Welcome!

In Partnership

We're so excited to partner with you to further our mission in creating globally-minded citizens while cultivating meaningful friendships both near and far. We look forward to getting to know you and can't wait to see how our partnership unfolds.
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Before we dive in, it’s important to talk about the definitions of the words we’ll be using throughout this presentation so that we each understand what we mean by them.

Equity means that everyone gets what they need. Not to be confused with equality (everyone gets the same thing).

Outside of a legal setting, justice means removing the barriers that prevent equity and equality from happening.

Needing no outside support in meeting needs, especially, in Mwebaza’s case, as the needs relate to quality of life.

Meeting our own needs without compromising the chance for others, both now and in the future, to meet theirs.

The action and process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous communities of an area.
Our Mission

...is to enrich the relationships among our Colorado and Uganda partner schools through cross-cultural exchange and service learning that enhances educational opportunities, fosters a healthy learning environment, and promotes self-sufficiency.
What does this mean?

Throughout a typical school year, students in Uganda and Colorado correspond via pen pal letters, video chats, and emails. Students in Colorado join Mwebaza clubs and help fundraise for various projects at their partner schools that support an equitable education and sustainable livelihoods for their friends in Uganda.

Both groups of students also have the chance to participate in curriculum that enhances their educations and teaches them to be globally-minded citizens.
Why do we exist?

We talk about equity and justice a lot in this country and abroad, but we don’t often highlight the root causes of inequity and injustice.

Traditional structures of nonprofits or non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) perpetuate the legacy and harm of colonization. The non-profit industrial complex explains this phenomenon through the identification of unequal power structures and transfer of wealth.

Uganda continues to recover from the oppressive systems established under British colonization. Colonization dismantles a culture and its systems so that it can exploit resources, natural and human. Even when independence is reclaimed, economic exploitation continues through current global systems that marginalize some groups of people for the benefit and wealth of another.

The Mwebaza Foundation is committed to transforming these traditional structures of aid, by offering a new way forward that is based on collaboration and partnership to build a more just and equitable of philanthropy. We use a decolonizing framework to guide our work and interactions.
Talking About Our Work

When talking about the work you’re doing with Mwebaza, it’s important to keep in mind the dignity of all involved, including our Ugandan counterparts. Our friends in Uganda are capable, knowledgeable, and experts in what they want and need for their students, teachers, and communities.

We continue the legacy of colonialism if we perpetuate the belief (within our own minds and externally, through public discourse) that we, as a predominantly white organization from the U.S., know best and can do it best. Words shape our thoughts and grow, deepen, and strengthen our internal beliefs. Similarly, thoughts shape our words, making it crucial to examine our internal selves and uproot unjust, inequitable beliefs.

We must ensure that the photos, videos, and words we use to share a project, fundraising initiative, or activity highlight the equality that all people share as members of the human community. We want to be sure that we see our partners from a place of respect and equality so that our words reflect this.
Examples

Do’s:

Don’ts:
Why?

These photos reflect healthy, capable people participating in culturally-relevant activities.

These photos don’t paint their subjects in a dignified light.
Empathy First

When choosing words, photos, or videos to craft a message about Mwebaza, put it through the “dignity filter.”

Example:
A Fundraiser for Solar Panels at Parents’ Junior School
When describing the cause and the people who will benefit from the project, think about what they would be proud to read or see about their school, their students, or their families.

"PJS does not currently have electricity. The addition of solar panels will allow students and community members to benefit from reliable, sustainable electricity. Adults will be able to attend morning or evening classes and students can have greater access to technology that provides a more robust education."
Use these!

**(People of the) Global Majority**  
*Instead of: minority groups, people of color*

Refers to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People Of Color) populations in recognition that they make up 80% of the world’s population. This term shifts the focus from what could be considered a small ‘victimized/vulnerable’ group, to instead placing focus on the global majority who have largely experienced marginalization at the hands of colonialism.

**Majority World**  
*Instead of: global south, third world, developing countries, poor countries*

This term can be used when referring to countries in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. It highlights the fact that these countries and their people outnumber what is usually referred to as the ‘western’ world, or the minority world.

**Experiencing Poverty**  
*Instead of: poor people, impoverished people*

Choosing this term better communicates that poverty isn’t part of someone’s identity but rather a situation they are going through, due to a variety of reasons.

**Encourage/Inspire Autonomy/Agency**  
*Instead of: empower*

People are inherently capable, powerful, and know what they need. These terms better communicate that the subject actually already owns their power in the narrative we are telling, instead of being ‘given’ it back. These terms show that we as an organization are simply an intermediary working to encourage one to pursue their desire and fulfill their needs.
And these!

- Participant(s)/Community Member(s)/Partner(s)
  *Instead of: beneficiary, vulnerable population, recipient*
  This term shifts the focus from what could be considered a small ‘victimized/vulnerable’ group, to instead placing focus on the global majority who have largely experienced marginalization at the hands of colonialism.

- In Partnership, In Collaboration, In Solidarity
  *Instead of: helping, support, uplift, giving, charity*
  Working in partnership/in collaboration is the foundation of equitable relationships. When we give/help, we remove agency from the communities we are working with and assume that we know best.

- The Specific Country in Africa
  *Instead of: Africa*
  Africa is a continent with 54 different countries that have distinctive cultures, traditions, communities, and economies. Be specific about the country within Africa you are talking about. Mwebaza Foundation specifically works in Uganda, in communities that reside in Gulu and Kampala.
Let’s try not to use these.

Fact check: We are still learning, too. Mwebaza’s staff has just begun to dig into the language we use and the stories we tell, trying to examine them through a critical lens to make sure that we are actively speaking with respect and shifting power away from ourselves (widening the circle to bring our entire community in?). We mess up, a lot, and that’s ok.

Poor African Kids
This is severely diminishing of someone’s humanity and we will actively call out the use of it when we hear it. Any combination of these terms that perpetuates the African continent and its residents as people who need saving, changing, food, clothing, and the like, is unacceptable in our communities.

Help
We choose not to use the word help when describing our work. Using the word help reinforces an unequal power dynamic that puts us in the position of giver/benefactor and places the person receiving the funds/donation/etc. in the position of receiver. It doesn’t accurately depict the collaboration that is going on between the communities.

Third-World, Global South
Creates a power dynamic again and an ethnocentric mindset. These don’t accurately depict where some countries are. Also places north and south in positions of linear power - one is above and one is below.

Charity
We choose not to give charity/be charity givers but focus on community organizing through investing in projects that unite and build power among the entire community.
Think
Before You
Speak.

Some of these words can be positive or negative, can reaffirm power or can take it away, depending on how these words are used and how they are heard.

Resilient
This isn’t a bad word, however, when using resilient in certain ways, it can place the responsibility and expectation on the person to overcome or endure their circumstances, while ignoring the structural systems that cause inequity and oppression.

Aid
Emergency aid is necessary after a disaster. There are structural issues around aid responses because of a lack of long-term responses in rebuilding. Aid is essential in a crisis but not a long-term strategy. When the headline changes, is the community equipped with tools to rebuild?

Give
Similarly to the word “help”, “give” can reinforce an unequal power dynamic and perpetuate a White Savior mindset. We work to build programs and partnerships that are mutually beneficial that dissolve systems of dependency and build a mindset of solidarity.

All Adjectives
Sometimes people in power use terms that imply they are the adult, the leader, or the more knowledgable one. Language that infantilizes or objectifies our adult partners is insulting and also works to discredit their agency and minimize their power. Think about the words you choose to describe ceremonies, school buildings, and community members. Make sure the adjectives aren’t ‘othering’ or perpetuating feelings of “us” and “them”.

"How to Write About Africa"
https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/

"I Am Not Resilient"
https://extramuralactivity.com/2015/10/12/i-am-not-resilient/

"Stronger Words, Stronger Policy"
https://donortracker.org/insights/stronger-words-stronger-policy-modernizing-language-contemporary-conceptions-inclusive

"If You Shouldn’t Call It the Third World, What Should You Call It?"
https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/01/04/3684438/if-you-shouldnt-call-it-the-third-world-what-should-you-call-it