

Ekisaakaate



Reconciling Traditional and Modern Gender Values



The Cross-Cultural Foundation
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1. The context

“Nowadays our children have bad habits, acquired from a mixed society, from exposure to different values and harmful peer pressure, and from limited discipline by parents. In the past, children were the responsibility and concern of all members of the community, but this is no more.”

Such sentiments, highlighting declining moral values, a lack of community support and cultural orientation, are echoed in many parts of Uganda. This includes Buganda, one of the largest and oldest kingdoms which, until the early 1960s, had a monarchy with strong administrative structures and developmental guidance. Traditionally, a clear distinction was made between gender roles among the Baganda: men were authoritative, taught leadership skills and expected to be responsible for their families' well-being. They took the final decisions in the home. Women were care givers, counsellors, and responsible for the day-to-day management of the home and family. These roles were generally complementary and at times jointly undertaken, as when men farmed alongside women and shared some household chores. Women also played an advisory role in respect to kingdom affairs. Young girls and boys underwent separate cultural grooming to mould them into these roles.

When the kingdoms were abolished, from 1966 until 1993, any display of cultural unity was downplayed to avoid adverse political attention, although local languages, dress, food, and dances continued to be in use. While this allowed a sense of cultural identity to endure, traditional cultural orientation aimed at character formation among the youth was greatly hampered. With weakened cultural support systems, knowledge on human, family and traditional values was no longer systematically developed or transmitted. Moral degeneration has also been attributed to a formal education system that focuses on academic performance and does not offer sufficient guidance and counselling with respect to personality development.

This case study focuses on *Ekisaakaate*, an initiative by the Buganda Kingdom to nurture young girls and boys into becoming 'holistic' persons who appreciate both traditional and modern values. It explores aspects of reconciling these values, with emphasis on gender equity. This is one of 14 case studies documented by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of

Summary

There is a growing public outcry about moral degeneration in society, especially within the younger generations. This is often attributed to weak social support systems and a lack of cultural orientation.

This case study illustrates how the Buganda Kingdom has restored a traditional system to promote cultural values amongst youth, albeit now living in a 'modern' context. The "*Ekisaakaate*", a 2-week holiday programme run by the *Nnabagereka* [Buganda Queen's] Foundation, aims at nurturing young girls and boys into 'holistic' persons who appreciate both traditional and modern values. The youth are facilitated to reflect upon a range of topics to enhance their understanding of culture, modernity, and critical thinking in various contexts. Modern and traditional concepts of gender are explored, with the aim of understanding differences in values and perceptions. While the *Ekisaakaate* is rooted in traditional culture, character formation, personality development and critical reasoning are given priority in the programme.

In spite of the challenges met, including negative attitudes towards the programme from within the Kingdom and outside, and inadequate funding that threatens its sustainability, the *Ekisaakaate* programme has empowered its growing numbers of participants, who demonstrate improved conduct, skills and enhanced confidence both at home and in their respective schools. The programme has attracted financial and material resources, and retained its human resources on a voluntary basis. It has also linked to institutions that provide technical advice on the Kiganda tradition and receives free services and goods from a wide range of supporters.

The *Ekisaakaate* meets a recognised and common need to restore morality in society, as illustrated by its growing appeal. The demand to join this programme from students of different ethnic and national backgrounds underlines common underlying values, putting into question the often exaggerated ethnic divisions drawn within and outside the country. This approach could therefore be replicated by other institutions outside Buganda, but would require strong linkage with the respective traditional institutions for acceptability and authenticity of any taught changes in cultural practices and norms. Cultural identity provides legitimacy and an important point of reference for both youth and adults in the face of various external influences.

Uganda since 2007 to illustrate the significance of culture in development. The documentation process involved meetings with resource persons and beneficiaries, using semi-structured interviews, as well as a review of relevant literature.

2. The history of the *Ekisaakaate*

In pre-colonial and colonial times, young Baganda men attended a 'school' for cultural grooming managed by the chiefs of the *Kabaka* (King of Buganda). This was conducted in an enclosed space fenced with papyrus reeds, the *Ekisaakaate* (or 'enclosure'). It was mainly for *Bakopi* (commoners), some of whom were sent to work in the palace after their training or even groomed into leaders. These young men acquired leadership and other political skills, knowledge on cultural practices and values, as well as occupational skills, such as blacksmithing. They were considered educated Baganda and the *Kabaka* often appointed some of his chiefs from among those who had been so trained.

As the *Ekisaakaate* groomed boys to ensure the continuity of leadership in the kingdom (a role women were not expected to play), girls did not undergo this orientation but were culturally tutored at home by their mothers, paternal aunts (*ssengas*) and paternal grandparents (*jajjas*), who played an important function in passing on traditional values and social skills. Princes and princesses, on the other hand, were groomed in an '*akakomera*' (royal enclosure) but would visit the *ekisaakaate* and learn

the ways of the 'ordinary' people.

The architects of the current *Ekisaakaate* explain that, after the abolition of Uganda's kingdoms in 1966, an entire generation was raised without systematic social and cultural guidance, a situation aggravated by political and social turmoil. This generation, many of whom are now parents, have therefore found themselves handicapped in providing guidance to their own children, because they did not receive it themselves. To salvage cultural values and beliefs and to restore a 'holistic' generation, the Queen of Buganda (the *Nnabagereka*) conceived the idea of a programme that would restore cultural values in the Kingdom's youth. The programme would focus on personality development for boys and girls who faced social challenges and needed support.

Consultations were made with the advisory Board of the Nnabagereka Development Foundation, religious leaders, teachers, women organisations, and chiefs to develop the concept. An annual holiday programme was developed for children, based on Kiganda tradition and values, but taking into account 'modern trends.' The programme was called *Ekisaakaate* because of its aim to provide cultural orientation although, unlike the traditional enclosure, it was open to all young people aged 6-18 years, regardless of social status or gender.



Activities at the Ekisaakaate: (L-R) Learning to make traditional food; about environmental protection; harvesting the bark from a banana plant; and weaving with local materials

3. The *Ekisaakaate* programme

The programme is run under the guidance of the Nnabagereka Development Foundation, whose mission is to nurture a healthy society by educating people rooted in the traditional culture, but able to operate effectively in a modern context. An executive committee of 10 members is responsible for approving the syllabus, developing plans and budgets, and implementing and monitoring activities.

Children join the *Ekisaakaate* for 2 weeks and are trained simultaneously in four age sets (6-8, 9-12, 13-15 and 16-18 years). The programme promotes inclusiveness and hospitality, with diverse ethnic groups and other nationalities (Rwandese, Burundians, Tanzanian and South African) often represented.

Every year, secondary schools are directly contacted and the *Ekisaakaate* is also widely publicised in newspapers, on radio and television. Students pay a subsidised fee for accommodation, meals and learning events of Ushs 155,000 (US\$75), a relatively high sum for ordinary Ugandans. In 2009, approximately Ushs 100 million was raised (in fees and material contributions from supporters, such as accommodation, t-shirts, food and drinks). This amount covered the cost of maintaining 530 children for the 2 weeks and paying the expenses of the trainers and ancillary staff.

Ekisaakaate links up with other institutions within the kingdom. Thus, members of *Nkoba za Mbogo* (a cultural orientation programme for young Baganda in higher education institutions) visit the *Ekisaakaate* to help children enhance their creativity and performance skills. The Buganda Ministry of Culture is also consulted on cultural norms and practices. *Ekisaakaate* collaborates with the Straight Talk Foundation (a health communication NGO for adolescents), and disseminates messages that are aligned to cultural principles and values. Other supporters include media houses and FM radio stations with programmes targeting the youth. Medical service providers also offer free services for the duration of the training.

The training contents and learning approach - The topics taught reflect an annual theme. In 2008, cross-generational sex provided a focus, and in 2009, the theme was "Being a True African." The programme

A typical day at the *Ekisaakaate* starts at 5.00 a.m...

Morning

- Prayer
- Physical exercise
- Talks by resource persons
- Debates

Afternoon

- Sports (volleyball, swimming or indoor board games)
- Talks by resource persons
- Handicrafts - (knitting, bead / craft making, weaving etc).

Evening

- Entertainment - TV or music
- Prayer
- "Bed time stories" - *Ssenga / Jajja* sessions

...and ends at 9.00 p.m.

content is based on the integration of the values of the Baganda, of Ugandans and universally recognised rights. There are 13 study areas, including personality, leadership, responsibility from an African perspective, wealth creation (through cottage industries), natural and social environmental protection, ethics and integrity, peace and security, justice and faith in God, Luganda language (writing, speaking, proverbs); sex and sexuality; health, nutrition and fitness, hygiene, herbal medicine, HIV/AIDS and other ailments.

The students are grouped according to the 18 counties of Buganda – cutting across age, gender, ethnic grouping and religion. These groups are assigned daily chores and work as a team throughout the holiday programme. The programme promotes a pluralistic appreciation of faith where no religion is discriminated against or given primacy and time is allocated for worship as appropriate.

The programme motto is "*Laba, Yiga, Kkola*" (See, Learn, Act), underlining an interactive learning approach in a friendly and homely (rather than school-like) environment. The facilitators take on the traditional role of *ssengas* and *jajjas*, playing an advisory, rather than judgemental role. Free expression also reflects a rapport between *jajjas* (grandparents) and their *bazzukulu* (grandchildren), which encourages confidence and trust, and where obedience is obtained through persuasion and understanding, rather than punishment. Students are



Facilitators demonstrating music and weaving skills, using local materials

helped to determine positive and rational behaviour in a given situation. African role models are used to encourage them to emulate traditional values that are close to their cultural context. Role plays demonstrate what has been taught in theory, illustrating the different situations children may encounter.

The participants confide in the facilitators about the difficulties they face both within and outside the *Ekisaakaate* environment and have private sessions with the *ssengas* (for girls) or *jajjas* (for boys and girls) to ask personal questions and learn about different aspects of their culture (knowing totems, meaning of proverbs, etc), thus recreating the *ekyoto*, the traditional fireplace around which children gathered to learn cultural norms and values, based on the principles of 'see, learn and act'. Luganda is used to effectively communicate the Kiganda tradition, promote love for the culture and the language, and improve writing skills. Using Luganda as a medium of instruction, says one of the teachers, does not present a major problem, as only a few children who enrol do not understand the language.

Each child is assessed daily through a points system. Points may be gained or lost depending on an individual's conduct - cooperation, communication, participation, collective and individual responsibility. At the end of the 2 weeks, all students receive certificates, with those who excel receiving prizes. Where a student is academically gifted, a scholarship may be awarded (up to Senior 6 class).

The facilitators - The programme is headed by a *Ssaabagunjuzi* (team leader), assisted by *abagunjuzi*,

ssengas and *jajjas* for different age groups and activities. The facilitators are selected by the Executive Committee according to their professional expertise (specialists in curriculum development, training of trainers, sports, music, religion, counselling, creative arts, psychotherapy, and health). A planning event is also held to guide the development of a training curriculum each year and identify suitable facilitators. These – who include the *Nnabagereka* herself - work on a voluntary basis, affirm cultural values and principles in their conduct both within and outside the *Ekisaakaate* and are often role models in their own communities. Some double as *ssengas*, *jajjas* or counsellors. All participate in 6 mandatory training workshops on various topics relevant to the annual *Ekisaakaate* theme and syllabus. Trainers also undergo compulsory sessions to supplement their professional competence – for instance selected nursery school teachers are trained on their additional role as *ssengas* for the participants aged 6-10. External resource persons are also invited to make presentations on topics in their field of expertise: medical staff for instance come to discuss HIV/AIDS and other health related issues. The facilitators are assessed by the students who are encouraged to talk to members of the Executive committee or other facilitators.

The *Ekisaakaate* worldview - The facilitators explain that the worldview promoted by the *Ekisaakaate* is based on an integration of traditional and modern views, aimed at nurturing young people who “are informed, knowledgeable about global influences, able to effectively engage with these influences and to compete favourably.” The programme adopts

culture as a positive and important foundation for self-development, and participants are facilitated to appreciate, rather than shun, their cultural identity and tradition. A facilitator reiterates: *“We are Africans before we are Christians or any other identity for that matter, and need to reflect on who we are, where we came from and where we are going.”*

With children constantly exposed to different lifestyles, values and influences, the *Ekisaakaate* provokes critical reflection on traditional, modern and diverse values and contexts. Sauda Namyalo, the Chairperson of the Programme, was brought up by her grandfather, a chief and himself a trainer at the traditional *Ekisaakaate*. She asserts that some perennial cultural values will not be erased by modernity. These include respect for elders, courtesy, modesty, integrity, hard-work, cleanliness, responsibility for self and others. Cultural etiquette is taught and one strong element of Kiganda culture and identity is maintained - young girls and boys are expected to kneel when greeting their parents and elders. Once boys reach a certain age they are however permitted to sit or stand with a respectful posture; often girls and young women continue to kneel well into their adulthood, although more often at home than in public. Traditionally,

cleanliness was strictly observed in Buganda, reflecting a belief that, if one lacked the discipline to keep one’s immediate surrounding clean, the ability to maintain order in other spheres of life (social, political and environmental) was questionable. In the programme, the same principle is used to teach children hygiene and sanitation which they are expected to demonstrate on a daily basis. Marks are for instance gained or lost depending on one’s demonstration of cleanliness.

But the programme sees culture as dynamic and responding to changing trends. The *Ekisaakaate* worldview places emphasis on appreciative learning and integration of elements of different cultures that contribute to holistic human development. This is supported by developing the ability to discern and critically analyse aspects of one’s own and other cultures; to objectively understand different contexts and their implications, to develop a sense of identity and self-understanding and to put one’s inherent potential to use. The influence of modern concepts of gender roles, equal opportunity and individualism is for instance evident in the emphasis on ability, rather than traditionally defined gender responsibilities.

The programme benefits from a wide range of facilitators, including the Uganda Police...



4. Reconciling 'traditional' and 'modern' gender values

In the *Ekisaakaate*, traditional gender roles are therefore discussed in the light of changing contexts. Today's educated boys and girls compete for the available social, economic and political opportunities in their environment, pointing to a need to develop skills across the board, as women venture into previously predominantly male domains and vice versa, oblivious to their traditional roles. With exposure and education, gender roles have evolved; as when women become breadwinners and household heads. Traditional values and principles that marginalised women have been overtaken by Western concepts of gender equality, equity and related affirmative action.

Within the Kingdom, gender roles can echo such changes: traditionally, women assumed leadership roles, as in the office of the *Nnamasole* (the King's mother) and the *Naalinnya* (the princess keeping the royal tombs) who handled women's affairs and played an advisory role on other kingdom affairs. Women are also nowadays encouraged to take up leadership roles in the Executive arm of the Kingdom. The current Kingdom Treasurer is a woman, further justifying the



Girls and boys play *Omweso* (traditional board game)

need to enhance leadership skills amongst girls in the *Ekisaakaate* programme.

Ekisaakaate participants therefore draw lessons from differences and similarities in gender perceptions, from a traditional perspective and in a 'modern' setting, where roles are more flexible. To reinforce such discussions, boys are taught to cook and serve food – an unprecedented step in a traditional setting – and boys and girls are encouraged to be supportive of each other within and outside the home. Similarly, in recreation, *Omweso*, a local board game, is taught to boys and girls, although it was traditionally only played by men, who were thought the only ones to have the time and need for the competition, discipline, quick thinking and counting ability the game promotes. In today's *Ekisaakaate*, both groups are encouraged to be creative and to play whichever sport or game will enhance their potential.

Within the 13 thematic areas of the *Ekisaakaate*, a few examples illustrate how attempts have been made to reconcile traditional and modern values. These topics are facilitated according to the knowledge needs and level of understanding of participants in different age groups:

Ethics and integrity - Participants discuss general conduct and how they relate with different members in society. For instance, early sexual relationships before marriage may be permissible in the western world but, in the traditional local context, while young people may marry early, girls were expected to remain chaste before marriage. With the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, engaging in early, unprotected sexual activities may have further grave consequences. The degree and acceptance of public display of (semi) nudity and intimacy varies, resulting in different understandings of what is considered "bad" or "good" behaviour. Discussing such topics allows participants to reflect on their circumstances and make decisions based on the culture, challenges and opportunities in a given context.

Dress code is a cross-cutting theme for all ages. Participants are encouraged to "come as they are" but cultural values in respect to dress code are observed during the programme and discussions discourage indecent dressing (mini-skirts, tight jeans, shorts for girls and loose trousers exposing underwear for boys). These are considered fashionable by the youth who imitate what they see in Western media, in which context these may be acceptable, but discussions are held about the local situation where these are



The Queen of Buganda, Nnabagereka Sylvia Naginda Luswata, Founder and patron of the Ekisaakaate (centre right)

considered shabby, indecent, and attracting negative attention. Traditionally, exposing private body parts such as the midriff, breasts or thighs was considered a taboo, as exemplified by traditional proverbs and songs. In Kiganda culture, any woman could potentially bear a child with the *Kabaka* and therefore could not expose, for instance, the breast that would feed the King's child or the future King. Similarly, women did not prostrate before the King and were expected to be respectable, with exemplary conduct and decent appearance. In the current *Ekisaakaate*, these expectations apply to both girls and boys. As the participants discuss dress codes in relation to fashion, personal image, self-esteem, personality, hygiene, occupation and occasion, they are encouraged to prudently emulate decent role models.

Sex and sexuality – students are thus taught to respect themselves and others, to understand the meaning of being a young woman or man from a traditional perspective, how to relate in a healthy manner with the opposite sex and how to manage changes in their bodies. Participants discuss sex and abstinence from a cultural and modern perspective and are trained separately on some topics related to sexuality and issues relevant to their respective needs. This was a role traditionally played by *ssengas* for girls but, with the adoption of western values which places emphasis on nuclear families, *ssengas* are less called upon; hence this emphasis in the programme curriculum.

Leadership - Building on the traditional principle of complementarity of roles, boys and girls are given equal opportunity to learn new skills, as well

as to undertake household chores. They learn to be responsible for themselves, their families and community. They are encouraged to develop their potential based on talents and merit rather than gender: both girls and boys are taught leadership skills and have access to leadership positions within the *Ekisaakaate*. The traditional governance structure of the 18 counties of Buganda helps participants exercise these skills: there are elections for the position of “county chief”, with both girls and boys competing equally (although, such a chief could traditionally only be a man).

5. Outcomes of the Ekisaakaate

Several outcomes of the programme in respect to the participants' confidence, skills, conduct and sense of empowerment were mentioned by respondents.

Improved skills and conduct - Facilitators have received testimonies from parents and guardians about positive changes in their children's behaviour, observing their religious obligations, physical energy, willingness to work and contribute to household responsibilities. It was reported that such improvements went beyond the *Ekisaakaate*: one parent reported that his son's school commended the boy for improved conduct and academic performance; he was also selected to make a presentation on public speaking and discipline during the following *Ekisaakaate* course.

Enhanced confidence - Parents also reported a change in their children's self-esteem, and in their attitude towards them and their friends. Thus, at the beginning of the training, some children were reluctant to disclose their identity as non-Buganda, but after discussions on the importance of self-image and personality, they gained confidence and shared their ethnic identity. The opportunity to exercise leadership skills in various positions of authority within the *Ekisaakaate* encourages participants to take on roles which demand a sense of responsibility and exemplary conduct. Some parents returned to ask the facilitators how they had transformed their children in such a short time, “*I witnessed my son come out of his shell and become a star performer in a very short time!*” said one proud father. Another parent reported that his son is now singled out as a role model and has opportunities to interact with prominent people (such as the *Kabaka*, the *Nnabagereka*, facilitators

and NGO representatives) who are likely to have a positive influence on his life. Other parents describe with much surprise how their children now comment on the way they dress, some even asking their mothers to dress more modestly. Less positively, but importantly, after receiving counselling from the facilitators, some female participants have also revealed being abused by male relatives at home, and the programme has attempted to provide an opportunity to address these issues with their parents.

Programme performance - The number of participants in the *Ekisaakaate* has increased from 263 in 2006 to 530 in 2009. One of the parents interviewed narrated how his son's first reaction to the programme was resistance: *"He had a very long face and I almost had to force him to participate. To my surprise, at the end of the 15 days, when I went to collect him, he said, "Take my luggage I will come on my own tomorrow!"* There has also been an increased demand for the programme to broaden its target group to include parents and guardians. There have been requests for the *Ekisaakaate* to cater for Ugandan children in the Diaspora, a demand yet to be addressed. The increased number of stakeholders and funding commitments from the corporate sector also flags an appreciation of the relevance of the programme. *Ekisaakaate* has thus registered increased stakeholder contributions and fees from U.shs.30 million in 2007 to about U.shs 100 million in 2009, much of which in kind.



The Kabaka and Nnabagereka with the facilitators.

Ekisaakaate students' views



■ *"I am a Senior 4 Rwandese student. My family came to Uganda in 1993, so I can speak Luganda. In the Ekisaakaate I learnt to make luwombo (traditional steamed food), bagghia and paper bead necklaces. Learning in the Ekisaakaate will help me to fit in Ugandan society better. I have made new friends and*

I think the programme should be expanded to East Africa because my non-Ugandan friends have said they would like to learn more about culture. It would also make people appreciate African culture, respect ourselves and gain respect from people of other cultures for being decent." (Leilah Igitego, 17)

■ *"I was reluctant to participate in the 2008 Ekisaakaate and I had to be dragged to the car because I expected that learning about culture would be boring. Later I found many youths, the programme was not a routine with a long list of rules like at school and the food was good! There were no exams, no lengthy notes to take, no stress. We interacted freely, participated in different sports and made new friends. We were encouraged to dress decently; smoking and drinking alcohol was strictly forbidden. We got points if we behaved well, participated in debates and dressed neatly. We also held elections for County Chiefs. I had always wanted to become a leader but I used to be shy. What I learnt in the Ekisaakaate made me confident, I stood for elections and was voted Ssaza (county) chief. When I returned to school I contested for the position of Assistant Head Prefect and was elected. I now appreciate my identity and understand the Kiganda culture much better and it is neither boring nor very traditional. Given the opportunity I would like to participate in the next Ekisaakaate."* (Lwamulungi Mulagwe, student from Buganda).

■ Bataringaya Ronald (14) is a secondary school student whose mother is a Muganda and father a Munyakole. At first, he felt the programme was a waste of his holiday time, which he preferred to spend with his friends. After a short while, however, he made new friends, learnt how to plant trees, play new games and make crafts. He has always been interested in art and is currently making a necklace for his mother. The *jajjas* taught him *ebikoco* (traditional riddles), how to bathe properly, and conduct himself well. Ronald says his impression of the Baganda has improved now that he understands their culture better.



6. Challenges

The programme is also facing a number of challenges, including limited follow-up, negative attitudes and inadequate financial support

Limited follow-up and support – *Ekisaakaate* runs for a short two weeks at a time and currently does not systematically follow up the participants. This poses a challenge, especially where a child has gained self-understanding but where the home environment may not be supportive of this transformation. In some cases, parents do not have a strong cultural background and find it difficult to sustain the positive impact the programme has had on a child, a constraint that may be partly addressed once a programme for parents is initiated. In cases where a child has suffered physical or psychological abuse, opening up and not being able to obtain continuous support may result in more difficulties at home, where parents or guardians lack the understanding of the *Ekisaakaate* counsellors. A few attempts are made to follow up children in especially difficult circumstances through schools and parents, but this is not always adequate. Some children have also returned for short private free counselling sessions, but this is not possible for those who live far from Kampala.

Negative attitude towards the programme - In its initial stages, some government officials were opposed to a traditional institution grooming children, suspecting indoctrination and fostering rebellion through the children. The *Ekisaakaate* became the object of subtle security surveillance but, with time, fears were dispelled. Secondly, some traditionalists within the kingdom and the community stated a preference to have this programme exclusively for Baganda children. A negative perception of culture as “satanic” has also surfaced: some religions groups (mainly *Abalokole* – ‘saved’ Christians) have linked learning about traditional values to learning about traditional worship and witchcraft, an accusation that the *Ekisaakaate* Executive Committee has deliberately not responded to, allowing parents’ and students’ testimonies to speak for themselves.

Inadequate funding - The programme does not have long-term financial sponsors: this limits the intake and coverage in different parts of Buganda. Some Ugandans consider the fee high, in spite of the subsidy, and with its opening up to non-Baganda who can afford the costs, this has led to a perception that the programme is elitist. With insufficient funds, the

Ekisaakaate cannot employ permanent staff or have a permanent home (the programme shifts venue, depending on the sponsor).

7. Sustainability and future plans

These challenges underline the critical nature of the *Ekisaakaate*’s sustainability. Commitments and plans have been developed to address this and other issues.

The *Kabaka* of Buganda has demonstrated support for the *Ekisaakaate* by interacting with the children and officiating at the closing of the annual sessions. He has offered 25 acres of land to establish a permanent home for the programme, where agricultural projects may be developed to promote the value of work, farming skills taught and the participants’ diet supplemented. There is also a plan to establish an income generating project of a model primary school based on cultural norms and values.

The *Ekisaakaate* plans to expand its target to children in international schools and in the diaspora (who have different holiday times). A parents’ *Ekisaakaate* programme will be held in 2009 to help them learn about cultural values and how to deal with them in a modern context, as well as to support the development of their children’s skills. It is also expected that, in the next 5 years, with more facilitators trained, the programme will expand to the 18 counties of Buganda and run simultaneous training cycles at an affordable fee. *Ekisaakaate* clubs will be established



Fun and games are also on the *Ekisaakaate* programme.

in schools to facilitate continued interaction outside the main programme. Tailor made workshops will also be organised for other interested groups (such as taxi drivers and operators) to enhance their own knowledge of the Kiganda culture.

During the 2009 *Ekisaakaate*, for the first time, a 'cultural day' was organised to showcase the different cultures of the students present (including those from outside Buganda). In future, this day will include cultural dress shows, preparation and exhibition of traditional food, competitions of cultural arts, drama, poems, songs and dance. Traditional forms of communication will also be used, such as drumming to call students for different activities, the "gwanga mujje" (traditional call for community work).

A monitoring, evaluation and networking strategy is also being developed. This will involve different stakeholders who can play a role in systematically assessing the performance and impact of the *Ekisaakaate*, and identifying improvement measures both within and outside the programme boundaries.

8. Conclusions

Students and facilitators agree that the *Ekisaakaate* programme supports character formation and personality development, which is not adequately catered for in the mainstream education system. The high demand for the programme to expand its intake and area of operation indicates a widespread need to restore the value of culture in personality development, while taking into account the 'modern' context. Although Uganda is ethnically diverse, the response to the *Ekisaakaate* from varied ethnic groups suggests shared concerns and a common need to restore a sense of morality in society. It also shows that, even within such a diverse context, there are common underlying cultural values which blur distinctions between ethnic groups.

The interactive approach employed by the *Ekisaakaate* fosters objective reflection on differences and similarities between traditional and modern values. It stimulates critical reasoning not only to discern what is acceptable in a particular context, but also to enhance understanding, respect and tolerance. In instances of conflicting values, participants are equipped to reason rather than reject traditional practice as irrelevant and backward, or modern practices as corrupting and indecent.

With regard to gender, in a clear departure from traditional cultural orientation, girls and boys are oriented in a common space, taught leadership and other skills and provided equal opportunities to exercise their skills. There are indications that the Kingdom is providing more space for women to take on leadership roles and authority in previously male domains, highlighting the dynamic and responsive nature of cultural values. Conflicts between modern and traditional concepts of gender are however hard to overcome. While modern aspects of gender that place emphasis on equal opportunity and equity inform talent and skills development, traditional perceptions of gender roles still prevail in the *Ekisaakaate*. Thus, etiquette still places more emphasis on dress and conduct for girls than for boys – less reference is made to boys who behave badly or dress inappropriately. For instance, respectful girls and women are expected to kneel in greeting before men or elders of cultural authority, regardless of their professional achievements, giving the impression that reconciliation of modern and traditional worldviews, in reality is to some degree superficial.

The concept of an *Ekisaakaate* can be replicated by others, but any such initiative will need to originate or be associated with a body that has the necessary cultural authenticity and authority. This is particularly important in handling change, such as when determining when traditional norms and practices may be applied flexibly in response to changing trends, especially against long standing tradition. While changes are inevitable, the involvement of a traditional authority increases acceptability of change and reduces conflict, both within an individual, and in relationships with others. A traditional institution provides a recognized point of reference from which young people can draw guidance when faced with peer pressure, the influences of modernity, and foreign cultural practices. Stakeholder confidence in such a programme is also based on the knowledge that the programme is originated and guided by the relevant traditional authority and custodian of culture.

"We are Africans (...) and need to reflect on where we came from and where we are going." The *Ekisaakaate* has evolved from an initially inward looking concept within a Kiganda context to a broader perception of being 'African', helped by a commonality of values (solidarity, collective identity and responsibility, respect for elders and patriarchy), from Kiganda, Ugandan or African perspectives. In its current form, the programme can however only



have a limited impact if the objective is to cause social transformation, as indicated in its mission: means must be devised to integrate and revive cultural orientation within the existing social system for it to be accessible, affordable, sustainable and owned by the wider Buganda community and beyond.

The *Ekisaakaate* nevertheless seeks to establish a point of convergence between different worldviews where identity allows one to make sense of his / her being within a context that is not only Ugandan and African, but is also in relation to the western world.

The younger generations have been significantly influenced by the long-term effects of colonialism which have undermined cultural systems and structures, and fostered the dominance of foreign culture and globalisation that expose the youth to unlimited and uncensored information. All this results in mixed perceptions of themselves and their world, and explains the need to return to cultural roots and to appreciate one's culture and identity as vital elements of personal development. The *Ekisaakaate* provides an appealing instrument in this respect, an agent for cultural change, as well as a point of reference and a stimulator of self-understanding and esteem.

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