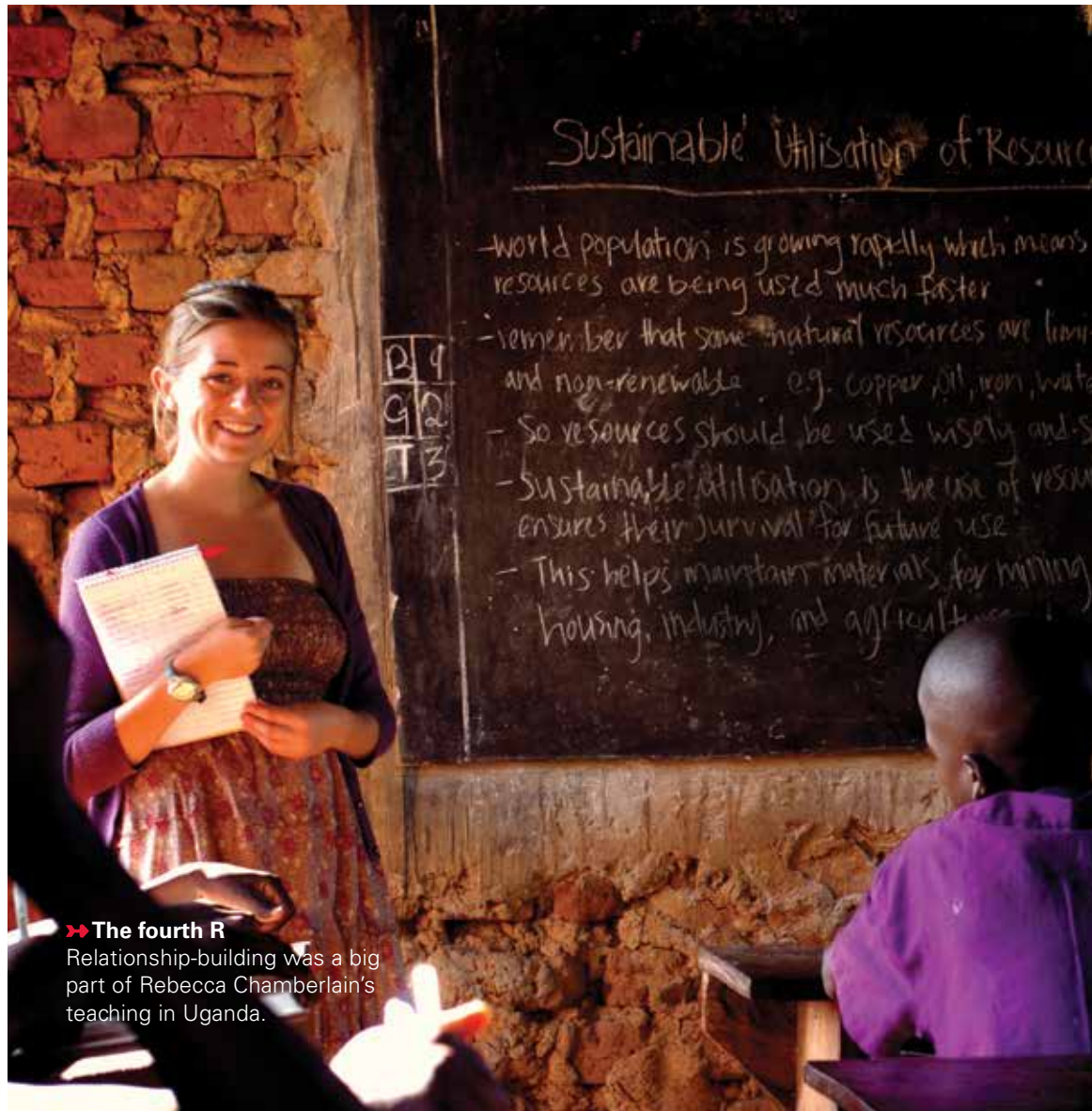


SOWING SEEDS OF SUCCESS

The Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods is changing rural Ugandans' quality of life – and teaching Iowa State students to be change agents in improving the global community.

By Thomas R. O'Donnell | Contributed photo



➔ **The fourth R**
Relationship-building was a big part of Rebecca Chamberlain's teaching in Uganda.

WHEN VISITING FARMS IN UGANDA'S RURAL KAMULI DISTRICT, Mark Westgate and his Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods colleagues watch for an initial clue to the families' welfare: Do they offer the visitors food?

"They're very happy to feed us when one of the team visits," says Westgate, director of the Iowa State University center, which marked its 10th year in 2013. "It's striking how generous they are. It could be sugar cane or fruit, but typically it indicates that they're well."

The center's efforts and the students it's brought to Uganda mean more farmers can feed their families, often with crops left to sell. In the three Kamuli District subcounties where CSRL operates, farmer-to-farmer training programs, demonstration projects, and other efforts have helped boost the percentage of families with food security – the ability to meet daily needs – from 9 percent to more than 60 percent in five years.

"Agriculture is the foundation of our work, because just about everybody we work with is engaged in agriculture," Westgate says. Yet CSRL also addresses sanitation and hygiene, fresh water availability, and education. The center has helped drill 14 wells and supported Iowa State students who have gone into the schools to teach children about agriculture and nutrition and to work in gardens that supply food for the pupils.

Since 2006, 56 Iowa State undergraduates have participated in service-learning programs in Kamuli District, says Gail Nonnecke, CSRL's associate director for education and Global Professor in Global Resource Systems. Another 13 participated as interns for the GRS major, and six graduate students have conducted research benefitting the center's work.



➔ Sustainable philanthropy

The Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods might not exist without ongoing support from donors interested in developing water resource, entrepreneurship and nutrition programs, says Mark Westgate.

"But the real impact of the donors is they are engaged with us. We communicate with them regularly and treasure their input," so that CSRL will continue to stand for positive change and crucial progress for years to come.

The program, with mostly private support, collaborates with Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns, a Ugandan nongovernmental organization, and Makerere University, one of the country's top colleges. Service-learning participants and Makerere students live and work as a binational team in Kamuli District, Nonnecke says. Some Makerere students also have come to Iowa State.

Iowa State students participate because they want to learn about international development, work globally in their disciplines, and help others, Nonnecke says. "We want them to have an international experience that transforms their perspective about what it means to be global citizens."

Rebecca Chamberlain, a junior from Des Moines majoring in GRS and environmental science, taught environmental science to fifth- and sixth-graders in Kamuli in 2013. She also helped plant Euphorbia, a succulent used to keep herd animals out of the school gardens, and planted trees for food and timber.

The children were all "very eager to learn and to experience new cultures. I also got to do the same, and learn something myself," adds Chamberlain. She is considering the Peace Corps or graduate school to work in sustainable agriculture.

Andrea Matthews, a senior also majoring in GRS, agrees. "Interning in Uganda taught me that in development, you are never alone," she says. "I now know more about how effective partnerships work and how to make these relationships and projects thrive."