

KFSP Volunteer Report—Summer 2014

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Overview:

I came to the Kibale Forest Schools Program to work as the farm intern on projects related to the Kasiisi farm and the porridge project. My time at KFSP can be broken down into two major projects. 1) Reviewing the porridge project accounts in order to get a grip on the farm's financial situation. 2) Teaching an afterschool program on soil quality with the agriculture club.

1) Porridge Project Accounts:

At the beginning of the summer no one had a clear idea of the financial situation of the farm, so Elizabeth asked me to review the porridge project accounts and write a report analyzing the farm's major expenditures. In my review, I found that the farm loses substantial amounts of money each year and that there is no single outlet for these losses. Though the farm does spend a substantial proportion of its budget on certain expense items (like premixed feed from Kampala), there seems to be no easy fix for the deficit. Though I did not have time to reach out to local farmers to get a better understanding of how they turn a profit with their produce, I suggest that anyone who wishes to address this problem further should make a point to research farming and livestock raising practices in the region and the state of the market for products like eggs and piglets. Only after the KFSP has a better idea of the profitability of farming in the region in general will it be able to assess whether or not the Kasiisi farm will ever be solvent.

2) Afterschool program:

Over the course of the summer I led weekly activities with the agricultural club surrounding issues of crop nutrition and soil health. Our first project was growing bean seeds in water bottles, which

allowed the students to visualize plant anatomy and watch the germination and development of seedlings. This project was largely a success and complemented the plant anatomy lessons the students receive in P4. The second project involved a guest workshop with Lisa Tiemann, a soil researcher from Michigan State University who has spent the past few summers staying at Kanyawara and studying changes in soil quality in the area. She visited the agriculture club one afternoon and brought equipment for the students to perform tests for nitrate and phosphate levels in soil samples. The students brought soil samples from their home gardens and compared nutrient levels with soil samples from the forest, then they filled out a worksheet asking questions about how to maintain and improve soil quality through sustainable agricultural practices. The soil workshop was a big success, and I would strongly encourage KFSP to continue collaborating with Lisa in future summers, as she has a wealth of knowledge and easy access to scientific equipment for agricultural curricula.

The only major difficulty I encountered with the agricultural club was that I did not develop a consistent student base across weeks. I always had plenty of students to talk to, but students often jumped between afterschool programs booked on the same afternoons. Both of my projects required sustained participation from the same students to work optimally, so they suffered as a result of the rotating club membership. In the future, I would encourage KFSP to make sure to not double book afternoons and to encourage interns to develop curricula that do not need sustained participation from students.