

ANNUAL REPORT



2022

THE EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS
CHILDREN, OUR PRIORITY.

Program for
Supporting the
School Education
of Indigenous
Peoples in the
Republic of Congo



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Suggested Quote: "All children have the right to education, even indigenous ones."

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The data contained in this report are derived from the activities conducted by Opoko Space between August 2021 and August 2022. They have been compiled, presented, and adopted at the General Assembly on August 20, 2022.

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

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Dear partners,

This year holds significant meaning in our journey. We initiated the project for the education of indigenous children in 2012 upon learning about the discriminations and marginalizations faced by this ethnic minority in the Republic of Congo.

We started in the Bambama district because, until that time, no indigenous child had crossed the threshold to secondary education. Subsequently, we expanded into other communities across the country.

In order to provide tailored solutions, we conducted studies and engaged in discussions with families to understand why indigenous children were not progressing in their education. It took us two years of trial and error before establishing a robust policy that not only facilitated sending indigenous children to school but also ensured continuous support for these children academically, at home, covering all school-related, health, and nutritional needs. By doing so, we successfully eliminated nearly 85% of the obstacles.

Ten years later, thanks to a highly committed team of volunteers, a handful of dedicated partners and friends, we managed to dispel several myths.

Today, the myth that indigenous people do not value formal education has been shattered. The myth suggesting their inability to adapt beyond their community is no longer valid.

We have shown the world that indigenous communities have the same fundamental needs as any other population. They simply lacked the same tools to fulfill those needs. Our mission, therefore, is to provide them with those tools, allowing them to face life with equal opportunities for success.

The remaining challenge is to gradually expand our activities nationwide and continue supporting those in primary schools, high schools, and universities. For the past two years, we have operated under the auspices of the Baptist Church ministry in Beauce, Canada, providing an opportunity to introduce these children to Christ.

To sustain these achievements, we require partners capable of supporting our activities. If you are interested in forming a partnership with us and offering indigenous children equal opportunities for academic success, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@espaceopoko.org.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Averty Ndzoyi', written over a horizontal line.

Averty Ndzoyi
President of the NGO Espace Opoko

I. PRESENTATION OF ESPACE OPOKO

Espace Opoko is a Congolese civil society organization registered in 2015 under number: 004/MID/DL/SG/DDSP. The statutes and internal regulations were modified and registered in 2022 under number 005/2002/MATDDL/DLEK/SG-DDAT.

It was established to provide support, create models, and provide necessary resources to indigenous youth, granting them access to education on equal terms as all other children.

This is a program that fully supports the education of indigenous children. This support encompasses various aspects, including the distribution of school kits, enrollment in schools, payment for volunteer teachers, school insurance, monitoring in schools and cities, housing, healthcare, transportation, and nutrition when they relocate to urban areas for high school, vocational schools, and university.



Every child deserves a quality education, regardless of their ethnic background, family income, gender, or the environment in which they live.

Our Areas of Operation

Our program has a total of 158 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

CONGO

Our areas of operation

- **In the Bambama district in the Lekoumou department,**

In this district, we have successfully enrolled all school-aged children. In total, we have 45 children in primary school and 11 in secondary school. In recent years, we have registered several children coming from Gabon and more distant communities to take advantage of the program. This is because our program supports children all the way through university. Therefore, parents take advantage of sending their children to our area of operation so they can benefit from the support until university.

- **In the Zanaga district in Lekoumou,**

We were informed of the admission of a very bright 12-year-old indigenous student from the Salambama village to the Elementary School Certificate. Unfortunately, she had to repeat a year because her parents couldn't afford her education outside the community. As a result, we took her under our care, placing her with a foster family appointed by our representative in the city of Sibiti, where all expenses are covered by us. Additionally, in Brazzaville, we are supporting an indigenous student from this district.

- **In Brazzaville,**

We are supporting 8 indigenous students enrolled at Marien Ngouabi University.

- **In Owando, Cuvette Region,**

We have one student from the Owando district in the Western Cuvette region among our ranks.

- **Komono district in Lekoumou,**

We have 52 students in primary school. These children are enrolled at Lefoutou Primary School. Many of them come from indigenous communities in Diba-diba and Moussahou to benefit from our program. With us, children are guaranteed support all the way to university, unlike any existing programs in Congo.

- **Sibiti in Lekoumou,**

We are supporting 8 indigenous high school students enrolled at Sibiti High School. So far, these are indigenous high school students from the districts of Bambama and Komono. We also have 12 children from the indigenous community of Youwa in primary schools in the city. This year, we plan to expand our activities to other communities around the city if we secure funding.

- **Mossendjo in the Niari department,**

We have 2 students completing their training at the National School of Water and Forestry. They are the first two indigenous high school students in the history of the Bambama district. They are at the end of their training cycle.

- **Abala district in the Plateaux region,**

We have two indigenous female students from the Abala district in the Plateaux region among our members. Due to limited resources hindering our ability to expand our activities nationwide, we are committed to beginning with indigenous students from all departments of the country.

II. WHY ARE THE MAJORITY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL?

1 Lack of role models in the community

Children require successful role models in their environment to encourage them to attend school. Unfortunately, several indigenous communities lack role models for academic success. This is why some believe that academic success is unattainable for indigenous individuals, leading to the perception that attending school is a waste of time. Many attend school solely to learn how to read and write.

3 Discrimination in classrooms and schools

Indigenous people are often regarded as inferior by their Bantu neighbors. This discrimination continues within the school environment. It is heightened due to the odor of the few clothes they have, worn in all circumstances. Additionally, others mock them whenever they struggle to pronounce a French word correctly. This discrimination leads to school dropouts.

5 Health issues

Life within indigenous communities poses various health risks. These children face numerous challenges that jeopardize their health, often experiencing accidents in the forest. Lacking financial resources, they resort to herbal remedies and strongly believe in magical-religious rituals for healing. A stomach ache caused by intestinal worms can hinder a child's education for several months, ultimately leading to complete dropout.

2 Funding their education

The indigenous population is extremely impoverished, lacking any form of paid work. Financing their children's education becomes a puzzle, especially when public schooling, meant to be free, turns somewhat into a private affair. Parents must prepare for the school year and pay volunteer teachers. Affording all this for a child is a sacrifice that should be motivated by the prospect of success. However, not believing in academic success already, making this sacrifice when they cannot afford it becomes a real issue.

4 Lack of food

Indigenous communities solely rely on hunting, fishing, and gathering for sustenance. Within their environment, all family members must contribute to nutrition. A 10-year-old indigenous child is already capable of setting traps to catch mice and bring food home. Sending them to school would be seen as a loss for the family, especially when nobody is certain about academic success. Additionally, those attending school frequently encounter significant challenges in their village to obtain food since they are no longer actively participating in providing for the family.

This explains the increase in dropout rates after each school break. Children stop attending school during Christmas holidays, return to the forests, and parents prevent them from going back to school.

6

Illiteracy among parents

A study has shown that children perform better when parents are involved in their education. The three pillars of education are often mentioned: parent, teacher, and child. Unfortunately, indigenous parents cannot read or write. As a result, they are unable to assist their children with homework. When a child doesn't understand something in class, they have no means of comprehension at home. This makes learning even more challenging for these indigenous children.

8

Support for indigenous students at the National School of Water and Forestry in Mossendjo

We have two indigenous students in their second year of training at the National School of Water and Forestry in Mossendjo. As this location is far from the organization's headquarters, we consistently have to send money for their rent, food, healthcare, and clothing.



7

Support at the High School Level

There isn't a high school in the Bambama district. After completing the BEPC (Certificate of General Education), indigenous children are compelled to relocate to either Zanaga or Sibiti to attend high school. However, they lack the means to rent houses, provide for themselves, or cover healthcare expenses.

Discrimination makes it challenging for them to be accepted for house rentals. Some Bantu individuals refuse to rent their houses to indigenous people. Once enrolled in high school, they cannot rely on parental support for food, healthcare, or housing. This is why until 2012, when indigenous children reached the third year in Bambama, they didn't even sit for the exam. They already felt incapable of managing the high school expenses.

9

Lack of civil registration documents

Many children lack civil registration documents. Teachers often agree to enroll them without these documents, but they encounter obstacles during state exam procedures. Some children may have these documents, but they often get lost or damaged during the rainy season. This year, we faced a situation where a student presented a half-torn birth certificate. The other half was used by the mother to roll her tobacco.

WHAT WE DO

10

School education for children in the Republic of Congo demands significant financial investments from parents at all levels. It requires the necessary resources to enable a child to complete their education from primary school to university.

Indigenous populations, being very poor, often manage to enroll their children in the first and second years of primary school. However, afterward, the children leave school because the parents can no longer afford the expenses.

The lack of teachers in remote villages often requires parents to contribute monthly towards paying so-called volunteer teachers' salaries. This expenditure poses significant challenges for indigenous parents to afford.

During the 2021-2022 school year, for the tenth consecutive year, we facilitated access to education for 158 indigenous children in the Republic of Congo. These activities included supporting the schooling of indigenous children, focusing on hygiene and health.

Additionally, we participated in several workshops and training sessions to share our experience in various fields. Hence, this report is structured based on the aforementioned areas.



**WE BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION IS THE ONLY MEANS TO
IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF INDIGENOUS
POPULATIONS.**



"AT ESPACE OPOKO, EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES TO BECOMING A BUILDER OF A WORLD BASED ON MUTUAL ASSISTANCE."

III. ACCOMPLISHED ACTIVITIES:

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

1. SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

Our strategic objectives regarding the education of indigenous peoples were as follows: enroll 100% of school-aged indigenous children in classrooms; reduce school dropout rates to 0%; achieve a school success rate close to 100% for indigenous children; and improve the academic level of children to 75%.

To achieve these goals, the following activities were carried out:



Preparation of clothing packages by the team in Brazzaville before sending them to indigenous communities.

COLLECTION OF SCHOOL KITS

Our teams from the offices in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire mobilized for 3 months to gather school kits in the two major cities of the country. Thus, thanks to churches and well-meaning individuals, we managed to collect half of the required kits for this academic year.



Awareness campaign in the indigenous community of Youwa in Sibiti.

CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

We conducted awareness campaigns in indigenous communities to discuss the importance of school education. Our volunteer teams worked for two weeks in indigenous communities such as Bambama, Leweme, Lefoutou, and Youwa. During these activities, we registered several school-age children. Some parents unaware of their children's ages, we used the traditional method of passing the child's hand over their head to reach the left ear. If the hand reached the ear, it meant the child was six years old and could go to school. If not, we waited until the following year. A total of 135 children were identified for enrollment in primary and secondary schools.



Awareness campaign in the indigenous community of Leweme, Bambama district.



Consultation within the indigenous community of Bambama.



Enrollment of Ordela at the Catholic College Notre Dame de Lourdes in Sibiti.



Distribution of school kits within the indigenous community of Bambama.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVIL REGISTRY DOCUMENTS

Before enrolling indigenous students in schools, we identified fifty-two indigenous children who lacked birth certificates. We mobilized efforts to obtain these civil registry documents to ensure the children's acceptance into schools.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

This year, we enrolled 158 indigenous children in schools. 141 in primary and secondary schools, 8 in high school, 2 at the National School of Water and Forestry, and 7 at the university. We also paid for school insurance, registration fees, and contributed to various operational budgets of each school, as mandated by Congolese legislation for several years.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTION

After listing school-age children and enrolling them in schools, we distributed school kits to 158 indigenous students. We also stored supplies such as notebooks within the communities to distribute whenever a child needed them. Due to budget constraints, we were unable to distribute bags and school uniforms.

ADOPTION AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF ORDELA



Ordela's first day at secondary school.

Ordela is a young indigenous girl from the village of Sala Mbama in the Zanaga district. Due to lack of support, she had a gap year in her village after obtaining her Primary School Certificate. Upon learning of her situation, we sent a team to her village. After discussions with her parents, we adopted Ordela and took her to Sibiti to give her the chance to attend school. She was placed in foster care with the Espace Opoko representative in the Lékoumou department. Throughout the year, Ordela's mother made trips to spend time with her daughter. After the school year, Ordela is currently in her village for the holidays with her family, awaiting the next school term.



Divin welcomed by Paul and Alex in Brazzaville.

RECEPTION AND SETTLING OF DIVIN IN BRAZZAVILLE

Divin is a young indigenous person from Indo in Sibiti. He passed his Baccalaureate in 2021 while under foster care in Nkayi. After his examination, he couldn't settle in Brazzaville due to lack of support. Consequently, we decided to include him in our group to give him the opportunity to continue his studies at the university.

He was then received in Brazzaville by our team and taken care of. He is enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Marien Ngouabi University. His dream is to become the first indigenous lawyer in the country to defend the interests of his people.

Since 2012, Espace Opoko has been supporting indigenous communities to enhance access to quality education, ensuring that indigenous children have the same access to education as all other children.



PAYMENT OF VOLUNTEER TEACHERS

For the tenth consecutive year, we have covered the payment of volunteer teachers on behalf of indigenous students. This arises due to the shortage of teachers in villages, which forces parents to recruit teachers from within the communities to oversee the children. As a result, each parent contributes to their payment. For the past 10 years, we have covered the portion for indigenous students.



CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL OPERATING BUDGETS

In recent years, schools no longer receive funding from the government. To keep them operational, parents are asked to contribute to the operating budget of the schools. As indigenous individuals are unable to do so, we take on the responsibility to contribute on their behalf. Consequently, we contribute to the operating budgets of three primary schools and one secondary school.



TAKING CARE OF STUDENTS AT ENEF

Dorile and Vanessa completed their third year at the National School of Water and Forestry in Mossendjo, Niari. We provided for their accommodation, nutrition, healthcare, education, etc.



SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS IN BRAZZAVILLE

Despite the existence of several texts in the Republic of Congo aimed at improving the living conditions of indigenous populations, such as the adoption of the national action plans for 2009-2013 and 2014-2017 on the improvement of the quality of life of indigenous populations, the promulgation of Law No. 5-2011 of February 25, 2011, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous populations, and the Constitution of October 25, 2015, which guarantees and promotes the protection of their rights; indigenous students in Brazzaville do not benefit from any aid to survive.

To help them pursue their university studies, we assist them to the best of our abilities. This aid includes renting a studio and providing nutrition for three of them. For those in foster families, we cover the costs related to university procedures, healthcare, and other expenses.

As family placement isn't always ideal in some cases, our wish is to secure the necessary funding to cover all their needs. To achieve this, we have initiated negotiations with the Ministry of Higher Education with the aim of obtaining free education for these students and spots in the campus.



Visiting schools to monitor our students' progress.

This year, we conducted 14 visits to schools to monitor specific situations concerning our students. These issues were mainly related to absenteeism, low academic performance, and a fight. The majority of absences were due to illness. We observed low grades in the second term at primary schools in Lefoutou and Bambama.

During our visits to schools and families, we noticed that most cases involved children from alcoholic families. The children were affected by their parents' behaviors, causing disruption. Once the issue was identified, we engaged with parents, children, and teachers to find a solution. Unfortunately, the results did not improve for several children in the third term.

In regards to the fight, the headmaster of the primary school in Lefoutou informed us that the indigenous students had fully integrated and that relations with other children were improving. However, some Bantu children still struggle to accept equality among different ethnic groups. A clash on this topic led to a fight between an indigenous student and a Bantu student. The indigenous students were afraid of retaliation from the Bantu community, so they contacted our team, and we visited the village.

We were pleased to note that the Bantu community did not perceive this fight as a serious situation. The father of the Bantu child even emphasized that it was a problem among children and that adults should simply talk to the children to maintain harmony at the school.

Reception of Children from the Indigenous Community of Gabon



Malouono, came from Gabon for a chance to go to school.

Every year, we welcome indigenous children from Gabon to benefit from our educational program in the Lékoumou department. This year, we received a child who lived with his father in Gabon. He had no birth certificate, didn't know his age, had never been enrolled in school, and didn't have a first name. The only information we had about him was that his name was Malouono. His mother brought him from Gabon so he could benefit from the program offered by Espace Opoko to have a chance to attend school. We enrolled him in the first grade and provided a school kit.

Children in Malouono's situation are quite numerous within indigenous communities, and we do what we can to assist them.



A technician from Congo Telecom doing the installation.

Free Internet for Indigenous Students in Brazzaville

We've set up internet access at our office in Brazzaville to enable indigenous students enrolled at Marien Ngouabi University to conduct research and participate in online training and conferences for free. Located in the Cardinal Émile Biayenda neighborhood, the Espace Opoko office in Brazzaville is now connected to fiber optic internet, courtesy of Congo Telecom.

PARTICIPATION OF 5 INDIGENOUS STUDENTS IN THE ENSOA COMPETITION

Five of our students participated in the competition at the École Nationale des Sous-Officiers d'Active (National School for Active Non-Commissioned Officers) this year. This participation was made possible through advocacy efforts with COMEC, aided by the General Directorate of Indigenous Peoples. Among the 5 students, 3 are from the Lékoumou department, one from Plateaux, and one girl from Cuvette.



The 5 indigenous candidates in the 2022 ENSOA Competition"

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION FOR INDIGENOUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

As they were in Sibiti, far from their families, we organized a Christmas party for indigenous high school students in Sibiti. The celebration took place at the Espace Opoko representative's place in Lékoumou. They cooked, ate together, and even danced a bit. Far from their families, they had a fulfilling meal and spent a good time together with our team from Sibiti. The celebration was beautiful!



Construction of a boarding facility for indigenous high school students in Sibiti

When they finish secondary school, indigenous students from Lékoumou are forced to relocate either to Zanaga or Sibiti to attend high school. Unfortunately, this relocation demands the renting of houses in those areas and money for sustenance. This explains the scarcity, a few years ago, of indigenous children in the high schools of the Lékoumou department.

To address this issue, we initiated the construction of a boarding facility for indigenous high school students in Sibiti. The construction project includes:

- Two buildings, each containing 3 apartments. Each apartment will have two bedrooms and a living room. One building is for girls, and the other is for boys.
- A media room to allow students to attend in-person and online training sessions on-site.
- Modern toilets and showers.

Currently, we are nearing completion of the first building. We are making efforts to expedite the construction of the restrooms and the meeting hall so that these two facilities will be available before October 2022.

Additionally, we are continuing to seek other partners to support us in this monumental project, which will provide indigenous children with decent accommodation while attending high school.



Plan of the boarding school



Justin Assomogi, Director General of the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples at the Ministry of Justice of Congo, visiting the construction site of the boarding school.

2. HYGIENE, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT

The strategic objective regarding hygiene, health, and the environment was to ensure that all our students and their families remained in good health throughout the year. Thus, the following actions were carried out:

Cases of Diseases



This year, we recorded 41 cases of illnesses distributed as follows: one case of Covid, one case of sudden death, and 39 cases of malaria. One indigenous student tested positive for Covid in Brazzaville and received free treatment through our partnership with AgoraCare.

The father of a high school student had a crisis in the indigenous community of Lefoutou in the Komono district. Without going to the hospital, the community thought it was an epileptic crisis and attempted traditional treatment. Unfortunately, the patient did not survive. Everything happened within a day, and we did not have time to intervene.

The 39 cases of malaria were identified among 5 students in Brazzaville, 6 high school students in Sibiti, the mother of a student in Sibiti, and 27 in the villages. Except for the care provided by AgoraCare, all expenses were covered by us.



Malaria test on a high school student

DEWORMING CAMPAIGN

We conducted deworming campaigns using Mebendazole in the indigenous communities of Bambama, Leweme, and Lefoutou.

This operation aimed to prevent deaths caused by an excess of intestinal worms, especially among children. Everyone aged 1 year and older was dewormed.

This operation took place in partnership with the biological analysis laboratory AGORAcare, with the support of the Integrated Health Center of Bambama.



Let us remember that this campaign is launched every year in memory of Azaria, a 5-year-old indigenous child who passed away in 2017 due to an excess of intestinal worms. Since then, we have decided that no family in these communities should endure this anymore.

According to the WHO, intestinal worms infest 1.5 billion of the world's poorest and most marginalized people. We are glad to be a part of the solution in the indigenous community of Leweme through our deworming program.



DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHING

As every year, we distributed clothing to indigenous children and families.

The purpose of this activity is to enable indigenous populations to dress with dignity, thus preventing stigmatization in schools and villages.

This year's particularity is that we conducted two clothing distribution campaigns.



CONSTRUCTION OF A WELL IN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF YOUWA



We were informed about a conflict over a water source between the indigenous community of Youwa and the Bantu populations. Several indigenous children were assaulted by the Bantu while they were fetching water. As the situation became increasingly recurrent, we sent a team to the field to understand and find a solution.

Following this mission, we decided to build a well to provide water to the indigenous community. This well ultimately resolved the conflict.





WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

On the occasion of World Environment Day, our team from Brazzaville joined the Green Crown committee for a tree-planting activity in Yie (45km from Brazzaville).

The planting involved two types of saplings: *Artemisia Annu* and *Moringa*, both species known for their significant health benefits, such as their miraculous properties against malaria, high blood pressure, and more.

It was an opportunity for our team to reaffirm our support for biodiversity conservation.



The Espace Opoko team in Brazzaville with the Embassy of Belgium in Congo.





ARGUMENTATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN CONGO

We took part in advocating for environmental protection in Congo alongside the Green Crown committee. During these advocacy sessions, we discussed issues concerning environmental education, the enforcement of laws governing this field, awareness campaigns, and the organization of green space days in our country.

This activity allowed us to compile a list of actions we can undertake within indigenous communities concerning environmental protection.



Vanessa Nzouba,
Representative from Espace Opoko
Brazzaville speaking during the
advocacy session.

3. Activities with the United Nations System

The strategic objective here was to engage in activities with United Nations agencies not only to learn best practices but also to share our own experiences. To achieve these goals, we participated in the following activities:



Participation in the visit of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Lékoumou

We were invited to the visit of Chris Mburu, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Congo in Lékoumou. We had the opportunity to present our activities and the outcomes in favor of indigenous peoples in the Lékoumou department. Our aim was to engage in the various programs led by the United Nations in Lékoumou to significantly enhance the living conditions of indigenous populations. Despite not having received funding from the United Nations thus far, we remain open to collaboration to improve the living conditions of these long-marginalized peoples.





PARTICIPATION IN THE KICKOFF WORKSHOP FOR THE PROJECT STRENGTHENING THE ADAPTIVE CAPACITIES TO CLIMATE CHANGE OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES LIVING IN THE CONGO RIVER BASIN.

We participated from February 22nd to 23rd, 2022, alongside the World Food Programme and the Ministry of Environment of Congo-Brazzaville, in the kickoff workshop for the Project Strengthening the Adaptive Capacities to Climate Change of Vulnerable Communities Living in the Congo River Basin.

Even though it focused only on Likuala, Sangha, and Bouenza, this workshop provided us with the opportunity to understand certain challenges for our future projects. This enables us to face the future with confidence.



School is the place where young people put into practice essential leadership skills, analyze social and cultural norms within their communities, and develop civic engagement abilities that enable them to make an impact in their community. That's why we invest in the education of indigenous peoples.

EXCHANGE MEETING WITH MRS. GEORGIA PERGOLINI

On the occasion of the visit to the Republic of Congo by Mrs. Georgia Pergolini, Focal Point of the 'Adaptation Fund Project in Congo' at the World Food Programme (WFP) headquarters in Rome, Italy, we participated in an in-person and online exchange meeting.

The meeting focused on the strategies and activities planned within the framework of the 'Capacity Strengthening Project for Climate Change Adaptation of Vulnerable Communities living in the Congo River Basin.'

This is a \$10 million investment project that will be implemented over 5 years in the Republic of Congo, with the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and the Congo Basin (MEDDBC) serving as the executing entity.

Although the project does not include indigenous peoples from the Lékoumou department, we expressed the wish that the World Food Programme finds a way to support the education of indigenous peoples in that department.



PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC REFLECTION WORKSHOPS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM



We participated in strategic reflection workshops with the United Nations system in Congo regarding the program to improve indigenous populations' access to social protection in the Lékoumou department.

Although not among the organizations that received allocated funding for this, our communications officer seized the opportunity to share our experience in keeping indigenous children in school. It's an experience that has borne fruit for 10 years and that any organization can replicate to provide indigenous children with the same opportunities for academic success.



PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAINING ON THE COMMUNITY APPROACH TO A SANITIZED VILLAGE IN SIBITI.

We participated in a training session on the community approach to a sanitized village in Sibiti. The training, conducted by UNICEF Congo Brazzaville in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Hydraulics, aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of poor sanitation.

Thanks to this training, we acquired the necessary tools to reach out to multiple communities and relay the message, enabling them to protect themselves.

The risks we face when allowing flies to freely move between open toilets, our households, and sometimes our food are significant. It's essential to take appropriate measures to reduce the risks of contamination.



4- Capacity Strengthening and Operations of Our Teams

As the subtitle suggests, the strategic objective of this section was to enhance the capabilities of our various teams to improve our interventions and our overall efficiency, as well as strengthen the cohesion of our professional group. To achieve these goals, the following activities were carried out:

Capacity Building for Our Teams

In our commitment to continually improve our results, we spare no effort in sending members of our various teams for training. In line with this, Alex Jesse Ndzoyi Nzambi and Mexi Ndingoué from our Brazzaville office participated in an Entrepreneurial Capacity Building program.

The training was provided by the NGO The Burning Fire Association. It equipped our team with the necessary tools to manage and launch new projects for the indigenous populations of the Republic of Congo.



TRAINING IN AGRI-FOOD PROCESSING

As the years go by, our results demand more resources to support our students at every stage of their education and to expand our activities into other communities across the country.

In line with this, thanks to our partnership with the Yali Congo Association, members of our teams in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire received training in agro-food processing.

The training covered areas such as maize, soybean, and rice processing into high-quality flour and porridge rich in nutritional value; soap making including bars and liquid soap; processing and preservation of fruit and vegetable juices; as well as manufacturing and preservation of fruit juices.

This training enabled us to initially launch the production of a yogurt brand named Opoko in Pointe-Noire. The proceeds from this product will provide us with some resources to contribute to the nutrition of indigenous students.

We are also considering the launch of other products.



Photo of the Pointe Noire team during the training



Photo of the Brazzaville team

CELEBRATION OF SOLIDARITY DAY

We established a solidarity day for all members of our organization two years ago. This day is observed on December 11th. In fact, on December 11th, 2020, we lost a significant supporter of our Organization. This was Father Rufun Mbani, who tragically passed away in an accident while transporting stones for his construction site for a church, a training center, and a hospital in the Bambama district.

Depuis, nous avons décidé de mener une action de solidarité en sa mémoire. Ainsi, le 22 décembre 2021, nous avons célébré notre première journée avec les orphelinats à Brazzaville et Pointe Noire. Nous avons acheté de la nourriture, fait la cuisine, nettoyer les toilettes et les chambres avant de manger et jouer avec les enfants.



An undergraduate student from the University of Virginia (USA) completed a three-month internship with us.

Maggie Zibas is a third-year American student at the University of Virginia, majoring in French and Drama. Her studies focus on issues that hold particular resonance in contemporary African life, such as oral literature and its impact on other art forms, key aspects of French colonial politics, and its legacy in Africa: language, politics, and education.

With skills in digital design, communication, organization, and more, Maggie strongly believes in the importance of education for all. She completed a three-month internship with us to provide indigenous children in the Republic of Congo the opportunity to learn and grow through education.

This internship is part of the UVA Global Internships program at the University of Virginia, managed by a unit within the Education Abroad Division of the University's International Studies Office.



Opening of the Pointe-Noire Office



The building housing our Pointe-Noire office

In order to expand our activities throughout the country, we deemed it necessary to establish a representation in Pointe-Noire. This office's mission is to forge partnerships with local NGOs and businesses to benefit from their expertise in specific areas.

It will also enable us to operate in the Pointe-Noire and Kouilou departments. Our Pointe-Noire office is located at: 30 Georges Dumand Avenue, downtown, La Baraka district, Pointe-Noire.

OUR TEAM HAS GROWN.



We were delighted to welcome new members to our teams in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville.

Together, we will amplify our efforts to provide indigenous children with equal opportunities for academic success.



Ngapene



Leonche





"IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, WALK ALONE, BUT IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, LET'S WALK TOGETHER."

IV. PARTNERSHIPS

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

IV. PARTNERSHIPS

The strategic objective here is to build partnerships with other organizations that will enable us to achieve the same goals. This year, we have signed and renewed the following partnerships:

WE JOINED THE REPALEAC.

We signed our membership with the Network of Indigenous and Local Peoples for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems.

This is a sub-regional civil society organization and a specialized network of the Central African Dense and Humid Forests Conference (CEFDHAC), a platform that brings together Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working for good governance and sustainable forest management in Central Africa under the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC).

Since its inception in 2003 in Kigali, Rwanda, REPALEAC and its active national networks in Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic,

The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Chad, and Rwanda are engaged in actions aimed at defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) as well as the sustainability of the ecosystems to which they are intimately linked, and upon which their survival depends.

Our membership in this network not only allows us to expand our action at the national level but also enables us to benefit from the experiences of other organizations in the sub-region addressing issues concerning indigenous populations.

This marks the beginning of a long journey aimed at achieving our main goal: providing equal opportunities for academic success to indigenous children in the Republic of Congo.



Photo taken after the signing.



RENEWAL OF PARTNERSHIP WITH AGORACARE.

We have renewed our partnership with the medical analysis laboratory AgoraCare. This partnership enables the healthcare coverage of indigenous students enrolled at Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville, as well as all members of our team. This coverage includes medical consultations and medical analyses. It was through this partnership that the student Paul Makita was able to recover from Covid.





"MAKING A STRATEGY BEAUTIFUL
IS A FACT, BUT DON'T FORGET TO
LOOK AT THE RESULT."
- WINSTON CHURCHILL

V. OUR RESULTS

Program to Support
the School
Education of
Indigenous Peoples
in the Republic of
Congo

V. Our results

1 Dropout Rate

The strategic objective regarding the dropout rate was to reduce it to 0% compared to last year's rate of 7.92%. Unlike previous years, we have not recorded any dropouts this year. Therefore, the dropout rate stands at 0%. The strategic objective has been achieved.



2 Academic Results

The strategic objective concerning academic results was to raise the success rate close to 100%. Unfortunately, this year's success rate stands at 49.36%. Compared to last year's success rates of 50%, we have dropped by one percentage point, pending the results of the BEPC and the ENSO competition. Here are the results broken down by educational level:

Primary School Results

This year, we enrolled 117 indigenous students in 4 primary schools. These include Liele Nkama and Leweme primary schools in the Bambama district, Lefoutou primary school in the Komono district, and Moussanda primary school in the Sibiti district.

Out of the 117 students, 67 progressed to the next grade, resulting in a success rate of 57.26% at the primary school level. Our highest success rate this year was recorded at Lefoutou primary school, with a success rate of 55%. Our top-performing students at the primary school level are as follows:

Secondary School

This year, we had 12 indigenous students enrolled in high school. The results did not meet our expectations. Out of the twelve, one took the BEPC exam. Among the remaining 11, only 3 progressed to the next grade.

High School

It's at the high school level where we had very good results. Out of our seven high school students in the 7th year, only one repeated the class. The other 6 progressed to the next grade, and one among them passed the Baccalaureate exam. This results in a success rate of 85.71%.

National School of Water and Forestry

Vanessa and Dorile are the first high school students in the history of the Bambama district. After spending two years at the high school, they took the entrance exam for the National School of Water and Forestry (ENEF). This year, they completed their training. The next step is to find internships for them in companies and initiate the process for their integration into the civil service. If this process is successful, they will be the first indigenous civil servants in the history of the Bambama district.



Vanessa posing in her ENEF uniform.

Summary Table

N	Écoles	Inscrits	Présents	Abandons	Admis	Échoués
01	Leweme	30	30	0	15	15
02	Lefoutou	52	52	0	29	23
03	Liele Nkama	35	35	0	17	18
04	Sibiti	12	12	0	5	7
05	Secondaire	12	12	0	3	9
06	Lycee	8	8	0	6	1
07	Université	7	7	0	RND	RND
08	ENEF	2	2	0	2	0
Total		158	158	0	77	73

NRN: Results not Available

"At Espace Opoko, we ensure that all indigenous girls of school-going age are enrolled and pursue a normal education without discrimination."

Our prides of the year 2022



Ramane passed the Baccalaureate in 2022, making him the first indigenous high school graduate in the history of the Bambama district.



Vanessa has completed her training at the National School of Water and Forestry. She is yet to undergo an internship, and the process for her integration into the civil service needs to be initiated. If successful, she will be the first indigenous civil servant in the history of her community.



Dorile has completed his training at the National School of Water and Forestry. He still needs to undergo an internship, and the process for his integration into the civil service needs to be initiated. If successful, he will be the first indigenous civil servant in the history of his community.



After experiencing a gap year due to lack of support, Ordela managed to advance to the next grade, emerging as the top student in our secondary school program.



Brice is in the CP2 class. He finished first in his class with an average of 7.67/10, making him the 4th best student in the primary school of Lefoutou.



Chirac Mandjo is a member of our team. As a civil engineer, he designed the boarding school plan and oversees the construction work.

Our prides of the year 2022



Rebeka is our top high school student this year. She is advancing to the A4 final year with an annual average of 12/20.



Sagesse is the second indigenous girl in the history of the Bambama district. She is the first indigenous high school student in Bambama to reach the final year without repeating a grade.



Kipono is our top student this year at Bambama Primary School. He is advancing to CP2 with an annual average of 6.63/10.



VII. Difficulties Encountered

The increase in enrollment at each educational level demands more work and resources. Thus, during this year, we encountered several difficulties:

1 Insufficient Funding

As in previous years, we were unable to raise the necessary funds to execute all the projects outlined in our action plan. Consequently, the deworming program was carried out only once; the food distribution program did not take place in all communities; the mentoring program for high school students to improve academic performance was effective only for the final year student preparing for the Baccalaureate; the construction project for the literacy center in Bambama did not commence, and so on.

2 Les pannes avec le bus scolaire

Le mauvais état de la route a usé le bus scolaire mis à la disposition des enfants qui parcourent plus de 30 km deux fois par semaine pour aller à l'école. Nous avons dépensé le peu de ressources à notre disposition dans les réparations du véhicule. Le mieux serait de trouver un deuxième véhicule pour limiter la distance parcourue par la première voiture.

3 Transportation Challenges

We had more interventions in schools this year compared to previous years. Whenever an issue is reported at a school, our teams must promptly respond to resolve it to prevent children from being forced to leave school. Typically, our teams rent motorcycles to reach the villages. This year, it was very challenging to rent motorcycles. Owners consistently charged higher prices, assuming we had ample funds. For the next year, the ideal scenario would be for us to purchase our own motorcycle for these urgent trips.

4 The Election Period

During the election period, certain politicians, assuming we harbored political ambitions in the villages, went to indigenous communities and falsely claimed that we were receiving government funds to take care of the indigenous populations. This created a false representation of our budget allocation and actions. Consequently, our teams were repeatedly confronted in indigenous communities. To resolve the situation, we sent indigenous high school and college students working with our teams to explain to parents how we finance our projects. Subsequently, our teams explained that we had never received anything from the government.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

This year, we learned that leading such a project relying solely on donation promises isn't feasible. Several organizations pledged to support us; unfortunately, nothing materialized. That's why we've decided to organize ourselves to launch income-generating activities to ensure the sustainability of the progress we've achieved so far.

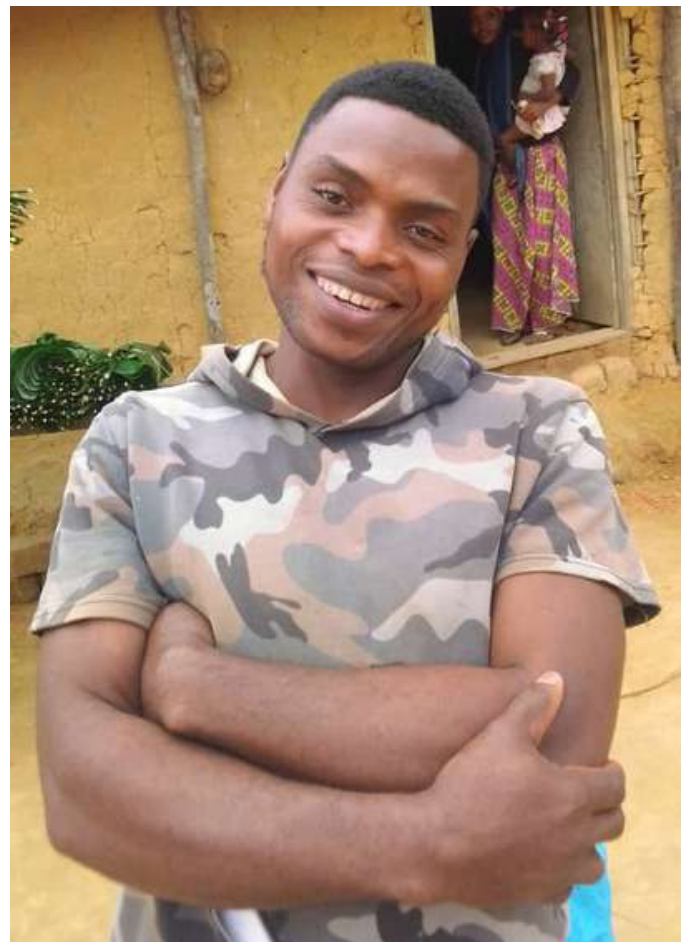


IX. PERSPECTIVES FOR 2023

For the academic year 2022-2023, we will initiate the opening of the first building for the indigenous high school students' dormitory in Lékoumou. Following that, we will continue the construction of the second building. Additionally, we will commence an adult literacy program with the indigenous populations in Sibiti.

Furthermore, we will launch the construction of a literacy center in the Bambama district. Concerning indigenous students at the university, we will continue advocating with authorized institutions for them to receive their university scholarships and secure accommodations on campus.

Finally, we will ensure the provision of supplementary classes to enhance the academic performance of all indigenous high school students in Sibiti.



HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

- You can contribute directly on our website: www.espaceopoko.org
- You can use our mobile money account to transfer funds +242 06 928 88 13
- You can donate school kits for indigenous children.
- You can donate clothes for indigenous peoples.
- You can donate computers and printers to help revive the computer office.
- You can assist us in paying volunteer teachers for indigenous children.
- You can spread the word about us to your friends and family.

PLEASE SCAN TO MAKE A DONATION.



Comment peut-on sortir de la pauvreté Générationnelle ? est un outil de développement personnel qui offre les clefs de succès aux jeunes. Ce livre décrit avec une pertinence qui rappelle les plus grands théoriciens de l'économie libérale, la pauvreté générationnelle dans la société africaine en général et dans les communautés rurales de la République du Congo, en particulier. L'auteur y expose les acquis économique-culturels positifs tout en les améliorant par des vertus sociales et des valeurs d'éthique. Par ailleurs, Averty Ndzoyi décrit sans prendre de gants les tares qui bloquent le développement d'un peuple qui peuvent être environnementaux, culturels, individuels, collectifs. Pour résoudre l'énigme du développement, il sied par conséquent de traiter le problème à la base. Ce livre est un chef-d'œuvre qui honore l'intelligence de la jeunesse africaine.



Averty Ndzoyi est à la base communicateur des entreprises formé à l'Institut des Hautes études de Management et Institut Supérieur de Technologie Industrielles (IHEM-ISTI) en République du Congo. Fervent défenseur du leadership servant formé à l'université de la Virginie (UVA) aux USA, Averty Ndzoyi est le fondateur d'Espace Opoko, une organisation de la société civile congolaise qui soutient l'éducation des populations autochtones. Actuellement responsable de la communication de l'entreprise Canadienne Qualité Extérieure, Monsieur Ndzoyi est également Mandela Fellow 2015, sélectionné pour participer au programme YALI du Président Obama pour les jeunes leaders africains. Il est membre de l'Institut Mandela pour les Études de développement (MINDS).

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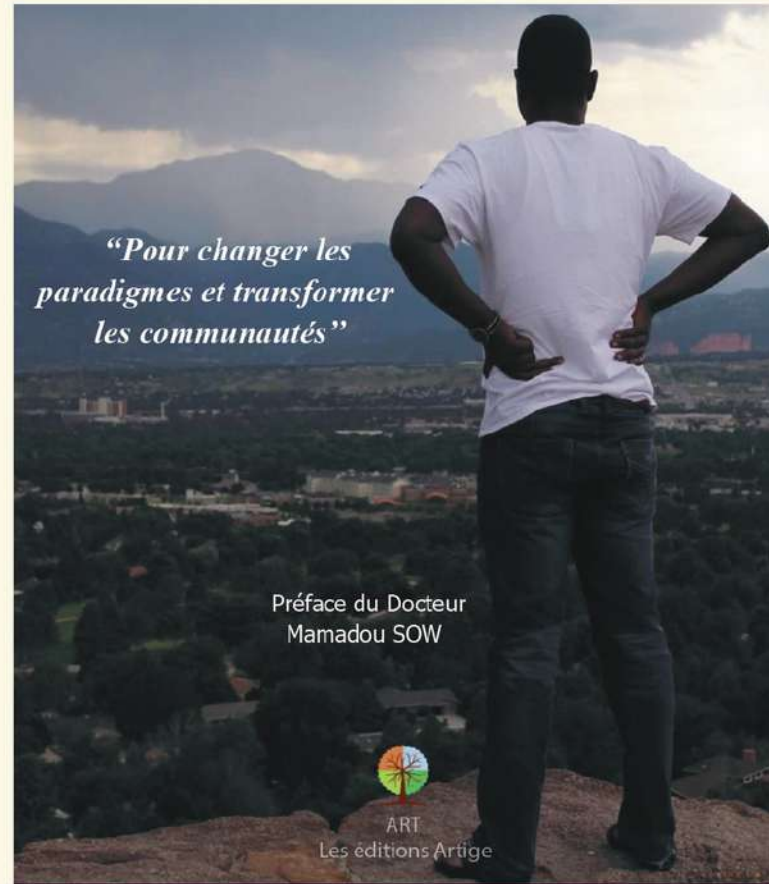
Les éditions Artige

Comment peut-on sortir de la pauvreté générationnelle ?

Averty D. NDZOYI

AVERTY D. NDZOYI

COMMENT PEUT-ON SORTIR DE LA PAUVRETÉ GÉNÉRATIONNELLE ?



“Pour changer les paradigmes et transformer les communautés”

Préface du Docteur
Mamadou SOW



ART
Les éditions Artige

After serving the most underprivileged for 10 years and traversing the world in search of solutions to the issues facing impoverished communities in Africa, our President Averty Ndzoyi has just published 'How to Break the Cycle of Generational Poverty.

It's a self-help book that highlights paradigms, cultures, and customs that have kept many African communities, including indigenous populations, in poverty for generations. It also offers step-by-step solutions to break free from certain constraints and escape poverty.

TO PURCHASE THE BOOK IN CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE,
A CONTACT NUMBER IS AVAILABLE: +242 06 937 9923.



Conclusion

With our various teams, we have given our best, as we do every year, to enable 158 indigenous children to access education. Our teams have been mobilized at all levels to prevent any school dropouts. Consequently, we have succeeded in reducing the dropout rate to 0%. This year marks the 10th anniversary of our organization. Therefore, it was necessary for us to organize ourselves to ensure the sustainability of our activities. To achieve this, we have launched an extensive construction program to provide decent accommodation for all indigenous high school students in the city of Sibiti. In the effort to expand our activities to other departments in the country, we have established an office in Pointe-Noire, in addition to our office in Brazzaville. The teams in these two offices are working to establish partnerships with other organizations and institutions to allow us to replicate our activities in other departments of the country. Once again, this year presents us with several challenges to overcome. Hence, we are open to all types of partnerships that can help us achieve our ultimate goal: to provide equal opportunities for academic success to indigenous children.