

UGANDA EXPEDITION 2010



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH CLUBS
Over 45 years of achievement

NAYC

UGANDA EXPEDITION 2010

Overview

This year saw NAYC head for Africa, providing the opportunity for eleven young people to visit Uganda. We were based at the amazing Discovery Centre, Jinja for our two week expedition and would be working with some of the children from the local villages.

This opportunity of a lifetime had been in the planning for over two years and the young people had been involved in this process for over 18 months. They had assisted with the planning, produced the selection criteria, and participated in fundraising events including the outstanding achievement of cycling 4000 miles (UK to Uganda distance) in just 72 hours! Our overall aim was to enhance the lives of young people (both in UK and Uganda), enabling them to realise their full potential, through an overseas expedition.

This brief report will give you a glimpse of this truly life changing experience and demonstrate that it was a success in every aspect.

Our first day in Uganda was spent at the centre, a fantastic facility for young people and groups to use, who's aim 'releasing potential' reflected ours for the expedition and throughout our time here the Centre and staff supported us in striving to reach this aim. During the day we went for a walk around some of the local villages from where the children we were to work with lived. As we walked down the bumpy, red-earthed, dusty path, into the woods we then saw their village, a collection of small mud and stick huts, children playing in the earth, women cooking on fires in the open. As we walked through the village we were greeted with big smiles and surrounded by friendly children. For most of our group this was their first experience of 'real' poverty and immediately had an impact on us all.

"The villages, you don't actually realise how lucky we all are until you see the conditions that some of these people are living in, it was hard seeing it, and at times very emotional but it's amazing how happy they all are." Laura (16)

In addition to raising funds for the expedition, our young people had raised funds for 25 of these local children to spend three fantastic days at the Discovery Centre. For these children this was their 'opportunity of a lifetime'; a bed, three meals a day, electricity, running water and a chance to join in with amazing activities. The UK young people took responsibility for the children at the centre over the three days, planning and running activities, entertaining during their free time, helping at meal times, ensuring their well being. Our young people worked with small groups and the whole group of children, facilitating football, basketball and volleyball activities, fun games, initiative tasks, art and crafts, singing, talent show pieces and supported them on the challenge course. The local children were so enthusiastic about everything and built up great relationships with our young people, who learnt about communication and the responsibility with its stresses, strains and long hours of overseeing a group. It was great to see the sharing of games, songs, experiences from culture to culture. Our young people all showed tremendous leadership qualities throughout this period and although sad to see the children leave, were ready for some rest days after giving of themselves.

“The fact that you can learn so much from them [Ugandan children], it’s crazy! There also an inspiration at how they still are smiling no matter what, and makes us have a different outlook on life.” Shyam (17)

“I have enjoyed their [Ugandan children] singing, humour and being responsible.” Jack (15)

The following few days were spent experiencing some of the beauty of this great country, this was a good time for the young people to relax a little and enjoy some fantastic places. A trip up the River Nile watching hippos, crocodiles, and reaching the bottom of Murchison Falls, a game drive through the countryside revealing giraffes, elephants, monkeys, buffalo and more all in their natural environments. Awesome experiences which also provided an opportunity to learn about the country and wildlife and also further team building as we had to set up a group camp for our time in the National Park.

“It was amazing, loving the crocodiles and hippos, because they are dangerous. It was jaw dropping, Buffalo herd—WOW! Phenomenal, Buff-autiful, awesome.” Ben (16)

“ It was beautiful.” Hannah (18)

“ I’m actually in the jungle!” Janey (17)

After returning to the Discovery Centre, the young people spent some time doing practical work helping to prepare the new education centre on the Discovery Centre site which has been in construction over the last two years. The vision for this building is for it to be used by local schools where they have little or no equipment or even electricity. They would visit the centre to experience and learn with the aid of equipment including computers and other IT equipment. Our young people helped clear some of the surrounding grounds, prepare pathways, clean the building and site, all helping to ensure the centre can be used to educate the local young people.

Our final days were spent visiting a chimpanzee sanctuary and an isolated community about 20miles into Lake Victoria and reviewing our time in Uganda, it’s impact on us and how we could use the experience. As leaders we had seen great developments in all of the young people, some real potential starting to be realised, and the impact of this experience had increased their confidence in themselves and their desire to achieve more. The young people had appreciated the experience and positive effect that it had had on them, for some it challenged their views and actions, all had a greater confidence in communication, leadership, appreciating others and making the most of every opportunity.

“If I could stay one more day, I would like to spend it at the Discovery Centre helping out. I want to be able to help some of the villages near the Discovery Centre where the kids from and also help out in any way to improve the Discovery Centre.” Hannah (18)

“Uganda has impacted me for life. I would never expected to be so challenged and changed by this experience in such a positive way.” Ben (16)

Outcomes

We have successfully achieved all our outcomes during this expedition and the evidence is clearly seen in this report, the leaders observations and the young people’s evaluations, journals and comments.

The outcomes are detailed on a separate sheet and if you wish to see any of the young people’s journals or evaluations in detail please contact us.

“Since I’ve been in Uganda my outlook on everything has changed, I now know not to judge a book by it’s cover, who would have thought how beautiful it is here. The people here have just made me feel so welcome and have made me realise it’s what’s inside that matters.” Hannah (18)

“Being involved in the Uganda Expedition has brought team building skills, more self confidence and just a whole onlook of our lives and how much we take for granted.” Jack (15)

“It’s made me—me! It’s made me use my confidence in a more positive way, it’s made me realise that I take a lot of things for granted especially food.” Laura (16)

“I think I have become more independent and feel like I can now lead a group in something as it has built up my confidence also I realise that it doesn’t take a lot to really impact someone elses life so I will try to be more considerate towards other people and do more to help the less fortunate.” Cydney (16)

“Uganda was truly life-changing. What we learnt was immense, almost a new way of life. We learnt so much from the kids, staff and general public of Uganda. A new drive, a new way of tackling life, in that belief is all you need to succeed. How they make so much from so little. How they are always smiling no matter what and how everybody no matter, colour, age, sex is family. It’s inspirational, touching but also innovative.” Shyam (17)

Thanks

The positive development and releasing of potential in these young people would not have been possible without the support and generosity of many individuals and organisations. We would therefore like to thank the following for their kind and generous support:

The Childrens Fund
Northamptonshire County Council
Michael Jones Jewellers
Nationwide Lifestyle Gym
Northamptonshire Trampoline Gymnastics Academy
CocaCola Enterprises
County Councillors - Mike Hallam, Suresh Patel, Sally Beardsworth
Discovery Centre - Uganda
Richard Johnson
Individual sponsors

Future

Having seen these young people develop, shared the experience and glimpsed the potential, it is our responsibility to ensure we enable them to progress and develop further. We will be meeting with the group to review the expedition and further our learning now we are back in the UK. We will also be encouraging the young people to utilise their new skills in leadership and communication and share their experience with other groups and young people across Northamptonshire to inspire them to take opportunities and strive for their full potential. We will also be looking at developing a link with the Discovery Centre to continue to support the local young people which we built great relationships with.

If you would like any further information on our expedition, photos, video or even a presentation by the young people, then please contact Richard Buckingham, email richard@nayc.org