

Leading Light Initiative

In mid February, 2009, the first shipment of eight solar powered LED lanterns was hand-delivered to the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) Uganda office in Entebbe. Staff there were absolutely delighted by the donation and have all kinds of ideas about how they can deploy them.

This is one of the first lantern being delivered to its new owner, Ednah Byabali, who runs the Boomu Women's Group in Masindi District. Jane Lawton, Executive Director of Jane Goodall Institute Canada had the privilege of delivering the lantern in person.

The group has a small community tourism development project just outside the gate of Bugondo Forest, where JGI also has an ecotourism site. The group was created in 1999 as a basket weaving group and now offers basic accommodation and food to passing tourists. "Boomu" means "together" in the local language. Fifteen percent of all income raised is put to a community fund that finances school books, soap, pencils and porridge for local children attending nursery school created as part of the group. The gift shop displays a selection of handicrafts for sale including baskets, hand woven blankets, pictures and jewelry, most made locally.

They have no electricity. The lantern will be used either so they can work by its light at night, or to light one of the "bandas" (huts for tourists to stay in). Ednah was so delighted when Jane Lawton produced the lantern that she gave a big whoop of joy. The Uganda team is now considering the distribution of lanterns throughout their operations area, with the possibility of a couple more for the Boomu Women's Group.

Jane Goodall Institute Canada is participating in the Leading Light Initiative through their Roots & Shoots program and this lantern was donated and assembled by students at York House School in Vancouver. Canadian Hydro Developers is the principal sponsor of the Leading Light Initiative in cooperation with STAR EcoWorks Society. For everyone involved, it is a real pleasure to provide tangible support to community leaders in Uganda who are making a difference in their communities.

