

MENELIK EDUCATION LTD

SUMMER SCHOOL REPORT 2013

In July 2013, Menelik Education Ltd ran the fourth of its successful summer schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Background

Previous Summer Schools have been held at our partnership schools Lembo School, St Georges and St Rita in Kinshasa and our partnership orphanage in Kinshasa. The sessions have been devised and run by Menelik Education's Fundraiser and Trustee with assistance in previous years, from students at the Universities of Cambridge and Birmingham; The City of London Girls School and our own team of Congolese volunteers and students. In 2012 Menelik Education consolidated a partnership with three schools, two in Paris and one in Rouen, France. A member of one of the schools assisted in running the summer school in 2012 and a team from Rouen visited Kinshasa in the Spring of 2013 to plan the programme for this summer.

Funding for the project has been generously donated by CUSAFE and in particular Jesus College with additional funding raised by the Charity's Fundraiser.

For 2013 it was decided to focus the work of the summer school on a new orphanage which has recently joined the partnership and also with children in a rural district 600km from Kinshasa where Menelik Education is planning to develop new facilities and improve the area for the local community.



Lunchtime

Aims and Objectives of the Summer School Programme

Menelik Education works in areas of extreme poverty where only a small percentage of children go to school. Fewer girls attend school as they are usually required to assist with domestic chores in the home. The schools are poorly equipped with minimal resources for either learning or recreation, consequently the children are unable to benefit from either academic or sporting activities. This can affect their development, maturity and ability to work and play as a team. The Summer School Programme provides teaching in an informal session with the focus on sport, art and craft, singing, team play, language and IT teaching and reading. The Charity is able to bring resources such as pens, paper, books and sporting equipment which would not normally be available to the schools, and the children are able to take home their work, enjoy new activities such as craft work, and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their achievements.



Girls from the Village preparing and serving lunch



Director Theodore Menelik-Mfuni with older class. Uniforms donated by partnership schools in the UK

Summer School 2013

The 2013 programme was led by Menelik Education's Director, Theodore Menelik-Mfuni with all activities being run by the Charity's team of Congolese volunteers. Resources were purchased in the UK and transported out with the Director. Additional resources for the programme were purchased in the DRC including all food and refreshments for the children.

The location for this year's Summer School was the Julienne Tshituala Orphanage based in Gama district of Kinshasa and also in Bengi village, the new rural community with whom we now work. The orphanage, named after a young student whom Menelik Education supported for 2 years until her untimely death from a mis-treated melanoma in 2011, is home to 70 children aged from newborn to 25 years. The majority of these children have either been orphaned or abandoned by their families. Abandonment of children in the DRC is common-place and can arise for a number of reasons including, disability, poverty, a fear of possession by evil or a perceived curse owing to their parent-less status. Eighty-five per cent of children from the orphanage are able to attend school and a far smaller percentage in the rural areas.



Taking the daily register

Format

The programme lasted three weeks and was split between the two venues. Registers were taken each day and the numbers of children attending increased on a daily basis with over 120 children attending each day with ages ranging from one year to 20 + years.

It is rarely possible or practical to devise a formal timetable of activities each day but a structure was given by having the same activities available and then adjusting according to their popularity.

The children speak either French or Lingala or a mixture of both languages. Although it is helpful to have a degree of fluency in French we have not found it a hinderance if volunteers do not have a second language, as the value of play is sufficient a form of communication.

The children have great enthusiasm and energy, although those suffering from malnutrition or trauma were usually quieter and required more individual attention.

Each morning began with a range of sporting activities including football, tennis, cricket, ball games, relay races and group singing. This was usually followed by drawing, colouring and teaching of English with word-play games, playing cards and dual language story books. In comparison to European children of the same age, the Congolese children displayed less sophistication and less concentration or ability to work and play as a team. However, their interest and enthusiasm and appreciation of each activity far exceeded that of a child who has benefitted from a wide ranging education with a wealth of resources at their disposal.

Craft activities such as making cards and painting t shirts were very popular as the children were able to take something home which in turn engaged the interest of others who also began to attend the school.

For many of the children they would be fortunate to eat just one meal each day so the Summer School also provided snacks, drinks and hot food with fruit. The food was purchased from the project's funds either at the local city market or from rural small-holders thus providing an income for the local community. The food was prepared and cooked by our Congolese team bringing a period of employment to a group of young women.



Outcome

The Summer School has developed a format over the past four years which we know works well, the children enjoy the activities, their families are happy that their children are occupied and learning new subjects and our volunteers gain an insight into the great limitations of schooling in a developing country whilst enjoying the energy and enthusiasm of the children. The success of the Summer School is evidenced by the increasing numbers of children attending each day and the subsequent increase in those attending their local school the following term – even if on an irregular basis. An emphasis is always placed on supporting and educating young girls and encouraging them to become involved in each activity. It is encouraging to see confidence and self esteem increase in the children even over a short period of time. As our activities are always run within one of our partnership organisations we are able to keep a note of progress once the programme has finished. We have been encouraged by the increase in the number of children attending formal school as a consequence of enjoying the summer activities. We have also noted

a positive outcome, not just with the children attending the Summer Activities, but with our own Congolese volunteers who, by assisting in previous years, have now become able to run the programme themselves with less input from the European Team.



Class for the older girls

Plans for the Future

We are confident that we have developed a successful programme that we intend to continue on an annual basis for an indefinite period. We shall continue to encourage volunteer support from Europe but will also continue to include our team of Congolese volunteers and students in running the programme. In doing so, they gain a wider range of work experience which is particularly valuable for those wishing to continue their education and train as teachers. We hope to work more in the rural areas around the city where resources and facilities are even more limited and the percentage of children attending any form of education is lower. We also plan to work on a regular basis with our two partnership orphanages, equipping each venue with resources to enable an element of teaching on-site.



Children from the village