

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Lift Off - Primary and Secondary Space Education (1)

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BRINGING SPACE EDUCATION TO THE RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA THROUGH SPACE
CLUBS

Abstract

This paper highlights an outreach initiative to bring space awareness to primary schools in rural communities in Nigeria. The Space Club is an ongoing activity of the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education (ARCSSTE). ARCSSTE (affiliated to the United Nations) was established in 1998 with a mandate to train postgraduate candidates from English-speaking African countries in the space sciences. The space club was conceived as one of the catch-them-young initiatives geared towards sensitizing and educating school children at all levels. Over the course of 3 years, the centre has inaugurated about 300 space clubs in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. In 2007, a space club was launched at Shepherd Nursery and Primary School located in a rural community known as Owoeye in Ile-Ife. This community lacks basic infrastructure such as water, electricity and good roads. Shepherd Nursery and Primary School is a modest elementary school with about 121 pupils and 14 teachers situated in the heart of this rural community. In spite of the abject poverty of the environment, the school has a vibrant space club of about 50 members. Filled with enthusiasm and eagerness, these students have greatly impacted the community by creating awareness about space science and technology. Members of the space club educate the community through novel means such as poems, playlets and rhymes. The space club also has a museum showcasing locally fabricated models of rockets, satellites and astronauts. This study illustrates how the children utilize their limited facilities and gifts to enlighten a remote community who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to learn about space science and technology.