

# ANNUAL REPORT



2025



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## **2025 Annual Report – Espace Opoko**

Towards an Inclusive Future for Indigenous Peoples

Education, Health, Culture, and Solidarity  
in Service of Indigenous Communities in the Republic of  
Congo

Non-Governmental Organization Supporting  
the School Education of Indigenous Children

Year: 2025

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Espace Opoko has been working since 2012 to promote education, dignity, and the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Republic of Congo.

Through an inclusive and community-based approach, the organization supports Indigenous children from primary school through university, while also addressing key areas such as health, culture, environmental awareness, and community empowerment.

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EDUCATION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE, OUR PRIORITY

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## Message from the President

Dear partners, friends, and community members,

The year 2025 was, for Espace Opoko, a year of resilience, consolidation, and tangible impact.

In a context marked by financial uncertainty and significant logistical challenges, we made a clear choice: to stand firm and remain fully committed to our mission.

In 2025, a total of 1,652 Indigenous children were supported from primary education through university. Families regained hope, young girls rebuilt their confidence through health and hygiene programs, and students were able to continue their studies under more dignified conditions.

This year will also remain a historic milestone. For the first time, a young Indigenous participant from our program addressed the United Nations, carrying the voice of communities that have long been marginalized. This symbolic moment confirms that our local action is now part of a broader global advocacy effort for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

At the same time, we strengthened our organizational foundations through institutional restructuring, the establishment of local offices—particularly in Mokeko—and the development of strategic partnerships. Our objective is clear: to build a sustainable, credible organization that is firmly rooted in the communities we serve.

None of this would have been possible without the trust of our partners, the generosity of our donors, and the remarkable resilience of Indigenous communities. We extend our deepest gratitude to all of them.

As we enter 2026, we face new challenges, but we do so with a strong conviction: together, we can continue to transform lives.

Because investing in the education of Indigenous Peoples is an investment in the future of the Republic of Congo.

Averty Ndzoyi  
President – Espace Opoko  
January 2026



Scan the QR code to watch  
the 2025 impact summary video.



## I. Organizational Overview

### 1. Organizational Overview

#### 1.1 Mission, Vision, and Values

Espace Opoko is a Congolese civil society non-governmental organization committed to promoting education, dignity, and the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Republic of Congo.

##### Mission

Espace Opoko supports Indigenous children from primary education through university by addressing the structural barriers that hinder their academic success, including poverty, geographic isolation, discrimination, malnutrition, health challenges, and the lack of adequate educational infrastructure.

The organization also works to promote health, culture, environmental awareness, and civic engagement within Indigenous communities.

##### Vision

A Republic of Congo where Indigenous Peoples have access to inclusive and quality education, become agents of their own development, and participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of the country, including at the international level.

##### Values

- Equity: Ensuring equal opportunities for all children
- Dignity: Placing people at the center of every action
- Community Engagement: Acting with and for communities
- Transparency: Upholding accountability, integrity, and responsible reporting
- Solidarity: Building bridges across communities, partners, and generations

## 2. History and Organizational Development in 2025

Founded in 2012, Espace Opoko emerged in response to a critical challenge: the near absence of academic success among Indigenous children, particularly in national examinations. Since its inception, the organization has progressively developed a comprehensive support model addressing education, health, nutrition, housing, culture, and advocacy.

The year 2025 marked a decisive milestone in the evolution of Espace Opoko. It was characterized by a significant expansion of intervention areas and an institutional restructuring aimed at strengthening governance and organizational effectiveness.

This period also saw the opening of new local offices, notably in Mokeko (Sangha Department), the implementation of flagship initiatives such as the Ô Yika program supported by the Embassy of France and the Kouvousongou project, as well as an unprecedented level of international representation through the participation of an Indigenous youth at the United Nations.

These advances reflect Espace Opoko's commitment to consolidating its achievements while expanding the scale and impact of its actions.

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## 3. Organizational Structure and Governance

Espace Opoko is grounded in a participatory and decentralized governance model, designed to ensure close engagement with beneficiary communities and responsive decision-making.

### Governance Bodies

- General Assembly: the highest decision-making body
- National Executive Board: responsible for strategic orientation and operational oversight
- National Coordination: in charge of program implementation
- Local and Community-Based Offices: responsible for field execution and close monitoring of activities

The institutional restructuring carried out in March 2025 strengthened internal capacities, clarified roles and responsibilities, and further professionalized project management and organizational operations.



*Photo caption : Amanda Vouma (left), Espace Opoko Representative in Brazzaville, and Vanessa Nzouba (right), National Coordinator*

## 4. Key Figures – 2025

- 1,652 Indigenous children supported
- 350 new beneficiaries enrolled through the Ô Yika Program
- 21 Indigenous students supported at the university level
- 31 Indigenous communities reached
- Multiple departments covered, including Lékoumou, Sangha, Kéni-Alima, and Brazzaville
- Hundreds of women and girls reached through health and hygiene programs
- Strengthened national and international partnerships
- 

## 5. Areas of Intervention by Department and District

### Lékoumou Department

#### Sibiti District

- Henri Bounda (Engambele, Tangayi)
- Moussanda (Youwa)
- Indo
- Mapati
- Mambouana

#### Komono District

- Moutouala
- Vouka
- Kingani
- Douakani
- Moussahou
- Dibadiba
- L'Inde

#### Bambama District

- Bambama centre
- Leweme

#### Zanaga District

- Bandzié
- Malima
- Zanaga centre
- Obili
- Kengué
- Tongo

### Nkéni-Alima Department

#### Gamboma District

- BENÉ Gamboma
- BENÉ Eniamié
- Ekouélé

#### Sangha Department

#### Mokeko District

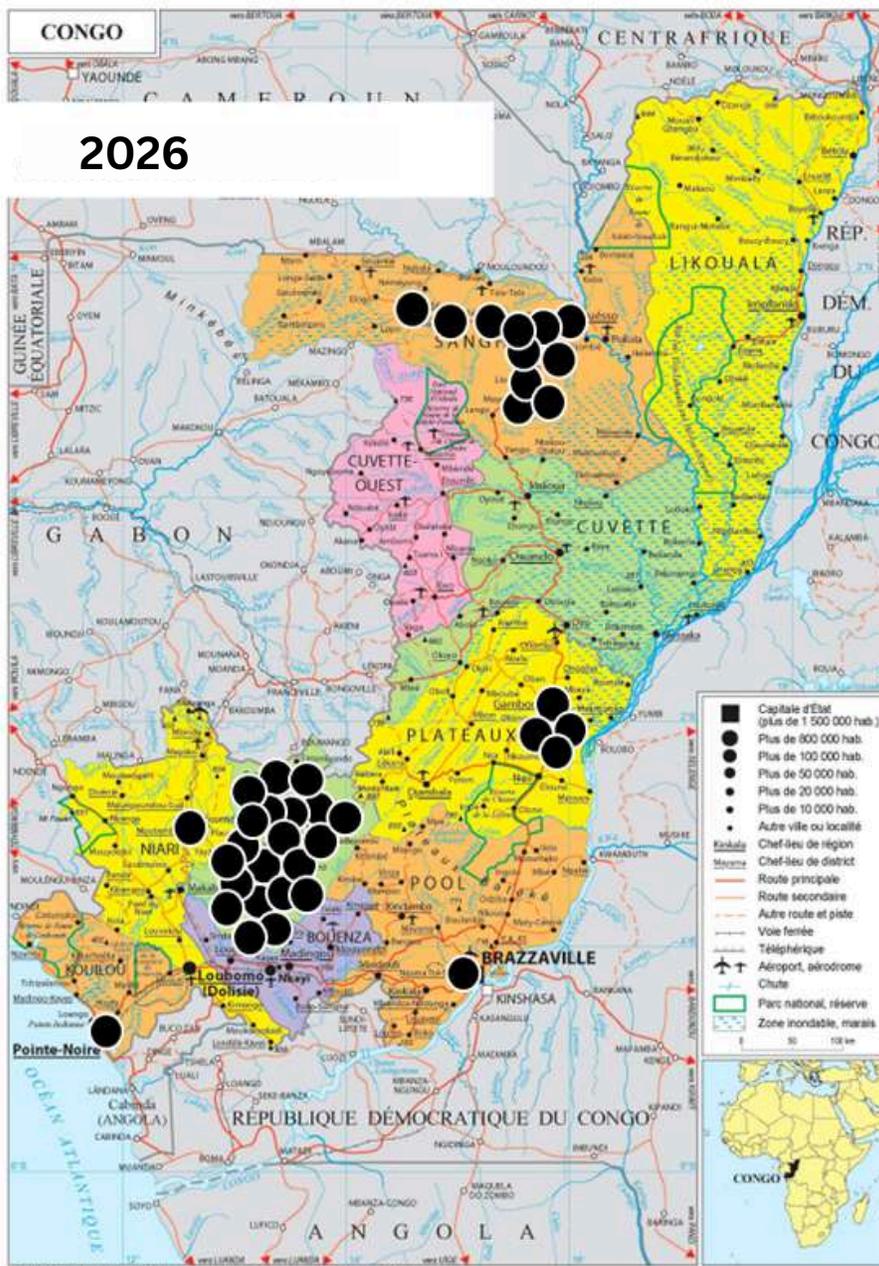
- Mokeko centre
- Makola
- Attention
- Ibonga
- Moyoye
- Ketta
- Seka

### Brazzaville Department

- Brazzaville



Since its establishment in 2012, Espace Opoko has pursued a strategy of gradual expansion to reach Indigenous communities across the country. Starting with a single community in its early years, the organization now works with 31 Indigenous communities, reflecting steady growth and a sustained commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities.



# II. ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE YEAR





## Education and School Support

Education lies at the core of Espace Opoko's mission.

In 2025, the organization implemented targeted interventions to ensure sustained and effective access to education for Indigenous children. These actions were structured around three key pillars: access to education, improvement of learning conditions, and continuity of educational pathways.

### Access to Education – Distribution of School Kits

One of the main barriers to school enrollment and retention for Indigenous children remains the lack of basic educational supplies. To address this challenge, Espace Opoko conducted several school kit distribution campaigns aimed at enabling children to enroll in school and remain in the education system under dignified and supportive conditions.

Between October 2024 and January 2025, and throughout the 2025 school year, Espace Opoko:

- distributed 1,052 school kits, later expanding the initiative to reach 1,652 children;
- intervened in multiple localities;
- enrolled new children from communities that had not previously been covered by the program.

Each school kit contained essential learning materials including notebooks, pens, and basic supplies necessary for children to participate fully in classroom activities.

### As a result of these distributions:

- many children were able to return to school or enroll for the first time;
- families were relieved of costs they were unable to bear;
- school attendance was strengthened from the very beginning of the academic year.

These actions often represent a critical first step toward school enrollment and long-term academic success for the Indigenous children supported by Espace Opoko.

## Observed Impact

- Significant increase in school enrollment across several localities
- Reduction in school dropout rates linked to extreme poverty
- Improved school attendance, particularly at the beginning of the academic year

## Rehabilitation of School Infrastructure

Recognizing that the quality of learning is also shaped by the school environment, Espace Opoko implemented targeted actions to rehabilitate educational infrastructure.

In 2025

- 153 school desks were rehabilitated in schools located in Moussanda and Henri-Bounda.

- These rehabilitation works directly benefited 213 Indigenous students,
- Local communities were actively involved in the implementation of the activities.

This initiative contributed to improving learning environments and strengthening students' motivation to remain in school and pursue their education.

**Before the intervention:**  
*children were attending classes seated directly on the floor.*

**After the intervention:**  
*all students are now seated at proper school desks, significantly improving learning conditions.*





## Support for National Examinations

The year 2025 was marked by strengthened support for Indigenous students enrolled in examination classes, with the aim of removing the administrative, academic, and logistical barriers that often hinder their participation in national examinations.

In addition to academic follow-up, we took concrete measures to ensure that each student had a complete and compliant examination file.

### Actions Implemented

The actions carried out included:

- Administrative assistance to support the submission of examination files for the CEPE, BEPC, and Baccalaureate national examinations;
- Provision of free identity photographs for all students registered in examination classes.

- Facilitation of birth certificate issuance for students who did not previously have official civil registration documents;
- Production of color photocopies of birth certificates to meet the administrative requirements of examination centers;
- Organization of remedial and guided study sessions for students in CM2, Grade 9 (3e), and final-year secondary classes;
- Close academic monitoring, provided by local teams and community-based facilitators.

These measures helped prevent administrative exclusion and ensured that students were able to submit complete examination files within the required deadlines.



## Accommodation and Protection of Displaced Students

For children forced to leave their villages due to the absence of local secondary schools, Espace Opoko continued its efforts to provide education-linked housing solutions.

In 2025, housing units in Mokeko and the boarding school in Sibiti enabled the organization to support 52 Indigenous children. Espace Opoko ensured comprehensive academic, nutritional, and health monitoring for these students, while maintaining close collaboration with their families throughout the process.

This integrated approach aims to ensure continuity in educational pathways while protecting children from the risks of school dropout and urban vulnerability.



*Espace Opoko Boarding School for Indigenous High School Students in Sibiti*

## Community Mobilization and Solidarity-Based Fundraising

In response to the growing number of children supported, Espace Opoko launched several fundraising appeals and community mobilization campaigns to prepare for the 2025–2026 school year.

### Objective

- Ensure the distribution of 1,652 school kits;
- Maintain support for students already enrolled in the program;
- Raise awareness among communities and partners about the urgency of educational needs.

These initiatives strengthened collective solidarity around the education of Indigenous children.



Former beneficiaries of the program, now employed as public sector civil servants, actively contributed to the school kit collection by donating notebooks and pens. Their engagement illustrates the success of Espace Opoko's model of solidarity, continuity, and intergenerational responsibility.

## Testimonials and Pathway Transformation

Beyond the figures, Espace Opoko’s educational interventions have led to meaningful life trajectory changes. Students such as Divin and Boundzanga Maïga embody the human impact of the program—returning to school, rebuilding self-confidence, and envisioning a more promising future.

“Before, I thought about dropping out of school. Today, I want to continue my education and become someone who can give back to my community.”

— Testimony of Boundzanga Maïga



*Boundzanga Maïga, Indigenous student supported by the Espace Opoko program*



“Without the support of Espace Opoko, I would no longer be in school today. Now, I believe in my future and I want to succeed in order to support my family.”

— Testimony of Beauchancie, Indigenous high school student supported by the program

## Summary – Education and School Support

In 2025, Espace Opoko’s education-focused interventions contributed to:

- expanded access to schooling for more than 1,652 Indigenous children;
- improved learning conditions in several educational facilities;
- strengthened academic achievement and continuity of education;
- reinforced community trust in education as a key driver of social transformation.



## Health and Hygiene – Promoting Dignity and Prevention

In addition to its education-focused interventions, Espace Opoko considers health and hygiene as essential drivers of academic success and human dignity.

In 2025, the organization strengthened its community health interventions, with a particular focus on Indigenous women and girls, who are often exposed to specific forms of discrimination and vulnerability.

As part of the Ô Yika Project, several awareness-raising workshops were conducted between July and August 2025 in multiple locations, including Sibiti, Bandzié, and Brazzaville.

These workshops addressed:

- personal and menstrual hygiene;
- prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs);
- combating taboos and discrimination related to women's health;
- the role of hygiene in academic success and self-esteem.

The sessions were delivered using a participatory approach, encouraging open dialogue and allowing messages to be tailored to local cultural contexts and lived realities.



## Distribution of Hygiene Kits

To translate awareness-raising efforts into concrete action, Espace Opoko distributed hygiene kits including:

- sanitary pads;
- soap;
- basic personal hygiene products.

These distributions addressed urgent needs while contributing to a reduction in school absenteeism among girls, particularly absenteeism linked to menstruation.



## Awareness-Raising Against Discrimination and School Dropout

Health-related activities also incorporated a social awareness component aimed at:

- combating stigma and discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls;
- preventing school dropout linked to poverty, early pregnancy, and health-related challenges;
- encouraging dialogue among youth, families, and community leaders.

These initiatives strengthened the collective understanding of the interconnected relationship between health, dignity, and education, reinforcing a holistic approach to student retention and well-being.

## Strengthening Partnerships – Membership in POSCO

In May 2025, Espace Opoko officially became a member of the Congolese Civil Society Organizations Platform for Health (POSCO), thereby strengthening its integration within civil society networks committed to promoting the rights and well-being of vulnerable populations.

This membership contributes to:

- strengthening the organization's institutional credibility;
- facilitating synergies with other community health stakeholders;
- improving coordination of field-based interventions.



## Clothing Distribution – Strengthening the Dignity of Indigenous Families

As part of our comprehensive approach to supporting Indigenous communities, we organized clothing distributions for Indigenous families living in vulnerable conditions.

This initiative aimed to address essential needs that are often overlooked but play a decisive role in the well-being and dignity of beneficiaries. For many families, the lack of appropriate clothing constitutes an additional barrier to children’s school enrollment, regular attendance, and social integration.

Through these distributions, we sought to relieve families’ immediate constraints, improve children’s living conditions, and enable them to attend school under more dignified circumstances—particularly during sensitive periods such as the start of the school year or the rainy season.

This initiative is fully aligned with our vision of holistic support that extends beyond the classroom, taking into account the social and economic realities faced by Indigenous communities. It also represents a natural transition toward our long-term empowerment strategy, notably the planned local production of school uniforms, which aims to sustainably reduce reliance on one-off assistance.

By addressing urgent needs while laying the groundwork for durable solutions, we reaffirm our commitment to dignity, inclusion, and resilience for Indigenous families.





## **FLAGSHIP PROJECT 2025 – Ô YIKA**

### **Supporting the Education of Indigenous Children**

In 2025, Espace Opoko implemented the Ô Yika Project, with financial support from the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo under the Kotonga Facility, with the aim of strengthening and expanding its educational support program for Indigenous children.

The project was designed as an extension of the existing program, both in terms of the number of beneficiaries and geographic coverage, with particular attention given to the continuity of school and university pathways.

Over the course of 2025, the Ô Yika Project enabled the organization to:

- enroll 472 new Indigenous students into Espace Opoko's education program, exceeding the initial target of 350 beneficiaries.
- Strengthened support for nutrition, health, and housing for secondary school students and university students relocated for educational purposes;
- Organization of school and university orientation sessions for Grade 9 (3<sup>e</sup>) and final-year secondary students, aimed at preparing them for national examinations and informed academic pathway choices;
- Implementation of three health and hygiene awareness workshops, held in Sibiti, Bandzié (Zanaga District), and Brazzaville, reaching more than 700 women and youth;
- Regular monitoring of partner communities and schools, covering 13 communities and 19 educational institutions.

- Procurement and preparation of school kits in anticipation of the following academic year.

The academic results recorded under the Ô Yika Project demonstrate its tangible impact:

- 237 students progressed to the next grade, including 97 girls;
- **National examination results:**
  - 8 out of 18 students passed the CEPE;
  - 33 out of 70 students passed the BEPC;
  - 14 out of 19 students passed the Baccalaureate;
- **At the university level:**
  - 2 students completed their final year of undergraduate studies;
  - 1 female student advanced to the third year;
  - 3 students are awaiting examination results.

Beyond quantitative results, the Ô Yika Project contributed to improving beneficiaries' living conditions, strengthening academic motivation, and enhancing student perseverance, while also reinforcing family and community engagement around education.

This project represents a major milestone in Espace Opoko's educational action. It enabled an unprecedented increase in the number of beneficiaries within a single year and laid the groundwork for a strategic reflection on the sustainability of achievements, notably through the pursuit of new partnerships and the development of income-generating activities.

*Project Launch in Brazzaville*



*Project Launch in Brazzaville in Sibiti*





## Culture and the Promotion of Indigenous Traditions

As part of the Kouvousoungou Project, Espace Opoko organized a series of cultural workshops in July 2025 in the localities of Bandzié and Madzounou, in partnership with the French artistic organization La Douche du Léopard.

The workshops focused on:

- Indigenous traditional dances;
- ancestral songs and rhythms;
- oral transmission of cultural narratives and symbolic heritage.

The approach promoted respectful co-creation, placing holders of traditional knowledge at the center of the process and recognizing their role as cultural custodians.

### Impact

- Active participation of children, youth, and adults;
- Enhanced recognition and valorization of local knowledge;
- Strengthened cultural exchanges between France and the Republic of Congo.



## Solidarity Days – Memory and Community Engagement

In December 2024, Espace Opoko organized a series of Solidarity Days.

Beyond commemoration, these days aimed to transmit the values of solidarity and community engagement to both members of the organization and program beneficiaries. They sought to reaffirm that solidarity is not defined by financial means, and that supporting others does not require wealth, but rather availability, commitment, and a shared sense of responsibility.



*Community Clean-Up Operation in Bambama*



*at the Cœur Céleste Orphanage in Tchimbamba, Pointe-Noire*



*Community Clean-Up Operation in Sibiti*

These Solidarity Days included:

- community clean-up activities and maintenance of gravesites;
- visits to orphanages and care homes;
- organization of community sports matches;
- moments of reflection and collective remembrance.

These activities contributed to strengthening social cohesion, encouraging civic engagement among youth and beneficiaries, and promoting intergenerational solidarity grounded in shared values of mutual support, collective responsibility, and community care.



*Community Clean-Up Operation in Zanaga*



*with elderly residents of the Poto-Poto Senior Care Home in Brazzaville*

## Promotion of Craftsmanship and Traditional Skills – Sewing Competition

Between June and July 2025, we organized a sewing competition in Bambama, aimed at promoting local craftsmanship and encouraging economic empowerment, particularly among youth and women.

The competition also sought to identify and select skilled local tailors in preparation for a tailoring training program planned for 2026, specifically targeting Indigenous women. This training will support the establishment of a local school uniform production unit, designed to supply Indigenous students enrolled in the Espace Opoko education program.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to ensure the sustainability of the education program, by promoting an inclusive local economy in which school uniforms for Indigenous students will be designed and produced by Indigenous women themselves.

The sewing competition contributed to:

- the recognition and valorization of local talent;
- the transmission of practical, market-relevant skills;
- the emergence of vocational training pathways linked to craftsmanship and artisanal trades;
- the identification of new income-generating opportunities in support of education.



## Environment and Awareness-Raising

Environmental protection and awareness of climate-related challenges are essential components of the sustainable development of Indigenous communities. In 2025, Espace Opoko implemented several educational initiatives aimed at strengthening environmental awareness among children and youth, while recognizing and valuing their role as traditional custodians of the forest.



## Environmental Awareness in School Settings

Between February and June 2025, Espace Opoko conducted 80 environmental awareness workshops across several schools.

Implemented in partnership with Renatura, and with the support of the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo, these workshops addressed:

- local biodiversity;
- forest and ecosystem protection;
- the impacts of climate change;
- waste management and environmental sanitation.

The pedagogical approach emphasized interactive methods, observation, and strong grounding in students' everyday realities, fostering practical learning and sustained environmental responsibility.





## Participation in National Tree Day

In November 2024, Espace Opoko took part in National Tree Day through a series of awareness-raising activities and symbolic tree-planting initiatives conducted in several communities where the organization operates. These actions brought together students, teachers, and members of local communities within an educational and civic-oriented approach.

This participation aimed to demonstrate in concrete terms the importance of trees in environmental preservation, while also highlighting their central role in Indigenous cultures and in maintaining ecological balance.

These activities contributed to:

- strengthening environmental awareness among children and youth;
- reaffirming the cultural, social, and environmental importance of trees within Indigenous communities;
- encouraging the adoption of responsible and sustainable behaviors in support of environmental protection.



### III.

## INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND PARTNERSHIPS

“No lasting impact can be achieved alone; it depends on strong institutions and committed partnerships.”





*During the project management training organized by the Cultural and Cooperation Department of the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo*

## **Institutional Strengthening and Partnerships**

In 2025, Espace Opoko placed particular emphasis on strengthening its organizational structure, professionalizing its practices, and consolidating strategic partnerships in order to ensure the sustainability and credibility of its interventions.

### **Capacity Building and Internal Structuring**

To enhance the effectiveness of its programs, Espace Opoko participated in several capacity-building and training initiatives, particularly in the areas of:

- project management;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- organizational governance;
- strategic planning.

In October 2024, a project management training was organized with the support of Initiative Développement, enabling team members to acquire practical tools to improve the quality and effectiveness of program implementation.

In March 2025, the organization initiated an institutional restructuring process, marked by:

- clearer definition of roles and responsibilities;
- strengthened governance through the National Executive Board;
- improved internal coordination mechanisms.

## Territorial Expansion and New Local Offices

In line with its commitment to proximity and community-centered action, Espace Opoko continued to decentralize its operations.

In 2025:

- a new local office was opened in Mokeko, in the Sangha Department;
- local field offices were strengthened across several areas of intervention;
- enhanced field presence enabled closer monitoring of students, families, and program activities.

This territorial presence has contributed to greater responsiveness and stronger community ownership of the organization's interventions.



Members of our Mokeko office in the Sangha Department

## Institutional and Technical Partnerships

2025 was marked by the strengthening and diversification of Espace Opoko's partnerships, both at the national and international levels.

Key strategic partnerships included:

- the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo, particularly for the financing and technical support of the Ô Yika Project;
- Initiative Développement, for organizational capacity strengthening;
- the United States Forest Service, through support for local scholarships benefiting five students enrolled in our program;
- national and international civil society organizations engaged in education, health, and human rights.

These partnerships enabled the mobilization of essential financial, technical, and human resources required for the effective implementation of program activities.



During the signing of the tripartite partnership agreement between the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo, Initiative Développement (ID), and Espace Opoko.



During the training conducted with Initiative Développement (ID) to strengthen our advocacy for Indigenous children.



## Institutional Strengthening

In 2025, we strengthened our institutional capacities in line with the priorities of French development cooperation, with a focus on organizational structuring, coordination among local stakeholders, and the sustainability of actions benefiting Indigenous peoples. This orientation aims to enhance operational effectiveness, accountability, and the medium-to long-term impact of our interventions.

Within this framework, from 30 to 31 August 2025 in Brazzaville, we took part in a peer-to-peer exchange mission with ACAF-Congo, organized under the Kotonga Facility, with the support of the Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle of the Embassy of France in the Republic of Congo. Conducted at the mid-term of the funded projects, this mission aimed to facilitate the sharing of good practices, identify operational complementarities, and structure practical synergies for the benefit of Indigenous and local communities—particularly in forest areas with limited access to public services.

These exchanges made it possible to identify several avenues for joint initiatives and resulted in the drafting of a strategic partnership framework, aligned with requirements for coherence, coordination, and sustainability of actions supported by technical and financial partners. This dynamic also facilitated our engagement with key institutional stakeholders, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), thereby strengthening our advocacy capacities and our alignment with national and international human rights frameworks.

Through these efforts, we are consolidating our position as a well-structured local organization, capable of contributing—alongside public authorities and technical and financial partners—to the implementation of inclusive, sustainable policies and programs aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



## Women’s Leadership and Inclusive Governance for the School Year

In 2025, we strengthened our approach to inclusive governance by promoting women’s leadership and active participation within our local branches, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality.

Within this framework, we organized a consultation and planning meeting at our Brazzaville branch, bringing together women members of the organization. Driven by local women’s leadership, this initiative provided a structured space for dialogue and collective reflection on the challenges related to the preparation of the 2025–2026 school year for Indigenous children supported by our program.

The discussions led to the development of a community-based action plan focused on mobilizing local resources for the collection of school kits, uniforms, shoes, and essential supplies, with the objective of supporting more than 1,500 Indigenous children under conditions conducive to sustained school attendance and educational continuity.

This approach contributed to strengthening the organizational capacities of the Brazzaville branch, consolidating internal cohesion, and enhancing community ownership of educational initiatives.

By recognizing and structuring women’s contributions to the design and implementation of our actions, we operationally integrate a gender-responsive approach across our programs. This initiative illustrates our commitment to making women’s leadership a cross-cutting driver of educational success and social transformation within Indigenous communities.





## Advocacy and International Representation

Advocacy and international representation constituted a major pillar of Espace Opoko's action in 2025, providing unprecedented visibility to the realities experienced by Indigenous children and families.

In June–July 2025, Paul Makita, an Indigenous youth supported by Espace Opoko, addressed the United Nations forum, where he carried the voice of Indigenous peoples and advocated for access to education, the fight against discrimination, and the respect of fundamental rights.

**“For many Indigenous children, education is not a right—it is an impossible mission that would require a miracle.”**

PAUL MAKITA AT THE UNITED NATIONS

This international intervention went beyond symbolic representation. It reflects recognition of the long-term fieldwork carried out by Espace Opoko and confirms the relevance and effectiveness of its community-based and education-centered approach. It also serves as a powerful advocacy lever, making it possible to elevate, at the highest level, the concerns and priorities of Indigenous communities in the Republic of Congo.

For beneficiary students and families, this intervention was a source of pride and inspiration, demonstrating in concrete terms that education can open pathways to international decision-making spaces, and that Indigenous children can themselves become legitimate voices and representatives of their communities.

*Scan the code to learn more about Paul's speech.*



## Events and Dialogue Platforms

In 2025, Espace Opoko also took part in several strategic events and dialogue platforms, recognized as essential spaces for consultation, visibility, and advocacy.

In particular, the organization participated in the Women Leaders Summit in March 2025 and the Civil Society Forum in June 2025. Engagement in these platforms reflects a clear commitment to bringing the voices of Indigenous children and families into decision-making, dialogue, and public policy development spaces.

These platforms provided opportunities to share field-level results, strengthen synergies with institutional and civil society actors, and promote inclusive approaches to education, human rights, and equality. They also contributed to positioning Espace Opoko as a credible, committed, and proactive stakeholder, capable of linking community-based realities with national and international policy dynamics.



*Participation in the Women Leaders Summit*



*Participation in the Civil Society Forum*



*Participation in Women's Rights Initiatives*

## IV. CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE

"Strength is not defined by the absence of obstacles, but by the ability to keep moving forward."



## Challenges and Resilience

The year 2025 was marked by significant progress, but also by major challenges that tested our organizational resilience. In response to these constraints, the organization demonstrated adaptability, innovation, and sustained commitment in service of Indigenous communities.

### Funding Suspension and Budgetary Constraints

In 2025, a major external decision directly affected the continuity of university pathways for several Indigenous students supported by our program.

Following a decision taken by the President of the United States, the U.S. government suspended a scholarship program benefiting Indigenous Congolese students, previously supported by the U.S. government and implemented through the United States Forest Service.



This decision resulted in:

- the sudden suspension of support for five (5) Indigenous students;
- the termination of funding for their tuition fees, housing, nutrition, and academic follow-up;
- an immediate situation of vulnerability, placing the continuation of their university studies at serious risk.

It is important to emphasize that this suspension was neither the result of shortcomings on the part of the students concerned nor of any failure by Espace Opoko, but rather the consequence of a unilateral political decision, taken independently of the students' academic performance and level of commitment.

Faced with this critical situation, Espace Opoko was required to:

- urgently reallocate internal resources;
- initiate alternative resource mobilization efforts with partners and donors;
- provide moral and administrative support to the affected students in order to prevent permanent dropout.

This episode highlighted the fragility of funding mechanisms dependent on external political decisions, while reinforcing the organization's conviction regarding the necessity to diversify and secure sustainable funding sources for Indigenous students' higher education.

## Logistical and Geographic Challenges

Most of Espace Opoko's areas of intervention are located in remote and hard-to-reach regions, where access conditions remain particularly challenging. The distance from urban centers, the often poor state of road infrastructure, and the severe constraints linked to the rainy season make travel time-consuming, costly, and at times impossible.

These realities have a direct impact on program implementation. They complicate the regular monitoring of students, delay the delivery of school kits and educational materials, and increase the complexity of coordinating field teams.

Without adequate logistical resources, it becomes difficult to ensure a sustained presence alongside the children and families who need it most.

In light of these challenges, strengthened logistical and financial support is essential to guarantee that every Indigenous child, regardless of location, has equal opportunities for educational success. Supporting Espace Opoko means overcoming geographic barriers and bringing education sustainably closer to the most isolated communities.



In some localities, the condition of access tracks is such that field teams must travel long distances on foot and by motorcycle in order to reach the communities.



*Identification and Monitoring of Children Without Civil Registration*

## **Persistent Social Vulnerabilities**

Indigenous communities continue to face deep-rooted structural vulnerabilities that directly affect children's educational pathways and overall well-being. These vulnerabilities include persistent extreme poverty, situations of discrimination within schools and broader society, chronic food insecurity, and the lack of civil status documentation for some children, which undermines their access to basic services and official examinations.

These realities clearly demonstrate that educational support alone is insufficient to ensure sustainable success. They highlight the need to deploy complementary interventions that integrate education, nutrition, health, social protection, and access to civil rights. Only through such an integrated approach can equitable conditions for success be created for indigenous children and the persistent cycles of marginalization affecting their communities be sustainably addressed.

## Organizational Resilience and Response Measures

In response to these challenges, we adopted a structured and accountable approach, grounded in concrete resilience and sound management measures. The actions implemented focused in particular on:

- Prioritizing high-impact interventions to ensure the continuity of essential services for indigenous children and their families;
- Strengthening community mobilization, by more closely involving local communities in the implementation and monitoring of activities;
- Consolidating technical and institutional partnerships to enhance coordination and complementarity of interventions;
- Optimizing the use of available resources, with a strong emphasis on efficiency, transparency, and accountability;
- Gradually diversifying funding sources, in order to reduce dependence on a limited number of donors and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the programme.

Thanks to the continued commitment of our teams, volunteers, and beneficiary communities, we were able to maintain the quality of our interventions, preserve the core components of our educational programme, and pursue our mission with rigor and professionalism, despite a context marked by significant constraints.

**“Despite the constraints, Espace Opoko continued to pursue its mission with rigor, accountability, and collective commitment.”**





## Lessons Learned and Outlook

The challenges encountered throughout 2025 served as significant learning opportunities for Espace Opoko. They enabled the organization to strengthen its capacity for anticipation, refine its management and steering mechanisms, and reinforce its commitment to building more sustainable and resilient intervention models.



This year confirmed the importance of rigorous planning, diversified partnerships, and strengthened resource security in addressing complex and evolving contexts.

The lessons learned from this experience now inform the organization's strategic reflection and guide its priorities for the coming years, particularly with regard to the sustainability of funding, institutional strengthening, and the consolidation of achievements for the benefit of indigenous communities.





## Rehabilitation of the Bambama Community Hall: A Foundation for Empowerment

As part of our continued commitment to education and the empowerment of indigenous communities, we undertook the rehabilitation of the Bambama Community Hall in order to restore its usefulness and transform it into a sustainable, forward-looking facility.

This community building, which had long been abandoned, was rehabilitated and repurposed into a multifunctional space for training and community gatherings, with a particular focus on indigenous youth and women. Through this rehabilitation, we laid the concrete foundations for the establishment of a sewing training centre, while also creating a venue capable of hosting additional vocational and community-based training activities.

Our objective was clear: to create a locally rooted space that enables communities to develop skills, generate income, and strengthen their autonomy, while indirectly supporting children's access to education and school retention.



This initiative fully aligns with our long-term vision. It anticipates and lays the groundwork for our decision to designate 2026 as the “Year of Empowerment,” notably through:

- the launch of a local school uniform production unit;
- the development of income-generating activities;
- the strengthening of local capacities and skills.



*Condition of the building Prior to rehabilitation*



*Launch of the rehabilitation works, in the presence of local authorities*

## V – IMPACT AND RESULTS

“Steps may leave traces, but it is results that pave the way forward.”



## Impact and results

In 2025, the actions implemented by Espace Opoko generated measurable results and sustainable transformations within indigenous communities. The observed impact is reflected across quantitative, qualitative, and strategic dimensions, in direct alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Quantitative Measures

### Beneficiaries and Coverage

- 1,652 indigenous children enrolled in school and supported, from primary education through to university level
- 472 new beneficiaries integrated through the Ô Yika programme
- 20 indigenous students supported at university level
- 31 indigenous communities reached
- Multiple departments covered, including Lekoumou, Sangha, Nkeni-Alima, and Brazzaville



## Education

- 1,652 school kits distributed in 2025
- 153 desks rehabilitated, benefiting 213 students
- 4 indigenous students successfully passed the Baccalauréat
- 36 students passed the Lower Secondary Education Certificate (BEPC)
- 15 students passed the Primary School Leaving Certificate (CEPE)
- 52 students relocated to urban centers to continue their education at lower secondary, upper secondary, and university levels

## Health and Hygiene

- 700 participants attended hygiene awareness workshops
- 700 hygiene kits distributed (sanitary pads, soap, and basic hygiene products)
- Clothing items distributed to students and parents
- Educational supply kits provided to support school operations

## Environment

- 80 schools reached through environmental awareness activities focusing on environmental protection, biodiversity, and recycling
- Hundreds of students trained on issues related to biodiversity conservation, climate change, and waste management





## Qualitative Outcomes

Beyond quantitative results, the impact observed in 2025 is reflected in meaningful changes in life trajectories and broader social transformations, including:

- Improved school attendance and a reduction in dropout rates
- Strengthened self-confidence and self-esteem, particularly among adolescent girls
- Increased cultural pride and identity affirmation through cultural initiatives such as Kouvounoungou
- Greater openness and dialogue around health and menstrual hygiene
- Enhanced civic engagement of young people around environmental and climate-related issues



## Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The results achieved in 2025 directly contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 4 – Quality Education: access to education, school retention, and academic success
- SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being: hygiene promotion and HIV/STI prevention
- SDG 5 – Gender Equality: empowerment of girls and women
- SDG 13 – Climate Action: environmental education and awareness
- SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities: inclusion of indigenous peoples

## Progress Indicators (2024 → 2025)

### Key Trends

- Increase in the number of children supported
- Improved examination results
- Geographical expansion of interventions
- Strengthened advocacy efforts and partnerships

### Impact 2025 – Summary

In 2025, Espace Opoko demonstrated that targeted investments, driven by a community-based and inclusive approach, can generate concrete, measurable, and hope-inspiring results for indigenous peoples.



## VI – OUTLOOK AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2026

« Avant de partir, les anciens regardent la route. »



# Outlook and Strategic Priorities for 2026

In 2026, we will pursue a strategy focused on consolidation and quality enhancement of our interventions, with the aim of sustainably strengthening access to fundamental rights for indigenous peoples, particularly children, youth, and women.

Our action is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular:

- SDG 4 – Quality Education: ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all;
- SDG 5 – Gender Equality: promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being;
- SDG 8 – Decent Work and Inclusive Economic Growth;
- SDG 13 – Climate Action;
- SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.

We will integrate a gender-responsive and intersectional approach transversally across all our programmes, from the design phase through to monitoring and evaluation.

## 1. Ensuring Sustainable and Equitable Access to Education

We will continue to place access to quality education for indigenous children and youth at the core of our interventions. In 2026, our priority will be to secure school and university pathways, particularly for students forced to relocate to urban centres due to the absence of educational infrastructure in their communities of origin.

Our actions will focus in particular on:

- Strengthening pedagogical support and individualized academic follow-up,

- Addressing social and economic vulnerabilities,
- Preventing school dropout, with particular attention to indigenous girls, who are more exposed to the risks of educational disengagement.

This approach directly contributes to reducing inequalities in access to education.

## 2. Making Empowerment a Central Lever for the Sustainability of Interventions

By declaring 2026 as the “Year of Empowerment,” we are initiating a strategic shift aimed at strengthening the economic and social sustainability of our actions, as well as their ownership by beneficiary communities.

This orientation will be reflected through:

- The establishment of a local school uniform production unit, contributing both to the reduction of education-related costs and to the creation of local employment opportunities;
- The development of income-generating activities, with a primary focus on women and youth;
- The valorization of rehabilitated community infrastructure, such as the Bambama Community Hall, as multifunctional spaces for training, production, and social cohesion.

These actions aim to progressively reduce dependence on short-term funding, by strengthening the economic resilience of communities and ensuring the sustainability of long-term impact.

## Outlook and Strategic Priorities for 2026

### 3. Strengthening Advocacy and the Participation of Indigenous Peoples

We will continue to strengthen our advocacy efforts in support of indigenous peoples' rights, in line with international human rights and inclusion commitments.

In 2026, we aim to:

- Strengthen the participation of indigenous communities in local and national consultation and dialogue spaces;
- Promote the inclusion of indigenous youth and women in leadership dynamics and decision-making processes;
- Contribute to international exchanges on inclusive education, gender equality, and sustainable development.

This approach seeks to enhance the voice, agency, and influence of beneficiaries, recognizing them as actors of development rather than passive recipients of aid.

### 4. Consolidating Institutional Capacity, Accountability, and Monitoring & Evaluation

We will continue to strengthen our governance structures and accountability mechanisms.

**Key priorities for 2026 include:**

- Strengthening results-based monitoring and evaluation systems, with indicators disaggregated by sex;

- Improving financial transparency and resource traceability;
- Progressively integrating internal procedures related to the prevention of gender-based violence and the protection of beneficiaries.

These actions aim to ensure sound financial management, reliable impact measurement, and full compliance with international cooperation standards.

### 5. Expanding and Structuring Sustainable Strategic Partnerships

In 2026, we will strengthen our multi-stakeholder partnership strategy.

We will seek structured and long-term collaborations with:

- Public institutions;
- Development agencies;
- Foundations;
- Private sector actors committed to corporate social responsibility.

These partnerships will aim to:

- Scale up the impact of our programmes;
- Strengthen our technical and institutional capacities;
- Ensure the financial and operational sustainability of our actions.

#### Overall Objective

Our overall objective is to contribute sustainably to improving the living conditions of indigenous peoples by ensuring that every child—girl or boy—has effective access to education, dignity, and full participation in the country's development.



## CONCLUSION

The year 2025 confirmed that the education of indigenous peoples is both a major challenge and a shared responsibility. Through its field-based actions, Espace Opoko demonstrated that sustained engagement—rooted in local realities and driven by the communities themselves—can generate lasting and measurable change.

From the schooling of thousands of children to the support provided to university students, from the promotion of health and dignity to the valorization of indigenous cultures, each action contributed to strengthening equal opportunities and opening new pathways for communities that have long been marginalized.



The year 2025 also underscored the fragility of the progress achieved. Financial constraints, administrative barriers, and structural inequalities require constant vigilance and strengthened adaptive capacity. It is within this context that Espace Opoko chose a path defined by resilience, transparency, and innovation.

By declaring 2026 the “Year of Empowerment,” the organization commits to taking a new step forward: consolidating its educational actions through sustainable economic initiatives, strengthening community autonomy, and securing the future of indigenous children.

This annual report is at once an assessment, a testimony, and a call to action. Together—partners, institutions, donors, and communities—we can sustain this momentum and build a future in which every indigenous child has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and fully contribute to the country’s development.

## How to Contact Us

For any additional information regarding our programmes, partnerships, or potential areas of collaboration, the Espace Opoko team remains at your disposal.

### General Contact Information

#### Espace Opoko

Non-Governmental Organization  
Supporting the education of indigenous children

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#### Territorial Presence

Espace Opoko operates in several departments of the Republic of Congo, including:

- Lékoumou (Sibiti, Komono, Bambama, Zanaga)
- Sangha (Mokeko and surrounding areas)
- Brazzaville
- Pointe-Noire

Follow our news, publications, and field activities on our social media channels:



Espace Opoko



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Scan to make a donation





# Indigenous Children School Education Support Program



**Investing in a generation that will make a difference in their community.**

Our mission is to provide indigenous children with the resources they need to become the true drivers of change within their communities.

## How to help?

- Make a donation ✓
- Donate clothes ✓
- Donate non-perishable food items ✓
- Tell others about us ✓
- Listen to their needs ✓

We support them from their first day of primary school until their integration into the professional world.