Teachers Immerse Themselves in the Diverse Environments of Cameroon

Environmental issues, a worldwide concern, are especially important for many countries in Africa as they strive to achieve long-term, sustainable development, as opposed to short-term, rapid economic growth that so often destroys the environment. Learning about the environmental issues of Africa can be a challenge, however, when done from the perspective of a participant-observer. This discovery was made by a hardy group of 12 middle and high school social studies and French teachers who spent five weeks this summer on a Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad to Cameroon, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The project was directed by Virginia DeLancey, associate director of IU Bloomington's African Studies Program.

The group learned about the range of geographic diversity of the African continent as epitomized in Cameroon and about the important environmental issues facing that nation. They strengthened their French language skills, collected "authentic materials" for use in their classrooms, and learned more about the educational systems of Africa. They prepared curriculum units for use in their own classrooms and for eventual dissemination to other teachers through the African Studies Program's Outreach Services. Accompanying the group to assist them in curriculum writing were two instructors from the IU's School of Education, Martha Nyikos, director of Foreign Language Education—who had also been on the 1996 group project to Cameroon—and Aaron Kercheval, a graduate instructor of social studies methods courses.

The group members began their study of the environment with lectures by Cameroonian faculty members at the University of Yaoundé and the University of Buea, and by representatives of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the U.S. Peace Corps environmental program. They then traveled to places that tourists seldom see. In the virgin forests of the remote Dja Reserve, they observed giant logging trucks carrying the timber from unprotected, rapidly-depleted forests to the ports for export overseas. They stayed at the location where the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline will terminate along the coast and considered the potential pollution from it and the disruption of the populations that must be evacuated to new locations. They climbed on the lava which recently had erupted from Mt. Cameroon and that had destroyed farmlands in its wake, threatening the plantations on the fertile volcanic soil of the mountain. They stopped along the coastal road at Debundscha, the second most rainy spot in the world, on a rainy day. They moved cautiously along a hanging footbridge over a wide river to enter Korup National Park, which has some of the most diversified flora and fauna in the

**Group teachers and staff relax in front of the Hotel Royal, Yaoundé. First row, left to right: Mary Vogl, Martha Nyikos (IU), Timothy Brian, Virginia DeLancey (IU); second row: Suzanne Wilson, Nissa Harry, Libby Brentlinger, Edmond Bilowa (U of Yaoundé I); third row: Kelley Fallon, Edith Campbell, Asheesh Mizra, Monty Pedon.**

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CLACS Receives Affiliation Grant with Nicaragua

In August, Indiana University’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) was awarded a grant of $116,000 from the United States Information Agency for an affiliation program with the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y de Centroamerica (IHN-CA) of the Universidad Centroamericana de Nicaragua (UCA). Each partner will draw upon its considerable institutional resources to develop collaborative multidisciplinary projects. At IUB, scholars from CLACS, the School of Law, and social scientists from the Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change (CIPEC) will work with their counterparts at UCA’s Departamento de Ciencias Jurídicas and at Nitlapán, a research center specializing in rural community development.

Ten faculty members from UCA and seven from IUB will participate in the exchanges to take place over a period of three years. UCA faculty will teach semester-long courses at IU, take part in mentoring and training programs, and gather resource materials to be utilized at UCA. Two IU faculty will spend a semester each at UCA teaching research seminars in their respective fields, while others will conduct short-term courses and workshops. The theme of the academic programs revolves around the question of minority rights as a “rule of law” concern, how minority rights relate to land use and land policy in Central America, and how the knowledge and technical expertise gained by UCA faculty can contribute to resolving some of Central America’s most pressing problems.

The affiliations program is co-directed by Jeffrey Gould (History), director of CLACS, and Margarita Vannini, director of IHN-CA at UCA. Among the IU faculty involved in the exchange program are Robert Arnove (Education), Kevin Brown (Law), Arlene Díaz (History), David Dodds (CIPEC), Clark Gibson (Political Science, CIPEC), Richard Guardino (History), and Richard Wilk (Anthropology).

—RMN

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world. Once inside, they spent the day walking through the rain forest—in the rain, in the rainy season.

In the North, the country was much drier and hotter as the rain forest gave way to savanna and then to near desert conditions. One of the most beautiful locations was at Rumsiki, where the eroded cores of ancient volcanoes have created a moonscape effect. Also beautiful were the terraced—but difficult to cultivate—millet fields marching up otherwise desolate hillsides, near villages with architecture which blends into the rocky terrain. Elsewhere, wildlife was prevalent—hippos in the river, which feeds the hydroelectric plant at Lagdo, and giraffes, monkeys, warthogs, and birds at Waza Game Preserve. The endangered elephants were nowhere to be seen during the rainy season. The participants learned, however, that they and the hippos also endanger the people and their farms.

It was a summer of vast contrasts: modern cities with remote rural villages; hot days ending often with air-conditioned nights (and wonderful meals from this agriculturally rich country); short trips along paved highways with long hours on bumpy, slippery mud roads. The group even spent an entire night enclosed in a Landcruiser that was stuck in a ditch—in a rainstorm, of course. One thing which remained constant, however, was the friendliness and hospitality of the Cameroonian people. In sum, the group learned, by its many unique experiences, a great deal about the numerous environmental issues typical of the African continent.

—Virginia DeLancey
African Studies Program