



March 2011

CongoAction News



As spring has arrived, we too at Congo Action feel a new bout of enthusiasm for the work at hand. We have recently been encouraged by the reports received from a yearly site visit done by one of our volunteers. Let me share these good news with you, as you have all contributed in one way or another in the expansion of our work.

The Muganzo school

This is the school we built in 2008, which houses some 350 children of primary school age. The popularity of the school meant that we had too many children to cater for, so we have now added another classroom for the older ones. This latest addition was done thanks to generous donation and a coffee morning that we organised, and the total raised finally reached its destination. As usual, the villagers made a real fuss of our visitors when they arrived there, and the school is their pride and joy, so they have formed a committee to take good care of it.

Some of our sponsors choose the option of sponsoring the school, as opposed to a particular child, and the money is sent for the benefit of the school, the teachers and buying teaching materials for the children. We need your continuing support for this, thank you. We are also in the process of seeking funding to set up self-funding projects for the teachers to encourage self-sufficiency in the years to come.

Sponsoring a child

For those of you who sponsor an individual child and wonder where your child is at in his

studies, don't worry! We continually ensure that these children are at school and benefit from the sponsorship. The feedback that you receive from the children in their letters is perhaps repetitive and does not tell you enough about the child himself. One has to understand and appreciate the limitations that the children are faced with, and the scarcity of information and visual images coming their way. Their thank you comes from the heart, and your support is a lifetime investment to them.

Congo Action is currently looking at ways of helping the young people who have left school to go onto further training or apprenticeship, so that their precious years of education are not lost. To achieve this ambition, we need to secure further funding .

The micro-credit projects

This was a new initiative that Congo Action started in 2009, with the help of our Congolese project worker, who has a long term experience of such projects. It consisted of giving villagers on our list small loans, which they used for an activity of their choice, with the idea of making a bit of profit. The money we lent was divided between three villages, to use over a period of two years. We plan to re-

Photos:

Very top from left:
Talking to villagers at Muganzo
Congo Action sewing group in action
New classroom in Muganzo

Above left:
The new classroom, children at work

Above:
Villages dancing saying 'thank you' for micro credit

Future Events

Barn Dance

with Fiddler's Elbow
Saturday 14 May 2011
Adult £8 Child £5
tickets from
Dru 07787 140336 or
Edith 01233 611448

Fashion Show

Wednesday 12 October
in Maidstone

The Mela

Mote Park, Maidstone
Sunday 11 September
An all day event for all the family.



invest the money reimbursed for further loans to the villagers we have on our waiting list. We would also like to encourage the villagers who have done well by lending them bigger loans, but we are short of funds to do this. Unlike the banks, we don't charge interests on money lent, as we are dealing with extremely poor people.

So far, this project has proved very worthwhile: People have reported that with the money they made, they were able to go to the doctor and get medication for their children, whereas before, this would have been impossible. Some of them chose to use the money on paying for school fees, others decide to buy & breed chickens or rabbits, etc... we were amazed to hear from these families how creative they could be and resourceful in trying to dig themselves out of poverty.

The sewing groups

The group of women Congo Action trained last year wanted to thank us, and did so by making special outfits for our visiting volunteers. Perhaps not the sort of outfit you would wear frequently in the UK due to weather conditions, but still of excellent standards, proving that the money we invested in sewing projects has been more than worthwhile! We would love to continue extending the sewing workshops and taking training and sewing machines to the villages, but we do not have sufficient money for this in spite of a long waiting list of eager candidates.

Paul 's story

Paul is a master tailor who is disabled, due to contracting polio at a young age. Congo Action has been involved with Paul and his sewing group for many years since Paul was running our sewing classes. As a result of personal tragedy (his wife being seriously ill) Paul got into rent arrears, and was evicted and unable to work. Unfortunately Paul's wife died soon after giving birth to their fourth child, which meant he was faced with more money worries and responsibilities than he could cope with. The sewing projects that he managed for us were seriously affected.

We teamed together with a local Catholic missionary in Bukavu, and between us raised enough funds to buy Paul a house big enough to be used as his workshop and his home. Paul has been thriving since and his group is going from strength to strength. He now runs apprenticeships for young people in difficulties, who would not otherwise have a chance of finding employment. This shows how having faith in the people that you work with, and a spirit of compassion for their unfortunate circumstances, makes it worthwhile investing in them, because you know of their pride and genuine determination to succeed. Also in times when we are all feeling crushed by this latest financial recession, it is worthwhile remembering that some people like Paul have to face adversity on a daily basis, and that they have more reasons to despair than we do!

On the home front.

Since January, Congo Action has recruited further volunteers: Welcome to Edward (new trustee), to Dan (secretary & Trustee), to Lauria (administrator & project worker), To Pat (Sponsorship secretary), and to Heidi (Treasurer & Trustee) who has come back from her two years studies. It is very exciting for us to have new people on board and a fresh influx of ideas and enthusiasm.

Fund raising events

The recent Quiz event at Barming primary school raised £420. Thank you to all our helpers and thank you to Barming school for hosting the event.

Please continue to check on our website for forthcoming events such as Barn dance on the 14th of May at St Francis primary school. The Mela (international festival of food & music) Mote Park, Maidstone, 11th of September, and many more....

Warm greetings from all of us at Congo Action.



Would you like to Volunteer?

Congo Action would be please to hear from anyone 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 682566 or E-mail: congoaction@hotmail.com

Thank you.



Photos

Top from left:
A group of villagers with Paul and Josephine
Paul and his family

Above:
A sponsored child and mum

Left:
Village children at Muganzo