Boxing Up A Classroom

Delta Kappa Gamma women are “hands on” people. For some members that trait causes frustration with the Schools for Africa project supported by the Society. Many members want to create or collect items to send to the 13 sub-Saharan African countries included in the project, a practice that UNICEF/U.S. Fund must prevent under the tenets of its agreements with individual African communities. However, there is a way that members can have a vicarious “hands on” experience as they collect money for the SFA project. It involves learning more about a metal box and its contents. The School-in-a-Box Kit is among the first items sent from UNICEF when emergencies arise that interfere with educational operations around the world. Educational specialists from UNICEF and UNESCO originally developed the kit in the 1990’s to provide education to thousands of Rwandan children displaced and living in refugee camps. The kit allows children’s education to continue within the first 72 hours of an emergency. With a School-in-a-Box a teacher can set up a classroom almost anywhere. Look inside the aluminum box and you will find basic school supplies and materials needed to support a teacher and up to 40 students for three months. The painted inside of the lid doubles as a chalkboard when classes are held in open spaces or buildings not equipped with boards. Teachers using this kit give their students the opportunity to forget the devastation around them and to focus on learning, if only for a short time each day. Beyond basic supplies each kit includes exercise books, pencils, erasers and scissors. A wooden clock to teach time, wooden cubes to practice counting and a wind-up/solar radio find their way into each box, as do laminated alphabet, multiplication and number tables. The specific items correlate to the locally developed teaching guides, curriculum and the language(s) in each setting where they are used. The kits are culturally neutral and therefore can be used anywhere. Quite often these materials are supplemented with other locally purchased books and materials in the local language. A School-in-a-Box Kit maintains equity for every group receiving this assistance while allowing those using the materials to address the unique needs of their students. What educator does not relish receiving a box of supplies for her students? Imagine the delight of both African educators and their students upon receiving a UNICEF School-in-a-Box Kit, currently priced at around US$250 with shipping. Each time a DKG member, chapter or state organization donates money to the SFA project, children in Africa receive an opportunity to gain an education. Your donations might be used toward the School-in-a-Box Kit a teacher uses to prepare students for a brighter future. While members cannot designate that their donations go toward a kit or even a particular country, just knowing that school supplies are actually being sent because of your monetary donations should make every DKG member proud to support Schools for Africa.

PROGRAM and FUND-RAISER IDEA

Combine your chapter’s support of both SFA and SEE (Supporting Early-career Educators) by having a program where members learn about UNICEF’s School-in-a-Box Kit. Ask each member to bring a donation (with receipts) of school supplies to a meeting. At the meeting each member shares what she brought. Collect receipts and tally them. Note the items brought that parallel those in a UNICEF School-in-a-Box Kit. See how close the costs of your “box” comes to funding one kit. Ask members to collect money at meetings throughout the year toward the amount needed to fund one kit. Donate the box of supplies generated at your meeting to a new educator in your chapter’s area. Full information on the contents of a School-in-a-Box Kit can be found at: www.unicef.org/supply/index_40377.html...click on the language you need to see the guidelines and the supply list.
FOCUS ON: SIERRA LEONE ... Info about this African Nation

Share this information as an introduction to a chapter program or in your chapter newsletter as you promote the Schools For Africa Project.

Location: Western Africa bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Guinea and Liberia
Area/Population: 71,740 sq. km. with a population of 5,743,725 (2014 est.); Median age, 19; life expectancy 57.39 (total); 54.85 (male); 60 (female, 2014 est.)
Terrain: Coastal belt of mangrove swamps, wooded hill country, upland plateau with mountains in the east
Climate: Tropical, hot, humid summer is the rainy season (May to December); winter is the dry season (December to April)
Natural Resources: Diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, chromite
Capital: Freetown, on the western coast
Government: Constitutional democracy with a president as chief of state
Languages: English (official), limited to the literate minority; Mendi (south); Temn (north), Krio (English-based Creole, a first language for 10% of population, but understood by 95%)
Infant Mortality Rate: 73.29 deaths/1,000; 11th in the world
Literacy: Definition/age 15 and over can read and write ... 43.3% (total pop.); 54.7% (male); 32.6% (female-2011 est.)
School Expectancy: 7 years (total); 8 years (male); 6 years (female)
Major Infectious Diseases: Degree of risk is very high
  Food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever
  Vector borne diseases: malaria, dengue fever and yellow fever
  Water contact disease: schistosomiasis
  Animal contact disease: rabies

RESOURCES:

Sierra Leone & the UNICEF/U.S. Fund Schools For Africa Project

Sierra Leone, along with Guinea Bissau, was added to the Schools for Africa project in the summer of 2013 as Phase III of the project started. This new phase aims to raise US$80 million between 2014 and 2017 to help the most vulnerable children in 13 of Africa’s countries.

Sierra Leone has long been a leader in education for children in West Africa, having been the site of the first secondary school for boys and later for girls in the region. Today there are challenges that prevent many children, especially girls, from attending school.

According to UNICEF Director of Programmes Dr. Nicholas Alipui, the School for Africa project embodies “the spirit of partnership and synergy that lies at the very heart of the initiative.” It has so far benefited more than 21 million children since it was initiated in 2004. Phase III opens a new chapter of opportunities for the children of Africa. Go to www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/index_69708.html for more information about the needs being addressed in Phase III.

A group of children give a presentation on hygiene and sanitation in front of their class at the United Methodist Primary School in the village of Njala-Nimikor, Kono District, on Wednesday, September 25, 2013.

Photograph courtesy of UNICEF/U.S. Fund
©UNICEF/SLRA2013-0350/Asselin, Sierra Leone, 2013