotional video which was uploaded across KFSP/Laidlaw channels. This allowed us not just to develop new skills, but also contributed to the promotion of KFSP's mission and efforts. In our video, which contains both interviews and videos of the activities we led at local schools, we shed light on KFSP, the importance of conservation education, the major threats to chimpanzees, and the activities we conducted across different schools over World Chimpanzee Week.

### *Technological Solutions:*

To overcome the issues with technology, we adopted several strategies:

- As previously mentioned, we delivered IT training to colleagues to ensure they were knowledgeable about the hardware used at KFSP.
- We started thoroughly checking what equipment we needed for our school visits.
- To remedy internet problems, we procured ethernet hardware and organized the maintenance of a modem-style router at our guest house. We also reverted to using flash drives/adapters to transfer larger files between computers.
- We worked on the one functioning computer available in the conservation office and investigated making the other three work.

Around halfway through our time with KFSP, all technological problems had been effectively mitigated.

## 6. Advice for Future Scholars

### *Work Culture:*

While it is natural to want specific tasks to carry out upon arrival, the pace of work may be slower and less directed than with what you're familiar, and this will take some getting used to. Nonetheless, the KFSP staff are flexible and are welcoming to new ideas and skills. Scholars should take time to learn where there are gaps in current programming, whether by asking the staff directly or through their own observations, and apply their unique skills accordingly. The work done within the six-week period, after all, will depend to some extent on the specific knowledge and equipment the cohort brings. Experiment with proposing your own ideas to the staff and taking the lead on any resulting projects. Some projects our group chose to take-on included creating promotional content for KFSP, developing new curricula, and revising pre-existing presentations.

Given the relatively small size of the team, taking responsibility for the implementation of your ideas is appreciated and provides opportunities for personal growth. Adaptability is another relevant skill, especially because work can be done on short notice and does not always go according to plan. Learn from each visit to local schools and make any necessary changes to the established routine and materials. Also, be sure to make a checklist before any excursions, to ensure that all required items are accounted for.

When visiting schools, be aware that the students' understanding of English may be limited. For this reason, it is important to enunciate, speak at a reasonable pace, and use simple words. Hand gestures can also be useful in conveying information. Based on the unique skills of the team, each person should consider where their strengths lie and use this information to decide which game to introduce, which slideshow to present, and so on. At the same time, scholars that collaborate effectively will share responsibilities more or less evenly and help each other through whatever obstacles may arise. To note, scholars may be asked to visit a given school alone or in small teams of 2 or 3, in addition to one CE staff

member. The even division of work according to skill becomes especially important in later weeks, when responsibilities and workload increase.

*Preparing for Your Visit:*

Living and working with the same people for six weeks will likely cause intergroup conflicts to arise, however minor. Communication, honesty, and empathy are recommended for dealing with conflict. Given the size of the team and the necessity of collaboration, sometimes in very small groups, resolving conflicts as they come up is best not just for productivity, but also for the well-being of the group.

As affirmed by the packing list, each scholar should crucially bring a laptop and adapter. A high-quality camera, video editing software, and a digital pencil such as an Apple Pencil with iPad (for digitally rendering WCD posters) may prove helpful for productivity. A revised packing list has been prepared by our Laidlaw group and will be made available to future cohorts in the process of planning their visit.

*Empaako:*

Though English suffices for communication with KFSP staff and most locals, scholars are encouraged to learn the *empaako*, or ‘pet names,’ of their Ugandan colleagues out of respect. There are 12 *empaako* in common use, and those who have one will often refer to each other by *empaako* rather than by name. Below is a list of 2025’s KFSP staff and associates along with their *empaako* (in **bold**).

<b>2025 Kasiisi Staff <i>Empaako</i></b>			
<b>General</b>	<b>Guesthouse</b>	<b>CE team</b>	<b>Health team</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Atwooki</b> Tusiime Patrick ('Pat')</li> <li>● <b>Atwooki</b> Gorret (pronounced 'Gorrey')</li> <li>● <b>Amooti</b> Otali Emily</li> <li>● <b>Abwooli</b> Francis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ateenyi</b> Jane</li> <li>● <b>Atwooki</b> Isaac</li> <li>● <b>Araali</b> Anderson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Atwooki</b> Kajura Derrick</li> <li>● <b>Ateenyi</b> Kasana Catherine ('Cathy')</li> <li>● <b>Araali</b> Ategeka Kenneth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ateenyi</b> Tuhaise Shamillah ('Shamy')</li> <li>● <b>Amorti</b> Musana Issac</li> <li>● <b>Akiiki</b> Nkwanzu Alpha</li> </ul>

There are two staff with birthdays that may coincide with the Laidlaw team's visit to Uganda: Kenneth (July 1) and Derrick (July 15).

Lastly, please refer to the KFSP contract to further understand what conduct is and is not acceptable while abroad.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

We would like to extend our warmest and most sincere thanks to the KFSP team for their support, guidance, and help during our six-week Leadership-in-Action experience in Kasiisi, Uganda. Their kindness, friendliness, and openness made us all feel welcomed in their community. We thank Atwooki Kajura Derrick, Ateenyi Kasana Catherine, and Araali Ategeka Kenneth for their leadership on the conservation education team. We also thank the KFSP health team and the other Laidlaw Scholars who joined us on our LiA, and Atwooki Tusiime Patrick and Amooti Emily Otali for their exceptional guidance as directors.

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