



February 2013

CongoAction NEWS



It is time to inform you about what is happening in Congo Action. Pat (sponsorship secretary), myself and Edward (secretary) made a site visit in December. We were really impressed to see all the positive results of our involvement and of your continuing support.

The timing of our visit was most unfortunate! The M23 rebels had just invaded Goma (South Kivu) and were threatening to march into Bukavu, where we were also heading! Once we got to the border, it was too late to turn back! We had to go ahead with our busy schedule and hope for the best. Indeed, the

rebels were talked into retreating from Goma, which they did after looting the town, ransacking shops and leaving many casualties and dead behind. And it is against this background of cruelty, devastation, and unrest that we continue to support and encourage our Congolese friends.

African Projects

The sponsorship programme

This is still running in Bizimana, Bagira and Muganzo schools and include teachers' financial support. Since the programme has been running for ten years, we used our visit to "weed out" the children who no longer appear to be at school, or those whose circumstances have changed, and they may have moved away.

We have a young person in his last year of university and have published his profile on our website (How we help / Ombeni's Story).

We launched a new sponsorship programme of two years' duration, for 20 primary school children. Vital, our Congolese project worker, is running

training sessions to help parents organise themselves in a group and become more self reliant.

Help to disabled groups

Congo Action is working in partnership with Andre Thijs, a Belgian missionary, to channel our financial support. This tends to be of an individual and practical nature, such as the buying of appliances and equipment, as well as paying for vital operations. This year, we have supported such a programme in Goma and in Bukavu. Andre Thijs keeps us well informed on the use of funds by providing photos and receipts. (See our website How we help/help to disabled for details).

Photos

Very top from left: Martine with a group of teachers a young girl Pat visiting school

Above left: The new sponsor group

Above: Edward inspecting the new toilet block at Muganzo school

Below: Andre Thijs





The micro-credit programme

We lent \$2500 to the project in 2012. By the end of January 2013 all credits made will be re-imbursed. We are planning to lend twice that amount for 2013, aiming to reach more people.

The micro-credit is run in three villages so far: In Bunkivane 21 people out of 44 on the list were served while in Cidjo 15 out of 22 people benefited and in Bagira four of the seven people on the list were helped.

What impact have these projects had on people lives? These are the questions that we asked the villagers, who made the following comments:

"With the money lent, I was able to work and make a small profit, which paid for my children 'school fees and a bit more food for the family. Also the capital I raised enabled me to rent a field and grow sugar cane"

"My son could not finish his studies at university. Since borrowing the money from Congo Action, I was able to raise a small capital and he has now finished at university and he is autonomous and self sufficient."

"I have five children and only three of them were able to go to school, now all five are attending. I hope to be accepted on the micro-credit programme again, to continue sending my children to school."

The Health Fund programme

Health is an everyday preoccupation in the DRC and being able or not to get medical care is of vital importance to the villagers.

Every year, Congo Action gives money to the three groups towards their health funds (They also pay a small contribution each month). But we are concerned that we must not create a system that would encourage dependency and discussed this with the groups. The people suggested investing into

a flour grinding mill which would generate funds that could then be used for their health programme.

The feedback we received from the villagers:

"I went to hospital 3 times due to severe malaria. Without the health funds I would not have been able to be treated and would not be here now."

"I had a serious accident whilst walking back from the market. I had to go to hospital and thanks to the funds provided I was able to be treated straight away. I was at risk of losing my legs but thanks to the funds, I had an operation followed by physiotherapy and I am now able to walk again."

The Goat project

What a success! It was such a pleasure to see the way the villagers look after their goats! To benefit from this programme, a person has to show evidence of commitment to the group by paying a small contribution and undergoing a training programme run by the vet. They also have to have built a small stable attached to their house and have access to foliage to feed the goat. The families who have done this so far have taken great care of housing their goats and proudly introduced us to the goats and stables!

The success of the project is largely the result of the vet's genuine effort and commitment to the programme. So far out of the 20 stables planned 13 have been built. Another key to the success is that money has been allocated to buy medicine to treat the goats.

These are comments made to us by the villagers:

"My name is Jeanette. I received one goat at the beginning. I have so far managed to sell three of the off-spring to pay for my children's school fees. I gave one of the off-spring back to the group for someone else to have a chance to do the same."

Photos

Above left: two goats in their new stable with local foliage to eat

Above: Pat and Edward receive a gift of eggs

*Below from top: A girl with a baby on her back
Edward and one of the goat gifts
Girl receiving physiotherapy*





"Since having the goats, my field has produced much better crops because of the manure generated by the goats. We can feed ourselves so much better now!"

In both villages (Cidjo and Bunkivane) Congo Action was presented with a goat as a thank you present. A very touching gesture indeed, but not terribly practical for the journey back on the plane!

We are planning to renew the funding for the goats, the vet and the medicine, and continue with the project until it becomes self supporting.

The sewing project

This is a new venture thanks to the £2000 received from the Allan & Nesta Trust. All the money has now been invested and we were impressed by the project: Four candidates are learning sewing for a full year. The teacher is dynamic and has long teaching and trading experience. The garments produced are already demonstrating excellent standards.

When their training is completed, the women will receive a sewing machine each which will be replaced by Congo Action for the next intake, and they will commit themselves to paying money back over a realistically agreed period. This will insure that the workshop will continue to grow to the point of self sufficiency. The students are already producing school uniforms whilst learning the trade. This provides them with a small income to buy their materials.

Congo Action will need to raise more money for this project which is still young and needs maintaining.

Fund raising

There have been less group activities during the year due to a decision made that we would change the way we fund raise, by focusing more on fundraising online, and less on outdoor events. This decision was due partly to the lack of new volunteers and little return from our craft events. Our social type

events would need someone willing to take it on board and give it a new lease of life.

The introduction of our "100 club" by Pat has been well received and is working well. Our £10 a year membership makes it very accessible to all. Why not use it as a "gift" for someone's birthday, if you run out of ideas as to what else to buy? For your convenience we have included an application form on the next page. We can provide you with a Congo Action leaflet to enclose with your gift. Please continue to support this new venture! Thank you.

Talks

Last year Congo Action was requested to do several talks and presentations of our work. This is always a good opportunity to spread the word and distance is no object. So should anyone know of the openings for more talks, please let us know.

Publicity

Please visit our website: www.congoaction.co.uk for more photos and information on our work. However, please remember to press the 'reload' button when looking at the website to ensure you are seeing the most up-to-date page. Facebook is also up and running and a good tool for sharing the news.

Conclusion

A very positive year all round! The work and commitment generated by so few volunteers has been phenomenal, and vital to maintain our programmes. We have been successful in our work thanks to Vital, our Congolese counterpart, who is a firm believer in people working to become self supported rather than always relying on Congo Action. Pere Andre Thijs also needs to be congratulated for his incessant, tireless work with disabled people and his deep understanding of the Congolese culture. Thank you to all, and we look forward to a better future for all our Congolese families.

Martine Le Buzullier.
Chairperson, Congo Action.

Photos

Top left:
Sewing group

Top right:
Pat, Martine and Edward
proud of their gifts of
colourful shirts

Below:
Photos of local children



CongoAction

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100 CLUB APPLICATION FORM

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. Each member is required to pay the annual sum of £10 in advance for a share which will entitle him/her to participate in each of the ten monthly draws.
2. Members may purchase one or more shares and will be allocated a number/numbers for the year. Unsold shares will be taken up by CongoAction so that all the numbers are allocated. All numbers are then entered into the draw.
3. The first draw will take place in March of each year. Subsequent draws will take place each month up to and including December. Draws will be made by non-members.
4. Prize winners will be notified in writing and a list of winning numbers, first name and home town will be published on the CongoAction website www.congoaction.co.uk. Lists of winners may be obtained on request from the Honorary Promoter, Mrs. Pat Phipps, 2 St. Francis Close, Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2FR email: p.phipps@tesco.net.
5. The Club shall be administered and controlled by CongoAction. The decision of the Committee of CongoAction shall be final and binding in any matter requiring adjudication. The Committee shall have the power to amend or revoke these rules at their discretion insofar as is consistent with current legislation.
6. The club shall be conducted under the provisions of the Gambling Act, 2005.
7. All members participating must be over 16 years of age.
8. Funds raised from the 100 Club will be used by CongoAction in accordance with its objects.
9. The prizes for each month will be: **1st £20** **2nd £15** **3rd £10**

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CongoAction 100 CLUB APPLICATION

Please enrol me as a member of the CongoAction 100 Club. I have read the Rules and Conditions and understand them and agree to abide by them.

Signature:

Date:

I would like to purchase share(s) at £10 per share totalling £

Please make cheques payable to CongoAction

APPLICATION IN BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Title and Name:

Address:

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Tel:

Email address:

This will help save postage for future communications

Please return as soon as possible with your cheque to: Mrs. Pat Phipps, 2 St. Francis Close, Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2FR