



The path of a donation from Germany to Uganda: Planning and setting up a project

Three years ago, I was approached by 'Together for Uganda'. They were a charity that had just received a large donation from a renowned Neuss-based car dealership, and were going to use it to set up an agricultural project in Uganda. As a biologist, they wanted me to supervise the planning of a gardening school for their sponsored children. No sooner asked than done!

When I subsequently went to Uganda for the first time, I discovered how different the local ideas of negotiation and timekeeping were from my own. The charity's half-yearly visits to Mutolere (two weeks in spring and autumn respectively) weren't enough to plan everything in great detail, which meant that later we often had to resort to trial-and-error, and adjust old plans to fit new circumstances. At any rate, building capacity in a community works best if the team adapts to local conditions and cooperates with local specialists.

The project got off to a rough start: In our first year, we found a suitable plot of land but no qualified instructors to work it. In our second year, we found the instructors we'd been looking for, but we'd also lost access to the land. In our third year, we finally managed to combine the two, and it all went smoothly from there!

We were provided with two recently renovated buildings on the extensive grounds of St Francis Hospital, Mutolere, some of whose wards had been sponsored by Together for Uganda (see the 'Projects' page on our website). Our training facilities consisted of a kitchen equipped with several stoves and a brightly painted classroom.

Conveniently for us, another Ugandan-European project called 'Sustain for Life' had been operating there since 2011. It taught hospital workers and people from nearby villages (mostly women) the basics of sustainable agriculture in courses lasting several weeks, free of charge. All the workable land on the hospital's premises had been turned into fruit and vegetable beds. Because the Ugandan climate has dry and wet seasons instead of warm and cold ones, they yield as many as three crops per year. Not only does this supply the hospital's own demand for food, but it enables them to distribute excess food wherever needed. In fact, the project has developed so well that the hospital was awarded the UN's and EU's Seed Award 2013 as one of two African winners (see the report on our website: [Seed_Award_2013.pdf](#)).

We easily convinced Sustain for Life's instructors to support our own project. Titled 'Hospital Agriculture Education Center' (HAEC), it ran under the slogan "The children are encouraged to do it at home" (Sister Katto). Accordingly, since early 2013 our sponsored children are taught basic agricultural skills such as the growing, harvesting, storing and processing of food crops. In addition, we teach them various related skills, for instance eco-friendly food preparation using less wood, general hygiene, precautions for family health and animal husbandry. The children pass on their new knowledge to their native villages, increasing the crop yield there and improving general living conditions.

The three-week courses take place during school holidays. Each class of about thirty pupils is guided by two instructors through theoretical as well as practical lessons. After completing the course, pupils are given seeds and seedlings to take home with them, where the teachers later visit them and, if necessary, give further instructions. All children are free to take the courses several times to improve their basic knowledge of agriculture. The programme has been warmly received by hospital

workers, patients' relatives and visitors alike. Even some children's grandparents have asked to be admitted.

We hope that at some point the project will no longer depend on external financial backing but instead will sustain itself through the course fee and sales of surplus crops and preserved food.

Overall, I've had a wonderful time in Uganda, and my involvement in the project has further deepened my respect towards other cultures.

Martina Klein

Bonn, spring of 2014

Pictures from the first two holiday courses of 2013



Micro-gardening in a sack mound



Children setting up their own sack mounds



Foot-operated hand washing station



Instructor giving construction advice



Starting a vegetable patch



Transplanting cabbage seedlings



Toques are distributed in the classroom before mealtime



Making a heat-insulated cooking box to reheat pre-cooked food (and save precious firewood)



Lunch is served directly from the cooking box



The children are guaranteed at least one meal per day during holidays



Seeds up for sale in the shop



Lesson on building cages for small animals