**Too old – too boring?**

**The Heritage Education Programme in Uganda**

Currently, CCFU works in about 130 secondary schools throughout the country, supporting Heritage Education clubs.

This work is placed in a context where:

* Family resources are scarce (Uganda remains one of the poorest countries in the world) and education facilities are poorly developed – yet Uganda has the second-most youthful population worldwide.
* Culture and heritage is not seen as a priority for “development”– either by parents or by the Government. Few are people who recognize culture as necessary and a potential lever for modernization… In some cases, religious influences foster a climate where culture is seen as negative, even associated with witchcraft.
* The School curriculum does not include heritage – hence the support to Heritage Clubs, which are extra-curriculum (CCFU is working with the National Curriculum Development Centre to change this situation).
* Many youth have been disconnected from their heritage – losing fluency in their ancestral language, not sure of their clans and their totems, more interested in facebook and other “modern” trends.

Supporting Heritage Clubs takes the form of training 2 teachers in each school as “club patrons” (using a tool kit which the Foundation has prepared) and providing learning materials linked to a series of activities to be undertaken by clubs throughout the year. The slides show a number of different activities. Competitions are also organized between clubs.

After 5 years engaging with youth, the following three points are offered for reflection and/or discussion:

1. Youth: In spite of the context, the many youth who are members of heritage clubs have proved enthusiastic participants. The interest is there – we need to engage with it!
2. Culture and its modes of transmission: in the African context, it has long been assumed that cultural identities, values, practices are transmitted from generation to generation through families, clans and other long-standing social structures. This is however changing: we need to harness the power of formal education (schools), the electronic media and other new forms of communication used by youth to help connect with their cultural roots.
3. Education: vision and policy – in Uganda, if schools have become important channels in this “transmission chain”, we need to question the kind of knowledge and values they impart. Many schools are the product of missionary influence and the official curricula currently give little or no room. An accent on policy influencing seems both necessary and justified.