



Dear Friends

Our last newsletter was in 2019, and some of you may prefer to receive mailed news, hence this newsletter. It is time to move on from the dreadful 2020, and answer some of the questions that you may want to ask about the situation in the DRC and work of Congo Action and our partner, WTC Working together Congo).

How has the Covid epidemic affected the DRC?

At first, the rise of infection has not been as rapid as in UK or other parts of the world, partly because the DRC was able to impose tight controls on their borders, and in Kivu in particular, where they have very few overseas visitors. Our Congolese partner in Bukavu made the following comment: "We have had to cope with Ebola, measles, polio, HIV, and so many other diseases, that Covid is not as frightening for us." Still at the borders, they now request the same vaccinations requirements and tests checks as everywhere else.

The major challenge for the DRC, with a population of more than 90 million inhabitants, is that the vaccination programme is not going well because of scepticism and misinformation about the vaccine, as well as poor infrastructure to deliver it. Already the country has had to discard thousands of expired doses and cope with increased infections.

Our school in Kavumba closed for 8 months in 2020, and reopened in October. The government ordered that schools should stay opened throughout

July and august this year to catch up on lost time. The school has therefore remained opened with the proviso that children should start at 7am, and finish at 12, by which time it gets too hot for everyone.

What are the problems facing education in DRC?

In August 2019, Felix Tchisekedi, the new elected president, announced free schooling for children age 6 to 16. Whilst this was a welcome move, it created a new set of problems, that of the teachers not being acknowledged. Only a small proportion received a salary, and this was supplemented by parental contributions. None of this is happening now in a great majority of schools. Free education also brings the risk of overcrowding in classrooms, and added stresses for the teachers. The government has a fundamental challenge in attempting to recognise that the work of the teachers has to be remunerated.

What is Congo Action doing to address this problem?

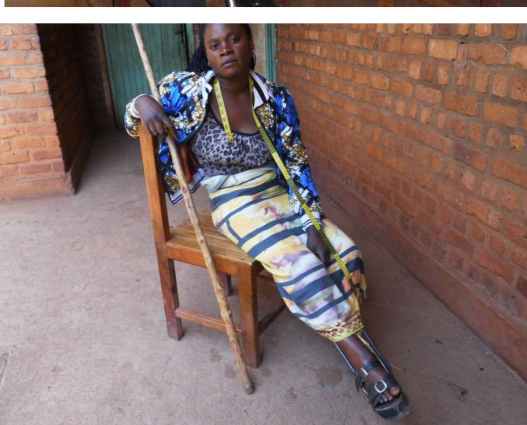
Whilst we hope that our teachers will, one day, receive a salary, we are looking at ways of encouraging their self-reliance with practical and achievable solutions that will bring revenues to the school. Together with WTCongo, we have bought a field in the vicinity of the school which is said to be very fertile, and will help to supplement their small income (we are continuing to pay



Photos: (top) L&R - The walls of the new building rise. Centre - New desks are being built. Above: School pupils watch the progress of the build.

"motivational fees" to the teachers, and to buy school supplies). The 8 teachers are excited at the prospect of products that they can sell and use to feed their families.

If anyone of our supporters should know of, or think of self-reliance projects that could be set up in a very rural areas, and bring more economic independence to our teachers, we welcome any feedback.



Photos: Top & left top & centre: Members of ADIPH (Action for the development of Disabled people). Raymond Zikomangane, in the red shirt top left, is the leader of ADIPH which was created in Bukavu and aims to help disabled people in the community to achieve economic independence and wellbeing. Bottom left: Martine at the fund raising event in Worthing.

New building for 2021

The new building is to complete the school with an office for the headmaster and meeting room for the teachers. As usual, the biggest challenge has been to get material delivered in terrible road conditions. However, Congolese workers are always prepared to face any hardship to get wages to support their families. So far, it has been a very exciting few weeks, and we will publish on our website the finished new building.

Working with disabled people

This is a less publicised part of our work, yet we are continuing to provide practical support to disabled people and finance the purchase of very much needed equipment. Doing so enable them to take an active role in society by being more mobile and have pride in themselves. Whenever we visited groups of disabled people in DRC, we always found them to be incredibly productive, resourceful and positive. (Sewing groups, carpentry, cobblers, etc.).

Fund raising event

Our first Fund raising event of the year,

31st of July, was successful and brought a lot of interest to our stall. This was a Charity market organised by the Lions club of Worthing, in East Sussex. Together with WTCongo partners, we were excited to be able to hold such an event, after so many months of forced Covid "hibernation".

Give as you Live

If you shop online, you can raise money for Congo Action. Simple: Go to Congo Action website. Click on the top banner "Free Funds, shop online". Then register for a Give as you live account, and follow the Give as you Live website to select your favourite shops. Once you have an account, every time you shop with your favourite shop, a little window will pop up to remind you that your shopping is raising a donation. Thank you for trying.

Finally, a big thank you goes to all of you out there who make our work possible, and continue to show interest and compassion for the people of the DRC.

Please visit our website and Congo Action Facebook for new updates.

Thank you.