



August 2007

CongoAction News

What has been happening at Congo Action these past few months?

The charity is still going strong, and is continuing with the same objectives and focus: the support of children with their schooling, support with the running of our schools, and the set up of self help projects to empower people at their local level.

The New school

The most exciting event this year has been the building of a school in a remote village where children did not have access to schooling. Thanks to a very generous donation from a retired school teacher, we have been able to put our project to fruition.

The project started with a local village chief donating a large plot of land for the purpose of building a school and a community centre. He made this offer when Martine last visited the Congo in April of this year. The plot is in magnificent surroundings with splendid views, and we were assured that the area all around is relatively safe. Although the people still live in primitive conditions and abject poverty they find solace in the knowledge that their children are going to have access to education, and hopefully be able to make a better future for themselves.

The school is a primary school, and will consist of five classes. So far we have registered 272 children ready to start this September.

The images are of the nearly "finished product" to give you an idea of what can be achieved with goodwill and solid partnership with our benefactors.

The sponsorship scheme

We currently have 65 children being sponsored. The numbers have remained steady, thanks to the constant support given by our sponsors. The relatively small number means that it is still possible to meet with each one of them, on yearly site visits; Martine did this again this year, also talking to their parent/guardian. Twelve of these children now attend secondary schools, which means that they also have to be visited in their



respective schools.

It has proved somewhat difficult to get these children to write to their sponsors on a regular basis. When we received letters, we have found that many of them had been dictated by teachers, anxious to complete the task of letter writing.

During her visit, Martine addressed this subject, and tried to get the teachers and children to understand the need for the letter to be done by the child, and that sometimes just a small drawing is enough as a message of thanks. As for those

Photos:

Above: a Congo artist's impression of the finished school
Top: Children registering for places at the school
Very top and over page: Building progress at the school



the best !

She wanted to remind us and our supporters of a few figures which are encouraging:

- Congo Action raises £6000 of child sponsorship income every year.
- Congo Action has had a return of £5000 of gift Aid in 3 years (hence the importance of signing gift Aid forms)
- Our best ever fund raising event was the African evening in February, which brought Congo Action £2000.
- In July, the children of Barming school (years 5 and 6) raised £207 for Congo Action, by making a continuous line of pennies across their playground. What a fantastic effort!

We thought that this financial feedback would be encouraging for all of you out there who keep supporting our efforts and good work. For details of our next events, please visit our website: www.congoaction.co.uk



letters written in Swahili, we do our best to find a translator in order to get, at least, the gist of the message!

We still need more sponsors especially to support the children at the new school. So if some of you know of someone interested, or somewhere where we could do a talk and presentation, please let us know.

Fund raising events

Our **African Evening** this February attracted crowds beyond our wildest dreams! Mose Conde and his friends entertained our public; young and more senior members were seen dancing to the music, and again, we succeeded in providing exotic dishes of all kinds – the African dishes were prepared by a group of ladies from Sierra Leone, who rescued us at the last minute–thank you!

The evening raised a massive £ 2000 – thanks again to all of our supporters!

The **French Evening** in May saw *The Drift* group playing wonderful traditional music from France, Brittany, and even Ireland. Again we managed to organise this on an evening on which there was an important football match, but still it attracted some of our usual public, plus a few newcomers. It was so great to see so many people dancing right up until the last minute, and a real privilege to have such a reputable group playing for us! Once again, we excelled with our food, and the evening raised an income of £1000.

Financial news

Our treasurer, Heidi Mather, is leaving us after two and half years of splendid work for Congo Action. Her professionalism and skills have been invaluable to us, and we thank her for the hours of work she has produced. Heidi has started a training course in acupuncture. We wish her all

Coming Events

The Mela

Congo Action plans to have a large stall at this popular annual *celebration of the diversity of Maidstone through music, food and dance* which will be held on

Sunday 9 September 12.45-6pm
at Mote Park, Maidstone
Admission free

Come and support us, eat our French pancakes, have a go at the tombola or children's Lucky Dip and buy our African crafts and homemade jams.

SeaSheppey 2007

Congo Action plan to have a craft stall on
Saturday 29 September
at the Queen Borough Maritime Festival.

Do visit us there.

Sponsored ride:

Here is a photo of Chris William who raised £650 by cycling solo from Maidstone to Lands'end. Chris cycled 370 miles in six days, camping overnight, and averaging around 60 miles in the saddle each day; not quite like "the tour de France", but still an impressive effort, that few of us could compete with. Chris, a 23 year old trainee teacher, is passionate about Africa, and hoping to use his teaching skills to go and work in an African school one day.

All the money he raised will go towards the building and running of our new school in the Congo.

Thank you Chris!