



Training Teachers

to be Environmental Educators at the Giraffe Centre, Nairobi, Kenya

The Giraffe Centre, located eighteen kilometres from the outskirts of Nairobi, is a conservation education centre that is home to the rare endangered Rothschild Giraffe. A successful breeding programme has commenced since the first giraffes came to the property in 1975. To date there is slightly over 330 Rothschild Giraffe in the wild, compared to the low figure of 130 in 1975. Currently, ten giraffes roam gracefully in the 140-acre sanctuary at the Centre.

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The education centre was built in 1983. The local children come in free of charge and learn about the importance of conserving wildlife and the environment. The doors opened to 830 school children in 1983. In 2005 alone we hosted slightly over 62,000 school children who go through an exciting programme of feeding the giraffes, listening to a talk on conservation, watching a wildlife film and thereafter have the option of going on a nature walk to the sanctuary or participating in a series of interactive environmental activities.

The Centre appreciates hosting these large numbers of children who are taught by several enthusiastic educators. However, there is the realisation that these children spend only about one to two hours at the Centre but spend a lot of their time with their teachers at school. The idea of training the teachers, who can strengthen the message with the children at school, was born.

A three to four-day training programme was initiated in 2001 to equip the teachers with skills that will enable them to teach the children about the environment, both in the formal and non- formal curriculum. The course covers an introduction to Environment, Environmental Education (EE), and more recently Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).



Pupils feed giraffes at the Centre



Environmental education (EE) CAN BE DEFINED AS AN ACTION PROCESS RELATED TO THE WORK OF ALMOST ALL SUBJECT AREAS. IT IS CONCERNED WITH THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MAN, NATURE AND THE WAY HE INTERACTS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. IT AIMS AT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITH THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) CAN BE DEFINED AS A FORM OF EDUCATION THAT BRINGS THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS TOGETHER AND STRIVES TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO.



A participant makes a presentation during a workshop



Teachers in an interactive session during a workshop



Teachers view the tree nursery demonstration at the Centre



The teachers are trained to integrate EE in the school curriculum and at the same time are able to apply sustainability concepts. Active

learning is emphasised as part of environmental learning and the use of the local environment, to teach the school curriculum. The teachers

are also taught a series of interactive learning activities which they can use to teach the children about trees, different wildlife species, animal sounds, colours and ecosystem interdependence.

Furthermore, the teachers are encouraged to improve the state of their school environment. If possible environmental learning projects are developed, such as nature trails, botanic gardens, tree nurseries, school greening, classroom museums, etc. These projects should also, if possible, be income generating. For example, the teachers have been trained on how they can use dried leaves to make fuel briquettes for cooking, a project that they can introduce in their school and surrounding communities to help stop the destruction of our forests and tree habitats where most of our biodiversity is found.

A thematic ESD pack has been developed at the Centre for the teachers to go back with and use it to teach the school curriculum. At the same time, the ESD pack encourages teachers to use nature centres such as the Giraffe Centre to teach the school curriculum. The themes include ecosystems / habitats (forests and savannah), water, energy and sustainable development. Examples are drawn from the school curriculum to give relevance and meaning to the teachers and students.

To date over 600 teachers have undergone this training programme from schools all over Kenya. We do hope to go beyond our borders and involve teachers and educators from neighbouring countries. We believe that this will go a long way in enhancing the conservation of wildlife and the environment, and also help us achieve Education for Sustainable Development. ♦