



March 2008

CongoAction News



A School Is Born In The Heart Of Africa

In September Muganzo School opened its doors to 350 primary children. A great achievement by the villagers, who designed, constructed and opened its doors within a year using a large donation to Congo Action from Mrs Bee Price.

The new primary school is situated in the village of Muganzo, territory of Kabare, in the South Kivu Province. It is at about 1hr45mins from Bukavu on a good day (no rain), and 2hrs otherwise. One needs a 4x4 vehicle to get to the village as no ordinary car could cope with the road conditions!

The building is made of wood with their traditional tin roofing, wooden windows and metal doors. The building comprises six classrooms plus the main office. These classrooms are built around a spacious playground and each houses up to 60 primary aged children. The 350 children come from Muganzo and the surrounding area.

Considering the state of the road, and the difficulties of transporting materials to the village, this building is a real achievement and stands out very proudly in the middle of the village overlooking a beautiful valley with a view of the Lake Kivu. The other two official buildings in the village are: a church next door and a meeting house for villagers.

Congo Action can be very proud indeed of such an achievement which was only possible to fund following a generous donation from a private

donor – thank you. We also thank our colleague in the Congo, Polepole Kashogolo, of the C.P.S.D organisation, who has overcome all difficulties enabling this project to materialise.

Congo Action is committed to finding long term solutions to solve the problem of running and supporting the school and the teachers. We called a meeting with the parents, asking them to contribute to school fees, and they agreed to pay a small amount each, which will go some way towards helping the teachers. Another suggestion was to start a sponsorship programme that will not focus on individual children but will benefit the whole school. We therefore hope that individual sponsors will come forward and join the sponsorship programme.



Photos:

Very top from left: The new school showing garden flower beds.

A classroom full of happy children. A school assembly held in the playground.

Above left: Some children standing in front of the banner honouring Congo Action, Martine Le Buzullier and our private donor at the official opening.

Above: Martine with two of the teachers in one of the new classrooms.

Left: A parent with the school's headteacher.



the sponsorship and of the real benefits that it brings to the children. This year, for example, we found that a 15 year old girl had become pregnant and had not been attending school so at the request of her family, her sponsorship was transferred to her younger brother.

Congo Action is very much committed to following these young people throughout their secondary education and, if finances permit, to university level for those who choose to continue their studies. We therefore very much depend on the support of the people who kindly agree to sponsor our children year after year.

The sewing group

Congo Action continues to be involved with the running of women's sewing groups by providing sewing machines and money to buy materials for sewing and training purposes. We looked at ways of making these groups more economically viable, such as having only a handful of apprentices at a time allowing the rest of the group to produce articles for sale (We sell some of these items on e-Bay and during our fund raising events). It is an encouragement for those women to know that their products are appreciated and sold abroad and we are hoping to expand the market for them. We also suggested that Congo Action would support these women in the purchase of their own sewing machines - by way of a loan that they would pay back gradually - so that by the time they complete their training they would have their own sewing machine to provide themselves with a small income.

These suggestions were taken on board by our women friends and will be implemented with the next intake of students.

Future projects

Congo Action is looking into investing time and efforts into solar aid projects. These types of projects would consist in training people in how to make small devices which use the sun to charge their mobile phones, run their radios, provide them with cheap lighting and cooking facilities. These projects have been tried and

tested in many parts of Africa and have proved to be very popular. Our vision is to provide people with alternatives to electricity, and ways of making an income, by learning how to make these small devices and selling them on.

We would always be interested to hear from anyone who has further ideas or information on these types of projects.

The sponsorship programme.

This sponsorship programme was started in 2001, and our sponsors have continued to support more or less the same children since the programme started. As time goes, more of these children are moving to secondary schools (we now have 25 children attending secondary schools and 36 still in primary school). In the Congo, children do not automatically move school according to their age. One has to remember that children can only attend school if their parents can pay the school fees. This often means that you will find much older children on the benches of a primary school because their parents have not been able to afford to send them on.

Every year, during her visit to the two schools where the children attend, Martine makes a point of seeing each sponsored child and meeting with their parent or guardian. This enables us to check on the validity of



Future events

- **French evening:**
Saturday 7 June 2008
- **Whitstable Umbrella Community Centre Fun Day,**
Sunday 15 June 2008
- an all day event for all the family.
- **The Mela, Mote Park, Maidstone**
provisional date
Sunday 14 September
- an all day event again for all the family.

African Craft

FOR SALE

Congo Action sells on behalf of two groups of disabled people that we have befriended and support. These are delightful crafts – such as figures made of banana leaves, African dolls, greetings cards, etc.

Items can often be found on e-Bay – www.ebay.co.uk – just type 'Congo Action' into the search field.

Items change frequently so keep looking!

Would you like to Volunteer?

Congo Action would be please to hear from volunteers who would be happy to give a few hours of their time to further the work of the Charity. Please telephone Congo action on: 01622 750979 or E-mail: congoaction@hotmail.com

Photos

Above:
A young boy holds his airmail envelope ready for posting to his sponsors.

Left:
Another group of children in their classroom.