



the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada



# The Learning Curve

*What we learn by missing the target*

# INTRODUCTION

What we do at the Jane Goodall Institute is hard. It is hard to save endangered great apes, hard to do grassroots, community-led conservation, hard to work with marginalized youth. The challenges inherent in our endeavours are too numerous to itemize and don't fit in a tidy list. We routinely contend with unstable governments, the rapid spread of disease, a range of cultural norms, corrupt practices, world-weary young people.

But we persevere. We keep going. Taking inspiration from our tireless founder, the singular Dr. Jane Goodall, we believe that we can build a better future for our generation, the next generation and the one after that. We can if we keep trying and if we stick together.

Here are some of the biggest challenges we faced over the past fiscal year (2018/2019) and how we met them.





# AFRICA PROGRAMS

## Delivering Healthy Futures

JGI Canada is now in the last year of the Delivering Healthy Futures (DHF) project, a four-year initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada and our generous supporters. Through DHF, we work in three regions located in the rural parts of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There, the field team conducts grassroots outreach in support of the project's targets of reducing maternal and infant mortality rates. They achieve this through improved health care, pre- and post-natal support, family planning outreach and supporting region-wide vaccination programs for infants and children.

The DRC has been the site of ongoing violent conflict and remains a politically unstable region. This is challenging in itself, but added to the volatility of the region has been recurrence of Ebola, a deadly and potentially fast-spreading disease.

Thankfully, Ebola was not present in the areas where we work. Nevertheless, it was noted that in communities where the disease had spread, many people were deeply mistrustful of healthcare and aid workers and reluctant to come forward with symptoms until it was too late.

We determined to be proactive among the communities where we worked and began to integrate messaging about Ebola through our WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) outreach. By doing so we raised awareness about the threat of the disease, how it is transmitted, and how to prevent its spread.

In addition to external challenges, we also had to make adjustments to our program delivery. Given the goals of the project, our target beneficiaries are child-bearing women, infants and young children, all of whom suffer mortality rates that are considerably above average - as many as 20% of children living in this part of the world die before reaching the age of five.

So targeted were our program activities, we discovered only through interviews and focus group discussions did we discover that the men in the household had not been sufficiently engaged in our outreach efforts.

Project staff responded by designing activities that removed some of the gender barriers that persisted despite our efforts to raise awareness of the many benefits of family planning. More specifically, we needed to determine how husbands/partners could support their wives by attending pre-natal care visits, sharing household chores to reduce stress during pregnancy, and ensuring that pregnant women get sufficient nutrition. The latter being very important in a culture where, more typically, men/boys in the household get more food and are generally better fed.





# ROOTS & SHOOTS

## International Aboriginal Youth Internship

The International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI) initiative offers Indigenous youth in Canada the opportunity to gain professional experience through international development work in Uganda. With funding from Global Affairs Canada, IAYI interns participate in projects that address environmental sustainability, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods. After a four-month internship, participants receive support in job search training and are connected with networks that can support the specific needs of Indigenous youth and their communities. Ultimately, the IAYI initiative aims to increase Indigenous youth's participation in their communities and increase their employment opportunities in sustainable forestry in Canada and international projects.

At the start of the program, we discovered that intern recruitment for the project was more difficult than anticipated. Nevertheless, we engaged five enthusiastic participants in year one. Despite their eagerness, the group experienced considerable culture shock in Uganda as they had not travelled so far from home or for as long a period of time before. Consequently, interns returned to Canada before the four-month period ended.

In retrospect, staff should have anticipated and allowed for a wide variation in travel experiences. Entering year two of the project, we applied the lessons learned from the first group.

We were proactive in engaging more hands-on involvement from parents/guardians. We also introduced peer advisors for each intern; and we scheduled JGI staff on-site visits halfway through the time spent in Uganda to make any adjustments required.

To date, our efforts have paid off. Recruitment has increased and the interns placed abroad have experienced a smoother transition to their temporary new home.

# ROOTS & SHOOTS

## A.P.E. Fund

One of our Roots & Shoots initiatives is our A.P.E. Fund granting program. This donor-supported youth engagement effort provides mini-grants for youth-led action projects that improve the local community by addressing the needs of Animals, People and/or the Environment (A.P.E.).

The majority of our grants support educator-guided student projects. The projects are implemented over the course of the academic year, concluding in June after which teachers are required to submit a report on impact. We discovered, however, that reports were often inconsistent with the initially proposed activities, instead describing an outcome that varied from the original application for funding.

We addressed this issue by assigning each application a unique project number and creating a reporting template that required consistent feedback on pre-determined activities.

We also instituted Knowledge, Action, Practice (KAP) surveys to capture pre- and post-results of funded projects. Systematic data collection will be used to inform the impact and reach of each project. As this was the first time for teachers to complete the KAP survey, webinars were provided at the beginning of the school year to help them through the process.





## ROOTS & SHOOTS

### Uncovering Common Ground

With funding from the Government of Canada, JGI Canada launched the Uncovering Common Ground project in 2019. Through this 12-month initiative, JGI Canada is collaborating with First Nations communities in three provinces to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people from across Canada. Through in-person meetings, workshops and forums, young people will exchange points of view and knowledge in order to find common ground where true reconciliation between cultures can take place.

During the course of a two-day launch, where all participants gathered at the University of Toronto for workshops and discussion, we quickly discovered that there was no consensus among the youth on what reconciliation actually means. This was an important learning moment for us and we needed to adjust our approach quickly.

JGI staff made an extra effort to create space for open and frank dialogue among participants on the meaning of reconciliation. Stepping back to allow everyone to question and unpack this complicated topic, before planning youth-led community projects, paved the way for the next phase of the initiative.

# CONCLUSION

While unforeseen challenges nearly always arise with each new project, we learn and adapt along the way. Our approach is that, with every step backward, we have an opportunity to move two steps forward. We strive to improve. We are grateful for those who support and contribute to our work while understanding that there can be bumps along the way. Lastly, we are grateful to the people who benefit from it and for whom change is most impactful.



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