

2023

Annual Report

Support Program
for Indigenous
Children's
Education



www.espaceopoko.org

Annual Report
Program for Supporting Indigenous Children's Education
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Suggested Quote: "All children have the right to education, including indigenous children."

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This report is available on our website: www.espaceopoko.org

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I- Introduction

1- GENERAL CONTEXT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

Education is more than a fundamental right; it's the key to a promising future for every child, regardless of their background. In the specific context of indigenous children in the Republic of Congo, access to quality education is a crucial component for their empowerment and holistic development.

Unfortunately, these children often face systemic barriers that hinder their access to adequate education. Linguistic barriers, socio-economic challenges, and cultural marginalization impede their access to educational opportunities.

Yet, education represents much more than mere academic instruction. It embodies a means of cultural preservation, identity reinforcement, and building bridges toward a fairer future. For indigenous children, education tailored to their culture and specific needs is essential to break the cycle of poverty and marginalization.

Investing in the education of these children is of paramount importance. It goes beyond providing them with academic skills; it's about equipping them with the tools to preserve their cultural heritage while adapting to the realities of an ever-changing world.

Our commitment to the education of indigenous children aims to create inclusive educational opportunities tailored to their unique needs. Together, we firmly believe that every child, regardless of their background, deserves equitable access to quality education, ensuring a better future for all.

2- Brief Presentation of the NGO, Its Mission, and Objectives.



At Espace Opoko, we are firmly committed to advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples by providing them with fair educational opportunities and instilling essential values for their prosperity within our society.

Our Mission:

We are dedicated to teaching and integrating fundamental life values to foster productive lives among members of our indigenous communities. Our primary mission is to provide indigenous children with equitable access to quality education while actively promoting their rights and cultural identity.

Our Objectives:

Educational Equality: Provide indigenous children with equal opportunities for academic success as their peers, thereby facilitating their integration and flourishing within the educational system while preserving their cultural identity.

- **Improvement of Academic Achievement:** Actively work to enhance the academic level of indigenous students, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge for a promising future while valuing their traditional wisdom.
- **Prevention of School Dropout:** Reduce and eliminate the dropout rate among indigenous communities by providing a conducive educational environment and highlighting their history and culture.
- **Promotion of Indigenous Rights:** Raise awareness about the cause of indigenous peoples, advocate for their rights, and recognize them as specific communities with unique educational needs.
- **Partnership and Parental Involvement:** Foster strong partnerships among parents, teachers, and students, actively encouraging parental involvement in the educational process and advocating for indigenous rights.

At Espace Opoko, we firmly believe that every child, regardless of their background, deserves an equitable education that respects their culture and rights. We are committed to working towards inclusive education, thereby promoting respect and recognition for indigenous peoples within our society.

OUR INTERVENTION AREAS

Our program includes a total of 500 indigenous students enrolled from primary school to university.



- National Capital (1,360,000 in 02)
- over 500,000
- over 100,000
- over 10,000
- other main city
- other city



Education of Indigenous Children: Obstacles and Calls to Action

The education of indigenous children faces a myriad of challenges that hinder their access to education and compromise their academic success. These challenges, diverse in nature, converge into major obstacles that require essential support to overcome their detrimental effects.

Firstly, the absence of successful role models within their communities is detrimental. The lack of inspiring figures fosters a sense of hopelessness regarding the possibility of succeeding within the education system. This absence of positive role models leads some to view school as a waste of time, limiting their motivation to fully engage.

Secondly, financial difficulties pose a significant problem. Indigenous families, often facing precarious economic conditions, struggle to finance their children's education. Public schooling, theoretically free, becomes an added financial burden when parents must cover the basic needs of education, including payment to volunteer teachers. This financial strain reinforces skepticism about the value of formal education for these children.

Persistent discrimination within schools also exacerbates the situation. Indigenous children encounter discriminatory acts, from teasing related to their attire or pronunciation to systemic discrimination that hinders their academic development. These social pressures often lead to dropping out of school, reinforcing the cycle of educational marginalization.

Furthermore, precarious living conditions, notably the lack of food, compromise children's attendance at school. In communities where subsistence relies on hunting and gathering, education is sometimes perceived as a hindrance to family contribution, leading to recurrent dropouts after breaks as children return to assist their families.

Unresolved health issues, often treated with traditional methods, also disrupt continuous schooling. Illnesses and accidents can lead to prolonged absences from school, significantly impacting the educational journey of indigenous children.

Moreover, parental illiteracy significantly limits the support they can provide for their children's education. The inability of parents to assist their children with home studies creates an additional disadvantage for these students already facing numerous obstacles at school.

The lack of accessible educational infrastructure, including the absence of high schools in certain regions, forces indigenous children to discontinue their studies after a certain level, thereby limiting their future opportunities.

These multiple challenges call for urgent and sustained intervention to ensure equitable access to quality education for indigenous children. Supporting their educational journey involves not only removing material barriers but also promoting an inclusive and respectful environment that encourages their participation and academic flourishing.

WHAT WE DO

Access to education for indigenous children in the Republic of Congo requires significant investment from parents at all levels. To enable their children to complete a full academic journey from primary school to university, considerable financial resources are needed.

Indigenous populations, facing extreme poverty, often manage to enroll their children in the first and second years of primary school. However, thereafter, many children drop out because their parents can no longer afford the increasing financial burden. In remote villages where teachers are scarce, parents are mostly compelled to contribute monthly to the honorariums of volunteer teachers. This expenditure poses a significant burden on indigenous parents, who often grapple with immense financial difficulties.

"Investing in the education of indigenous children is an investment in the future of their communities and the preservation of their cultural heritage."

During the academic year 2022-2023, we provided access to education for 350 indigenous children. Our efforts focused on various aspects, including promoting the schooling of indigenous children, hygiene and health-centered programs. Additionally, we actively participated in several workshops and training sessions to share our expertise in various fields. This report is structured to reflect our commitments in these diverse domains





"SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IS AN INVESTMENT IN A MORE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND DIVERSE SOCIETY."

II. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

"Indigenous children's education is a bridge to autonomy, dignity, and the preservation of their unique identity."



"Awareness Campaign in the Indigenous Community of Lefoutou"

EDUCATION

Awareness Campaign for Indigenous Children's Education

We conducted awareness campaigns on the importance of school education in indigenous communities of Lekoumou and Sangha. This initiative aimed to promote a deeper understanding of the positive impact of education and encourage families' involvement in voluntarily sending their children to school.

The campaign spanned over a month and employed a participative and respectful approach by closely collaborating with community leaders and key members. Meetings and discussion sessions were conducted in local languages, highlighting the benefits of education while addressing specific concerns raised by the communities.

The campaign highlighted the tangible benefits of education for indigenous children, emphasizing how it can serve as a gateway to better opportunities while preserving the richness of their culture. Inspiring testimonials from indigenous students were shared to illustrate successes and opportunities made available through education.

This campaign sparked genuine interest and increased openness toward education within these communities. Feedback showed a rise in enrollment of indigenous children in local schools, reflecting a positive response to our awareness efforts.



Indigenous Student Enrollment Campaign in Schools:

In continuation of our awareness campaign about the critical importance of school education within indigenous communities, we initiated a proactive effort to enroll and re-enroll students.

Driven by our commitment to promote access to quality education, our teams mobilized to facilitate enrollments in schools. We are proud to announce that all children of school-going age in the communities where we operate have been enrolled.

For the academic year 2022-2023, this initiative resulted in the enrollment of 350 indigenous children in schools.

These enrollments signify a significant step toward access to education for these youngsters, providing them a pathway to a promising future.

The importance of this activity lies in its ability to break down barriers to education, to open doors to new opportunities, and to provide a platform for the individual and collective empowerment of these communities. We firmly believe that every child deserves access to quality education and will continue to strive towards this ideal.

Distribution of School Kits in Indigenous Villages

After successfully enrolling students from indigenous villages into schools, our teams swiftly moved on to a crucial phase: the distribution of school kits to all enrolled children. This distribution holds paramount importance for Pygmy communities, providing children with essential tools for their education.

Over two intense weeks, our teams embarked on a journey through the remote regions of Congo, overcoming various challenges to reach these distant communities. We covered an extensive territory, delivering these school kits to Ibonga in Sangha, Sibiti, Indo, Bekole, Mougomo, Lefoutou, Leweme, and Bambama in Lekoumou.

This distribution went beyond simply handing out materials; it represented a significant effort to overcome access barriers and reach these remote communities. Logistical and geographical challenges were met with determination to ensure that each child could benefit from the necessary supplies for their educational journey.

This action highlighted the persistent challenges in accessing education for indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of our ongoing commitment to overcoming these barriers and ensuring equitable access to education for all children, regardless of their location.

These two weeks of distribution were a tangible testament to our dedication to the education of indigenous communities, reminding us that every child deserves an equal chance at accessing education for a better future.



Distribution of Kits in the village of Lefoutou



Distribution of Kits in the village Ibonga



Distribution of Kits in the village of Leweme



Distribution of Kits in the village of l'indy



Discovery of a Particular Situation in the Indigenous Communities of Mougomo and Bekole

We were recently made aware of a troubling reality within the indigenous communities of Mougomo and Bekole, located respectively 12 and 24 kilometers from Sibiti. Students in these regions were solely receiving oral education due to the lack of adequate school supplies. Teachers conducted their lessons orally, wrote on the board, while students, lacking materials, could only listen and observe before returning home.

Faced with this concerning situation, we took prompt action by visiting these areas alongside Mr. Nsika Édouard, the Departmental Director of Primary and Secondary Education in the Lekoumou department. Our intervention led to the distribution of school kits to 80 students at Mougomo school and 143 students at Bekole school.

This action was crucial in maintaining the operation of these schools and preventing premature closure, a situation encountered the previous year at Mougomo school. We continued our collaboration with the Departmental Directorate of Education to ensure the smooth running of school activities, ensuring that these schools remained open throughout the year.

It is with great satisfaction that we note these institutions were able to keep their doors open throughout the year, providing students with essential educational continuity for their development.

This experience underscores the crucial importance of school supplies in accessing quality education and strengthens our ongoing commitment to these communities, ensuring an educational environment conducive to the growth of young minds.

Repairing Desks and Benches to Address the School Overcrowding Crisis

Our commitment to supporting the education of indigenous children has had an immediate impact in schools, resulting in a significant increase in student enrollment. However, this increase has shed light on a critical issue: the dire lack of desks and benches in many schools.

Faced with this alarming reality, this year, we took the initiative to repair the defective desks and benches. This involved engaging a skilled carpenter and purchasing the necessary materials for these urgent repairs. While this action has increased the number of desks and benches in several schools, the problem remains concerning as many children continue to attend classes while seated directly on the floor.

This situation highlights the magnitude of the challenge faced by these schools, where a growing number of children aspire to quality education but are constrained by inadequate material conditions.

Despite our efforts to address this desk and bench shortage crisis, many children still lack the basic comfort required for learning. This underscores the urgency of continuing to support these schools by improving their infrastructure, providing essential equipment, and offering decent learning conditions for these children.





Tutoring Sessions at Bambama Junior High School for Diploma Preparation

This year, we undertook a significant initiative for the Bambama Junior High School. Our donation included study booklets for French, History-Geography, Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, along with boxes of chalk. We also provided financial support to teachers to encourage the launch of tutorial sessions in all subjects.

This action aimed to optimally prepare our students for their BEPC exam, boosting their confidence and assurance. Our ambitious goal was to reach a success rate of nearly 100% in this year's final exam.

The results were promising: the success rate reached 93%. Although we didn't hit the 100% mark, this achievement showcases the positive impact of our actions. The tutorial sessions and resources provided played a crucial role in helping our students prepare more comprehensively and approach the exam with confidence.

This encouraging success demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted initiatives in improving academic outcomes. We are proud of the commitment and collaborative effort of teachers, students, and our organization for this significant progress. We remain committed to supporting our students to reach their full academic potential.

**"By supporting the education of indigenous children,
we are investing in cultural diversity and a more
inclusive future for all."**



Photo taken during the meeting with the Deputy Prefect of Bambama about the project

Land Acquisition for an Innovative Project: Building a Multi-Purpose Training Center.

We have recently completed the strategic acquisition of two plots of land in the district of Bambama, marking the beginning of an ambitious project: the construction of a multi-sector training center. This center is designed to offer vocational training to indigenous youth while implementing a literacy program for adults within these communities.

The establishment of this center holds paramount importance in our vision of empowerment and skill development within indigenous communities. It aims to provide educational and professional opportunities, catering to the specific needs for training and literacy within these populations.

We wish to express our profound gratitude to the Sub-Prefect, the General Secretary of the Bambama district, and Chief Maleta for their invaluable commitment and support in the realization of this operation. The strategically acquired plots, located in the market area, have been officially registered with the neighborhood chieftaincy and at the sub-prefecture level.

This investment symbolizes our long-term commitment to education, vocational training, and the empowerment of indigenous communities. This center will serve as a catalyst for skill development, opening new and tangible prospects for indigenous youth and adults, thus enhancing their capacities and promoting their social and professional integration.

This project marks the beginning of a new era of opportunities for these communities, underscoring our dedication to strive for a better future where every individual, regardless of their background, has access to education and training to fulfill their full potential.



Construction of a Multimedia Room

We have built a media room within our boarding school for indigenous high school students in Sibiti. Thanks to the exceptional support from the Baptist Church of Beauce in Canada, this room provides our students with direct access to the outside world.

Currently, we are mobilizing to equip it with state-of-the-art materials to create a connected space, conducive to taking online courses and connecting with other students worldwide. This room signifies more than just a learning space; it opens new horizons for the personal development of our students, preparing them to tackle the challenges of the modern world.



"Every indigenous child deserves access to quality education to build strong foundations and make a positive contribution to their community."

Hygiene - Health - Safety

Promotion of Women's Health for Positive Educational Impact

Alongside our distribution of school kits to indigenous students in Bambama, Vanessa Nzouba, our representative in Brazzaville, led crucial discussions with indigenous women on the importance of personal hygiene. These discussions led to concrete action: the distribution of packets of sanitary pads to all the present women.

This initiative, beyond its sanitary aspect, holds paramount importance in our educational vision. We firmly acknowledge that women's health plays a crucial role in children's education. By providing indigenous women with essential resources for their hygiene, we contribute to creating an environment conducive to children's learning.

It's crucial to underline that challenges related to menstrual hygiene can not only impact women's physical health but also have an effect on their psychosocial well-being.

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Reduction of Stigmatization through Clothing Distribution to Indigenous Children

We embarked on a significant initiative aimed at eradicating the stigmatization of indigenous children in schools associated with the quality of their clothing. Clothing-based stigma has long been a barrier to the social and educational integration of these children, creating unjust obstacles to their school participation.

Recognizing this reality, we initiated a broad clothing distribution campaign for indigenous children. Our goal was clear: to provide children with the means to have spare clothing, aiding them in feeling more confident and eliminating a potential source of discrimination at school.

This initiative was met with enthusiasm and gratitude by indigenous communities. Hundreds of children received new and quality clothing, enabling them to experience school without the burden of clothing-related stigma.





Distribution of Essential Items

To encourage the schooling of indigenous children, we initiated campaigns distributing essential items to families sending their children to school.

This initiative facilitated the enrollment of all school-aged children within our areas of intervention. By providing these items, we've established a crucial incentive for families, demonstrating that the education of their children is a priority.

This practical approach had a significant impact, encouraging parents to prioritize their children's education over their contribution to family chores.

This tangible action helped break barriers to the schooling of indigenous children, reinforcing our commitment to inclusive and accessible education for all, regardless of their socio-economic status.



Tables-Benches Project for Indigenous Children's Education: Awaiting Approval for Positive Pedagogical Impact.

Our program supporting the education of indigenous children has experienced significant growth, with an increasing number of children enrolled in schools.

This increase has unveiled a recurring issue: the shortage of desks and benches reported by several school administrations. Recognizing the importance of learning conditions, we took the initiative to build desks and benches for free distribution in public schools.

To materialize this project, we initiated the necessary administrative procedures. A formal request for permission to harvest wood was submitted to the General Directorate of Forestry Economy as early as March 2023.

The approval is crucial for us to proceed with wood cutting and desk construction.

To date, the requested authorization has not been granted. However, we remain steadfast in our commitment to this project. Upon receiving the long-awaited permission, we will immediately initiate the implementation of this initiative.

Our goal remains unchanged: to provide the necessary tools to enhance the learning conditions of these children, contributing to their education and future.





"EVERY EDUCATED INDIGENOUS CHILD IS
A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THE
PRESERVATION AND FLOURISHING OF
THEIR ANCESTRAL CULTURE."

III. COLLABORATIONS

COLLABORATIONS

In our endeavor to expand our outreach across the country to reach all indigenous communities, we have forged partnerships with several organizations in the Republic of Congo. These collaborations have paved the way for our participation in various activities and have even resulted in substantial donations aimed at indigenous peoples. Here's an overview of some of these initiatives.



Distribution of school kits with the Kiminou Association at Moussanda Primary School.

Partnership with the Kiminou Association

Led by Berth Laval, this organization is committed to supporting the education of vulnerable children and youth in the Republic of Congo. Our partnership with this organization has enabled us to acquire school supplies for indigenous children in Sibiti. This collaboration allows us to combine our efforts to provide equal educational opportunities for indigenous children.



Freezer received and installed at the indigenous students' residence in Brazzaville.

Collaboration with Mr. Thierry Mfoula

Mr. Thierry Mfoula, Vice-President of Denis Sassou-Nguesso University, donated a freezer, a stabilizer, a bag of rice, and 5 liters of oil to indigenous students in Brazzaville. This gesture significantly improved the lives of our students in the Congolese capital.

Collaboration with Ibonga Primary School

Ibonga Primary School marks our first intervention zone in Sangha. Aiming to extend our reach to all indigenous communities in this region, we conducted a working session with the school's Principal, Mr. Deaudel Brice Daodoa. This meeting enabled us to initiate our actions, starting with indigenous communities in Louesso, Mouyoye, and Attention.



Work Session at Espace Opoko Headquarters, Brazzaville



Receipt of a Donation from the Ministry of Justice

In November 2022, our boarding school for indigenous high school students in Sibiti received a remarkable donation: 24 mattresses offered by the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and Indigenous Peoples. The ceremony for the handover of this precious donation took place on-site, within our institution.

The ministry delegation was led by Mr. Justin Assomoyi, Director-General for the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples' Rights. We express our deep gratitude for his commitment to supporting indigenous children through our program.

Thanks to this generous donation, several indigenous high school students now have more comfortable sleeping conditions.



Our representative from Lekoumou meeting with the Director-General of Indigenous Peoples.



Collaboration with the 'Don du Coeur' collective

The close collaboration with the 'Don du Coeur' collective in Pointe-Noire has been of paramount importance for our program. Thanks to this alliance, we have been able to participate in various activities where we had the opportunity to raise awareness about the education of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this organization generously donated school kits, clothing, and food, thus strengthening our ability to support these communities in a more extensive and meaningful manner.

Here are some of the activities captured in images with Don du Coeur.



Successful participation at the Civil Society Organizations Café in Pointe-Noire.



Participation in the blood donation campaign in Pointe-Noire.



Receipt of a donation of school kits for indigenous children.



Receipt of a donation of toys for indigenous children.



Reception of school kits.

*Thank you,
Don du
Coeur, for
everything.*

Pourquoi choisir un **Prélèvement à Domicile ?**





- 1- Faciliter de prise de rendez-vous
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Nos équipes se déplacent

AGORACARE   

Collaboration with Agora Care.

For three years, our partnership with AgoraCare Diagnostic Health Center for Biology and Medical Imaging has been of crucial importance. Through this collaboration, we provide free medical care to indigenous students in Brazzaville. This partnership is essential in maintaining the good health of our indigenous students.

Our ability to ensure the well-being of our students has been strengthened by the care provided by AgoraCare. In particular, this partnership allows us to regularly address cases of malaria among our indigenous students, a common health threat in the country.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this collaboration was vital. It enabled us to address the health challenges our students faced. The swift and effective care contributed to the protection and treatment of our students affected by the virus.

This strong and ongoing partnership with the medical facility has played a crucial role in our ability to provide essential medical support to our indigenous students, ensuring their well-being and safety.

Advocacy for the integration of volunteer teachers and support for indigenous students: A call during the ministerial workshop

At the workshop on the adoption of the National Action Plan for Improving the Quality of Life of Indigenous Populations, a major concern was addressed: the situation of volunteer teachers in schools serving indigenous communities. This event, led by the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples, provided an opportunity to highlight a crucial educational issue.

In accordance with Congolese Law No. 5 of February 25, 2011, education for indigenous populations is guaranteed free of charge. However, the reality in some schools demonstrates that volunteer teachers are often compensated mainly by parents of students, thus circumventing this law. During this event, Alex Jesse Ndzoyi Nzambi, our communications officer, presented a bold proposal.

The proposal aims to integrate volunteer teachers working in these schools into the civil service, thereby enabling the effective implementation of educational law. Additionally, the issue of supporting indigenous students admitted to various state exams was raised.

Furthermore, a significant announcement was made: our Boarding School for Indigenous High School Students in Sibiti is open to all indigenous students nationwide who complete their secondary education, offering them an opportunity to continue their studies in a suitable environment, despite constraints related to the proximity of major urban centers. These initiatives aim to provide equitable access to education for all indigenous students, in alignment with educational rights outlined in Congolese legislation.



Our communications officer addressing the gathering on this occasion.



Family photo taken during the ministerial workshop.

Commitment to Indigenous Education: Our Participation in the Symposium for Social Protection in the Republic of Congo.

We took part in the Civil Society Organizations Symposium on February 1st and 2nd, 2023, organized under the auspices of the Minister of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action, and Solidarity of the Congo.

The theme of this symposium was 'Enhancing Social Protection in Social Challenges in the Republic of Congo.'

As a Civil Society Organization committed to supporting the educational needs of indigenous children, we highlighted our dedication to improving access to education for these children and discussed the challenges these communities face in this area. We also presented our proposals to strengthen social protection for indigenous children as well as the entire Congolese population.

We firmly believe that social protection is a fundamental element in ensuring equal opportunities and social justice for all residents of the Republic of Congo.

We would like to congratulate our representative in Lekoumou for her hard work in integrating our organization into the National Platform for Social Protection in Congo (PNPSC). Likewise, we commend our delegations from Sibiti and Brazzaville for their excellent representation of our organization at this symposium.



Our delegation was accompanied by the Departmental Director of Social Affairs from Lekoumou.





EVERY EDUCATED INDIGENOUS CHILD IS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF LEADERSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND CHANGE WITHIN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY.

IV- CELEBRATIONS

CELEBRATION OF ESPACE OPOKO'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY



We celebrated our 10th anniversary during the 2022-2023 academic year. The celebration took place at the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples.

During this ceremony, we showcased the results we have achieved so far. We offered indigenous students the opportunity to address the authorities present, shedding light on the challenges they face.

Among the guests were the Director-General for the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples, Justin Assamoji, the Ambassador of Belgium to the Republic of Congo, Jean-Paul Charlier, the Deputy Director of WFP, Sidy Mohamed Babah, as well as representatives from the Embassies of France, Rwanda, UNESCO, various ministries, and organizations.



CELEBRATIONS

International Day of Indigenous Peoples.

BRAZZAVILLE:

For the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, we held a press conference in Brazzaville where indigenous students themselves presented the challenges they face in education. The article below, published by the 'Dépêches de Brazzaville,' provides a detailed account of what happened during this conference.

SCOLARISATION DES ENFANTS AUTOCHTONES

L'ONG Espace Opoko appelle au soutien

Dans le cadre de la célébration de la journée internationale des peuples autochtones, les responsables de l'ONG Espace Opoko ont sollicité le soutien de la société civile et des organisations internationales pour la scolarisation des enfants autochtones.

La conférence de presse animée par le chargé de la communication de l'ONG Espace Opoko, Alex Nzambi, en présence de la représentante de cette ONG, Vanessa Nzouba, et de la chargée des clubs Unesco, associations et ONG à la Commission nationale congolaise de l'Unesco, Hélène Nzoussi, a porté sur le thème de la journée, à savoir « *Les jeunes autochtones comme agents de changement pour une libre autodétermination* ». Pour l'animateur de la conférence de presse, l'autodétermination est un concept qui nécessite beaucoup de réflexion et que les autochtones eux-mêmes ont du mal à comprendre.

C'est pourquoi au niveau de l'Espace Opoko, ils se sont dit que ce thème qui fait appel à ce qu'ils mènent sur le terrain comme actions mérite bien qu'ils fassent écho en lançant un appel à tous les Congolais qui sont sur place au pays tout comme à l'étranger de soutenir leur organisation, car leur ONG répond bien à ce thème. « *Aujourd'hui, nous avons des étudiants autochtones que nous devons scolariser en octobre. En sus des étudiants, nous allons scolariser plus de cinq cents enfants autochtones, mais nous sommes confrontés aux difficultés des kits scolaires. D'où, nous lançons un appel à tout Congolais de nous soutenir; peu importe ce qu'il pourra*

apporter, pourvu seulement que ça permette à ces enfants d'aller à l'école », a signifié le chargé de la communication de l'Espace Opoko.

Ces enfants autochtones, a poursuivi Alex Nzambi, ils les ont identifiés dans le district D'Bounga sur l'axe Mombélé et dans le département de la Lékoumou. Par contre, au niveau de l'université, ils ont des étudiants des différents départements et c'est l'ensemble de toutes ces zones qui fait un total de plus de cinq cents enfants autochtones. Mais présentement l'ONG évolue dans la Sangha et dans la Lékoumou, a-t-il précisé. « *Lentement et sûrement, nous avançons dans d'autres départements pour scolariser des enfants autochtones et faire d'eux des vrais vecteurs et des vrais modèles dans le secteur de l'éducation afin que ces enfants inspirent d'autres enfants autochtones. Nous avons déposé des demandes de soutien à tous les niveaux même au sein des organisations internationales mais, jusqu'à ce jour, nous n'avons jamais eu de suite. On espère qu'ils sont en train d'étudier le dossier et qu'ils vont nous faire appel d'ici peu de temps, parce que nous sommes une organisation qui parle avec des preuves palpables sur le terrain* », a-t-il martelé.



Une cohésion des peuples à l'Université Marien-Ngouabi

Habib Ombi, l'un des étudiants autochtones se réjouit du fait qu'en sa qualité d'autochtone, il ne subit pas la discrimination à l'université Marien-Ngouabi et invite les autres enfants autochtones à s'appliquer. « *Il y a un grand changement par rapport à ma vie d'avant et celle d'aujourd'hui. Même à la faculté, il n'y a pas de discrimination entre les bantous et l'autochtone que je suis. J'invite mes frères autochtones à abandonner les choses anciennes pour s'adapter aux choses nouvelles afin de développer notre com-*

munité autochtone. J'invite aussi les gens de bonne volonté à soutenir mes frères et sœurs autochtones à obtenir des kits scolaires pour la rentrée scolaire prochaine. Ils ont besoin de ces fournitures scolaires », a-t-il dit. Le même appel a été lancé par la représentante de l'ONG Espace Opoko, Vanessa Nzouba: « *Certes notre ONG connaît des avancées significatives, toutefois nous accusons quelques difficultés par manque de soutien. Nous nous débrouillons avec les moyens de bord, ce n'est pas suffisant. Voilà pourquoi nous lançons un appel aux acteurs de la société civile, aux insti-*

L'assistance lors de la conférence de presse/DR

tutions et citoyens congolais de bonne volonté de nous venir en aide afin que nous puissions bien prendre en charge la scolarisation des enfants autochtones. Déjà à la date d'aujourd'hui, nous avons un total de sept étudiants que nous gérons. »

Notons que le projet d'éducation scolaire des peuples autochtones a commencé en 2012 avec le lancement de cette ONG. Et depuis lors, l'ONG a déjà enregistré sept étudiants, notamment Paul Makita Ensfa ; Habib Ombi, FSE ; Divine Gaston Mabiata, Flash ; Chica Taman Moungouomo, Flash ; Idris Saya, Ensfa ; Stévie Akouala, Sciences-économiques.

Bruno Okokana

International Day of Indigenous Peoples.

POINTE-NOIRE

On August 9, 2023, in Pointe-Noire, on the occasion of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, we participated in a Conference-Debate on the Socio-Professional Integration of Indigenous Peoples organized by the Dons du Cœur collective. This event shed light on the crucial issues faced by this community. The impactful intervention of Blaise Ngono, an indigenous high school student participating in our program and hailing from the village of Lefoutou, deeply resonated with the audience as he shared the real challenges of his people.

Addressing the audience, Blaise emphasized, "When I entered this room, nobody knew I was indigenous. Everyone looked at me as a human being. It was only during my presentation that you realized my difference. If I were a monkey, I wouldn't need to introduce myself because everyone would instantly recognize my nature. My message is simple: I wish for my people to be recognized as human beings, and I implore you to stop treating us like animals. We are all equal; we simply lack access to the same resources you have."

This conference brought together public, private, institutional, and business actors in Pointe-Noire, fostering fruitful exchanges on the integration of indigenous peoples. It highlighted the importance of inclusion and encouraged concrete actions toward a fair future. The collective determination of the participants marked a significant step toward a united and prosperous Congo.



Ngono Blaise during the conference





International Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, we organized an event with our female members in Brazzaville centered around the theme: 'The Role of Women in Civil Society Organizations for a Promising Future.'

We had the opportunity to discuss the lives of women who have made history, such as Kimpa Vita and Rosa Parks, before highlighting the exceptional work our female members contribute within our organization to ensure equal opportunities for academic success among indigenous children.

We take pride in the fact that our organization has more active female members than males, undoubtedly enhancing our strength. The celebration of International Women's Day at Espace Opoko was a great success.

We firmly believe that women have a significant role in building a sustainable future, and we are honored to work alongside such committed and passionate women.





Our Participation in the Belgian National Day Celebration

On July 21st, we had the honor of being invited to the reception organized by His Excellency Ambassador Jean-Paul Charlier on the occasion of the Belgian National Day.

Our communication officer, Alex Jesse Ndzoyi Nzambi, represented our delegation in the absence of our Brazzaville representative who was on a mission abroad. This reception provided us with an opportunity to continue advocating for the education of indigenous children among the diplomats accredited in Congo and certain authorities present at the event.

"Education is not only a fundamental right, but also the key to eradicating stereotypes and promoting intercultural understanding within societies."

We were able to lay the groundwork for several partnerships that will undoubtedly allow us to achieve our goals even more effectively. This activity has opened up new perspectives for us to strengthen our ties and cooperate more closely in fulfilling our missions. We are grateful to the ambassador for this opportunity.



Célébrating the end-of-year holidays.

In our commitment to our students' well-being, we organize a special New Year celebration annually. These festivities take place in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, and Sibiti, areas where our students have relocated to continue their studies.

These celebrations hold significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, they provide our students with an opportunity to come together, fostering a sense of community and mutual support during the holiday season. Being away from their families during the festivities, these events create a space where they can share moments of joy, companionship, and solidarity.

Absolutely, these celebrations play a crucial role in alleviating the sense of loneliness often experienced by students far from home during this period. They provide an opportunity for them to forge new connections, exchange experiences, and find comfort in the company of their peers and the educational team.



Celebration in Pointe-Noire



Celebration in Brazzaville



Celebration in Sibiti





"TRAINING IS THE LIGHT THAT
ILLUMINATES THE PATH TO
INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE
FULFILLMENT."

V. TRAINING

PROGRAM IN SUPPORT
OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S
EDUCATION IN THE
REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The complexity of our work requires a series of training sessions to ensure effectiveness and optimal results. Throughout the year 2023, our members benefited from various training sessions, including:



Justice in the Middle, Holding His Completion Certificate

Key Training: A New Director in Our Team

Our Sibiti Secretariat Director, Justice Mbembou, completed a 5-month training in graphic design, video shooting, editing, and drone piloting at GG Records in Pointe Noire. With his certification and professional license from the Ministry of Culture and Arts in hand, Justice now brings his expertise to create high-quality video and visual content for our organization.



Chalk Production Training

That's amazing! Having a member like Koueyi Reich, who successfully completed a training in chalk production, is a real asset for us. Every year, the shortage of chalk in our schools poses a consistent challenge. To address this economically, his newfound expertise allows us to produce our own chalk for our partner schools and students.



Organizational Development Training

Our members in Brazzaville underwent organizational development training with Well Grounded, a British NGO. This training, part of the 'Facilitators for Change (F4C)' program, aims to train experienced consultants in organizational development in Central Africa. It equipped our team with both technical and non-technical skills essential to becoming specialists in this field.

**Training in Project Management
Advocacy for Forest Governance
Action**

Our communication officer, Alex Jesse Ndzoji Nzambi, attended a training provided by Eu Aide Volunteers Forest. This training was a valuable opportunity to enhance our advocacy skills, particularly in the specific area of forest governance. Through this initiative, we actively engaged in various exchanges and discussions this year, particularly on crucial environmental preservation issues.



Caleb Caviness Joins Our Cause!

Caleb Caviness, an American citizen, has joined our organization for a humanitarian collaboration after years of remote correspondence.

Teaming up with the president of Espace Opoko in Canada, they will combine their efforts to enhance the living conditions of indigenous peoples and families in need, particularly through education, access to clean water, and food security.



The first working session between Caleb and the Espace Opoko team in Brazzaville.

Income-Generating Activities

We are encountering recurring challenges in securing the necessary budget to fund our various projects. In response to these difficulties, we have considered starting income-generating activities. In addition to our computer secretariat in Sibiti, which helps us cover certain expenses for indigenous high school students in the boarding school, we have launched two new initiatives this year:



Cornfield

For some time now, we have been considering launching a layer chicken farming project.

This project aims not only to provide employment opportunities to indigenous families to better support their children's education but also to equip our organization with the necessary resources to expand our programs to other communities in the country.

To start, we have begun cultivating a maize field to feed the livestock. This project commenced on a small scale. Currently, we are working on establishing a farm and acquiring chicks. It's a promising initiative for which we are currently seeking funding to materialize it as soon as possible.



OPOKO Yogurt (Pointe-Noire)

In the wake of a training program attended by several of our members, we launched the production and commercialization of Opoko Yogurt in Pointe-Noire. Profits generated from this venture contribute to supporting various projects within our organization.





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"BEAUTY IS IN THE STRATEGY, BUT
DO NOT FORGET TO LOOK AT THE
RESULT."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

VI. OUR RESULTS

PROGRAM TO SUPPORT
THE EDUCATION OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN
THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

VI. OUR RESULTS

1 Dropout rates

Regarding dropout rates, the year 2023 saw a marked increase. Out of 350 enrolled students, from primary school to university, 56 of them dropped out, constituting a dropout rate of 16%. The highest rates were recorded in Mougomo and Ibonga, areas where we intervened for the first time this year. Measures have been taken to ensure a different situation for the coming year.



2 School results

Out of the 294 students who completed the academic year, 177 have been promoted to the next grade. This represents a success rate of 60%. Compared to the previous year's success rate of 49.36%, we are delighted to have gained a 10-point increase from the previous year.

Our achievements this year



Sagesse was elected to the Children's Parliament where she currently serves to ensure that the rights of indigenous children are advocated for on par with those of other children.

VI. OUR RESULTS



Paul took his first international flight to attend conferences, passionately advocating for the voices of indigenous populations from our country.



Ramane passed his recruitment test for the military and is currently undergoing training to serve under the flag.



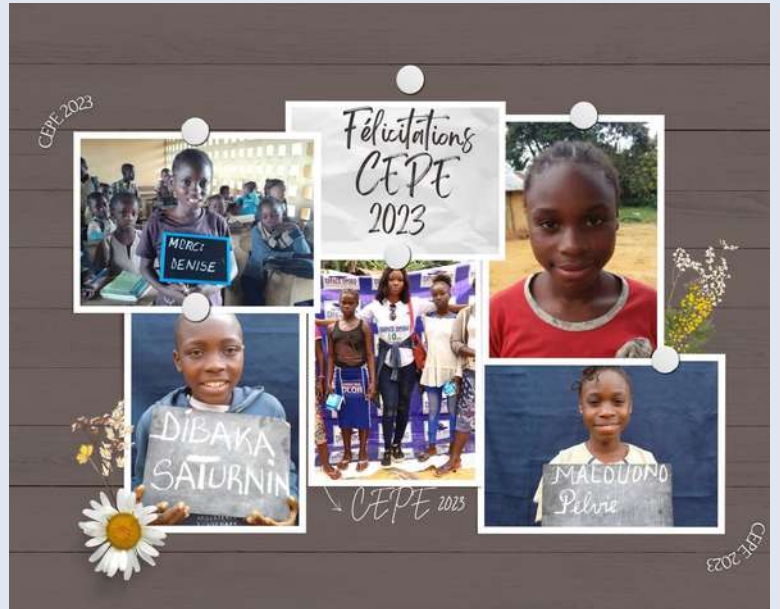
Divin participated in high-level meetings with the European Union, UNICEF, and the French Embassy to encourage them to invest more in improving the living conditions of indigenous populations.

"The education of indigenous children is an act of empowerment, providing opportunities to break the cycle of poverty and marginalization."

VI. OUR RESULTS



Hyrad-Siverlin obtained his Junior High School Certificate from the Bambama General Education College. Currently, he resides in our boarding school to continue his studies in high school.



Seven of our students have successfully completed their primary education and brilliantly obtained their Elementary School Leaving Certificate. Here are their names: Mapieme Noellie, Dibaka Saturnin, Malouono Pelvie, Ngoulou Clément, Tsiba Justeve, Ngouomo Kimpono Rama, Tsoumou Dieu Merci.



At just 6 years old, Nuptia walks a 5-kilometer round trip to attend school. Despite this challenge, she ranked as the third best student in her school.

"Education forms the foundation upon which the resilience of indigenous children is built in the face of social, cultural, and environmental challenges."

VI. OUR RESULTS



Mbindza Brice, who was our top student last year, has once again secured the first position in his class and is moving up to the third grade. As for Mougomo Bridel, he also ranks at the top of his class and enters the fourth grade. It's a first in our program to see two indigenous students excel at the top positions in the same school.

Ange Mabiala is the top student in his school.

Ange Mabiala, the top student in his school, embodies the hope of indigenous children in Sibiti. Initially, his parents were against his education, threatening to deprive him of food if he dared to go to school. During our visit, we encouraged education, offering food support and clothing to the families of students.

Despite this, five children dropped out, but the remaining eight, including Ange, succeeded and moved up to the next grade. His success proves the potential of indigenous children and motivates our investment in their education, believing they can transform their community.





Our Affiliation with UNESCO in 2023

The year 2023 will be engraved in our memories as a historic milestone. On June 29th, our organization officially joined the prestigious ranks of UNESCO. This affiliation marks a significant milestone, a recognition of our commitment and sustained efforts over an entire decade.

For eleven years, we have been dedicated to one goal: supporting the education of indigenous children. This commitment has been a source of pride but also of significant challenges. Every year, we have pushed boundaries to provide educational opportunities for these deprived children.

This step towards UNESCO represents validation of our dedication to these marginalized communities. We see it as a historic acknowledgment of our hard work, perseverance, and vision for a future where every indigenous child has access to fair and quality education.

This affiliation opens new doors, strengthens our capacity to act and influence educational policies, and allows us to collaborate more closely with international stakeholders to advance our common cause.

We consider this membership as an encouragement to continue our efforts with even greater determination. It's an honor and a privilege, but above all, it's a call to redouble our efforts to fulfill our mission and achieve the aspirations of indigenous children to receive adequate and inclusive education.

This milestone marks an exciting new chapter for our organization, a chapter that will be guided by our unwavering commitment to education, equality, and inclusion for all.



THE FORMAL EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN FOSTERS SELF-DETERMINATION AND STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES' CAPACITY TO SHAPE THEIR OWN FUTURE."

VII.

DIFFICULTIES, OBSTACLES, AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED.

PROGRAM SUPPORTING
THE EDUCATION OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN
THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Difficulties, obstacles, and challenges encountered during the year in project implementation.

• Difficulties and Challenges Encountered in 2022-2023

Last year was marked by significant challenges for [Name of NGO]. We faced several obstacles that tested our commitment to promoting educational rights for indigenous children.

Among these challenges, securing sufficient funding to support our educational initiatives was a constant struggle, limiting our ability to fully implement our educational programs and provide equitable access to quality education for these children.

The deplorable state of roads, as well as our vehicle, hindered our efforts to regularly monitor schools, compromising the continuity and effectiveness of our programs.

Moreover, difficulties in obtaining permits for the construction of desks and benches for schools delayed our projects, impeding the establishment of crucial infrastructures. Another major challenge was the inclusion of indigenous students in public service recruitments.

Furthermore, the lack of government support in securing placements at campuses for indigenous students has restricted their access to higher education, despite our efforts to provide them with equitable educational opportunities.

These challenges, albeit complex, bolster our commitment to continue our fight for the educational rights of indigenous children. They underscore the need for sustained collaboration and increased commitment to overcome these hurdles and tirelessly work towards meaningful change within these communities.

**COLLECTE
DES KITS SCOLAIRES**
POUR LES ENFANTS AUTOCHTONES
Du 1er juillet au 15 septembre 2023





CE QUE NOUS RECOLTONS

- Cahiers
- Stylos
- Crayons
- Règles
- Tailles crayons
- Gommés
- Ardoises
- Boite de Craies
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Analysis of specific constraints related to the education of indigenous children in the Congolese context.

The education of indigenous children in the Republic of Congo faces a myriad of specific challenges, indicative of the complex realities within these communities in the country. These diverse challenges have a significant impact on accessing quality education for these children.

Linguistic and cultural barriers, such as the official teaching language often differing from the local languages spoken by indigenous children, create difficulties in adaptation and a disconnection between the educational environment and their daily reality. This gap often hinders their full integration into the formal education system.

Socio-economic marginalization is another major obstacle, limiting access to basic educational resources such as school supplies, adequate infrastructure, and even fundamental needs like clean water and balanced nutrition, thereby affecting their ability to focus on their education.

The lack of tailored educational resources, both in terms of material and pedagogical content, also hampers their learning.

Their history, culture, and traditions are often not reflected in educational programs, thereby limiting their engagement and interest in formal education.

Furthermore, issues of access and infrastructure, such as the lack of schools in indigenous areas or their underdevelopment, impede their access to regular and secure education. This absence of adequate educational infrastructure hampers their educational journey.

Finally, the deficit in government support, characterized by the lack of specific policies and targeted funding to improve the education of indigenous children, restricts their educational opportunities despite the existence of quotas or inclusion measures.

All these constraints, compounded by growing financial challenges and the distance of secondary schools from villages, create a complex landscape and seriously hinder indigenous children's access to quality education throughout their academic journey.



"THE FIRST STEP IN
REACHING A GOAL IS
SETTING A GOAL."

VIII.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Program Supporting
Indigenous Peoples'
Education in the
Republic of Congo



Future Plan

The education of indigenous children in the Republic of Congo requires a holistic approach to overcome the multiple and specific obstacles these communities face. With this perspective, our future plan aims to enhance their access to quality education, considering various aspects from educational infrastructure to safeguarding their fundamental rights.

Future Plans for Supporting Indigenous Children's Education

1- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Establishing strong alliances with local organizations and governmental stakeholders to develop tailored educational programs and promote equitable access to education for indigenous children.

2- **Construction of the Second Dormitory Module:** Erecting a second module in the dormitory to provide 24 new spaces, thus reinforcing access to secure accommodation for indigenous children and encouraging regular attendance at school.

3- **Tutorial Sessions for Exam Year Students:** Implementing tutorial sessions to enhance the success rates of students in exam classes, offering additional support for their exam preparation.

4- **Construction of Desks and Benches:** Undertaking the construction of desks and benches in schools facing a severe lack of infrastructure, ensuring an adequate educational environment for indigenous children.

5- **Equipping the Media Room at the Dormitory:** Outfitting the media room at the dormitory and connecting the facility to electricity to provide students access to modern educational resources, thereby enhancing their learning experience.

6- **Regular Monitoring in Partner Schools:** Ensuring regular monitoring in partner schools to promptly address issues, ensuring an educational environment conducive to effective learning for indigenous children.

7- **'My Body, My Ownership' Campaign:** Launching an awareness campaign to combat violence against indigenous girls, thereby promoting respect for the rights and safety of young girls within these communities.

8- **Birth Certificate Issuance Campaign:** Organizing a birth certificate issuance campaign for all indigenous children, ensuring their legal identity and access to fundamental rights, including formal education.

By combining these efforts, we aim to create an inclusive, safe, and tailored educational environment for the specific needs of indigenous children. These complementary initiatives aim to ensure equitable access to quality education by directly addressing the multiple challenges faced by these communities. This is with the view of providing them with a promising and fair educational future.

New Projects:

1- **Mentorship Program:** Establishing a mentorship program for indigenous children by pairing students with volunteer mentors or community members to provide personalized support and educational guidance.

2- **Career Guidance Workshops:** Organizing regular workshops on career choices and job opportunities for indigenous students to inform them about various career paths and prepare them for their future.

3- **Strengthening Educational Infrastructure:** Undertaking the renovation or construction of schools in indigenous regions, thereby improving access to adequate educational infrastructure for these communities.

4- **Health Awareness Program:** Launching a health awareness program for indigenous children, emphasizing the importance of hygiene, nutrition, and mental health for their overall well-being.

Short-Term Goals (1 year):

1- Increase by 30% the number of indigenous children enrolled in tailored educational programs.

2- Conduct at least 6 training sessions for teachers on inclusive teaching methods.

3- Raise funds for the construction of two classrooms in remote areas.

4- Establish partnerships with at least three local organizations for joint educational initiatives.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the year 2023 has been filled with accomplishments and challenges for our organization. We've solidified partnerships, strengthened our capacities, and developed new initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of indigenous peoples. Despite the encountered difficulties, our determination to support the education, health, and well-being of these communities remains unwavering.

Each success, every collaboration, and every child sent to school signifies a significant stride towards our common goal: offering a better future for all, without distinction. We've achieved crucial milestones, yet there's much more to be done. We commit to persisting in our efforts, innovating, and fostering increased collaboration to realize our vision of a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We extend warm gratitude to all our partners, dedicated members, donors, and everyone involved in our cause. Their efforts have been essential to our success and the fulfillment of our mission.

Together, we continue to build a better, more inclusive, and equitable future for all.



**PLEASE SCAN TO MAKE A
DONATION**

