



Able and Willing

International Education Foundation

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NEWSLETTER

Fall 2007

A Word from Puma

Twelve years ago in Tshamalale village, there were no trees. All had been cut down to make charcoal. Since then, we have nurtured the stumps of the wild fruit trees, the Nfungo, Npundu, and Masuku. This year, for the first time we enjoyed eating fruit from the trees.

Twelve years of hard labor. That is the time it took for A&W with your help to complete MYRT School. It took the same amount of time for the trees to mature and bear fruit to finally break the chain of illiteracy. This year students at MYRT School wrote articles and published their school newspaper. This year a Congolese foundation was formed by staff, students and villagers to take leadership of the projects. This year we started a school in another village six kilometers away from Tshamalale village.

Friends, together hand in hand with love and hope we have paved the road to success and planted the seed of harmony and ever lasting peace in nature. Tshamalale is no longer a village. It is now a small town. A small town with a self supporting school, many wells of clean water, many latrines, small shops, even teams of soccer, ping-pong, basketball... all because of your dedication to making a better world for all. Once again I thank you so much for your continuing support of A&W.

**Mbuyu "Puma" Wa Mbuyu,
President & Co-founder**



Goals Attained

Our goal in 2007 was to finish MYRT School in the village of Tshamalale and start another school further away from the city of Lubumbashi. All planned projects needed to complete the MYRT School were finished within the original cost estimates adjusted for inflation. A modest start was made on a two room building in the village of Poleni, sufficient to enable work to continue through the rainy season.

Detailed planning was key to meeting our goals. A substantial early donation set the budget floor that made realistic planning possible.

Thanks from Jim

I have many reasons to be thankful this year. Personally, I am thankful for getting good medical care in South Africa after a retinal tear while teaching at MYRT School, I am thankful that the students carried on without me and produced the first school newspaper.

Above all, I am thankful for our many friends who have made our work possible. Your generosity has

allowed us to more than double construction expenditures. Read all about progress and plans in this edition.

We are looking forward to a great new year.

Jim Carpenter, Treasurer



2007 Progress Report...

2007 Able & Willing Work Team

Mbuyu “Puma” Wa Mbuyu, 45, is the president and co-founder of AWIEF. Puma has designed and lead the work projects in Africa every year since 1995.

Jim Carpenter, 60, now retired, taught a class in communications, covering computers, photography, and writing. This was Jim’s fourth service since 2002 for Able & Willing. Jim is also Treas-

urer for AWIEF and on its Board of Directors.

Angus Givens, 25, works as an electrician with Puma in the DC area. This was his first visit to Africa. His task was to lead the team that makes furniture, teaching them how to make frames by bending tubular pipe. Angus would like to learn Swahili and return next year with his young nephew.

Special Challenges

The booming economy and government impositions were the sources of our major challenges.

1. Cost of labor and material. Prices of key construction material increased by more than 50% over the quotes from local suppliers obtained four months previously. Wages doubled.

Solution: Detailed project plans enabled an early warning of serious cost overruns and served as an essential tool in modifying the specifications and designs to curtail costs. Tough negotiations, and scrounging for scrap metal and alternate sources helped reduce costs. Donor response to a special appeal also helped to cover inflation costs.

2. Labor supply. Labor was in short supply due to plentiful jobs and competition with the planting season. In previous years, skilled and unskilled workers were lined up for work within hours of Puma’s arrival. This year, we had to search for workers. In past years, boys and girls from local Scout troops volunteered to help construction. This year, our projects were scheduled after school started, which limited their participation. In previous years, many parents worked in exchange for their children’s tuition. This year, most of these parents had other jobs or had to work their fields.

Solution: Puma negotiated terms with each worker. Since most accepted work as a second job, time scheduling was the big factor. Puma formed teams that worked in shifts around the clock.

Some accepted work on a contractual basis so they could schedule their own time.

3. Government regulations. The Ministry of Education and other agencies impose requirements on primary, secondary, and technical schools which govern curricula, enrollment, and salaries. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between valid government regulations and the word of officials trying to make a living by exploiting their position. Indeed, kleptocracy had long been officially sanctioned under the Mobutu regime and will take some time to remove under the new democratic government.

Solution: Puma has a lifetime of experience in recognizing kleptocratic behavior and has employed a number of measures. Guilt, shame, pride, hope, and sympathy help to reduce demands to a minimum. For example, after a tour of the school, officials are invariably won over with pride in what their countrymen can do.

4. Customs tax. We’ve never had a problem with DRC Customs bringing equipment in our luggage. This year we were charged \$600 for the 34 used laptops we brought in our suitcases.

Solution: Although we had to pay the \$600 customs fee, we found a solution to avoid the problem in the future by establishing a local nonprofit foundation. (See page 5)

MYRT School Completed!

It took 12 years, but this year marks the completion of a remarkable school. Here is a summary of the projects.

1. Furniture. Technical school students, together with local high school Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts,



Photo: *new style student desk.*

made 100 student desks, 10 office desks and 10 office chairs. Angus Givens, a volunteer from Washington, DC, instructed the students on how to make the frames by bending tubular metal. The new desks last longer and are cheaper to build than the old wooden style.

2. Window & Door Frames. Students made 10 window frames which were installed in five existing classrooms to provide extra light and ventila-



Photo: *students make furniture and door and window frames in school workshop.*

tion. Students also made door and window frames for our new school in Poleni village. Students make frames for schools, business and homes in the region to generate extra income for the school.

3. New classrooms & shops. Work teams completed the interior finishing work on three class-

rooms and two workshops in the building that was constructed last year.

4. New septic system. Local masons built three brick lined septic containers for the

student toilet facilities build last year. The new toilet facilities doubled the capacity.

5. Electrical systems. Rooms in the main administration building, which includes the computer lab, a classroom, three offices, and library, were wired with electrical outlets and florescent lights. Three additional semi-portable diesel generators were purchased. Two power the administration building (one serves as a backup generator) and the third is for welding on remote worksites like the new school. Altogether, the school now has four diesel generators and two wind towers. There is still no other source of electricity in the village.

6. Computer lab. The computer lab was expanded to two rooms in the main administration building, taking advantage of the new electrical wiring and dedicated generators. Thirty-four laptop computers were added to the 10 working computers. All computer furniture was refinished. Storage cabinets were made to keep all supplies organized and secure.

7. Equipment for Workshops. The workshops were equipped with new hand tools, a mobile gas arc welder, and hydraulic press. Beams for overhead hoists were installed in the machine shops so heavy parts could be moved between workbenches. Four sewing machines were purchased for the sewing workshop.



Photo: The new building has two shops and three classrooms.

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MYRT School (continued from page 3)

8. New books. The school purchased over 150 books, including books of poetry, fiction, science, mathematics, biology. All books were purchased locally to support local publishers. Some were authored by Congolese. Each student, from sixth

grade and up, is required to read and report on at least one book per week. Books are available to any student. The public can also access the school library.

School Started in Poleni Village

Our original plan was to start building a school in Kipopo village, a distance of 20 kilometers from MYRT School. Transportation costs were prohibitive, so a school was started in the village of Poleni, located just six kilometers away. Poleni is on a crossroads connecting four other villages, all within two kilometers of Poleni. None of the villages have schools and all lack basic amenities, much like when we started MYRT School.

The frames for the doors and windows were made in MYRT School shops. The frames, along with tools and some building materials were transported six kilometers in hand trucks over the dirt road from MYRT School.

Poleni villagers, lead by the village chief, prepared the land for the school and helped to put up the roof and support structures, dig a well and septic pit. The shelter will provide a dry place to make adobe bricks during the six month rainy season that started in October.

The school in Poleni will operate as an extension of MYRT School and be governed by the same locally elected board of directors.



Photo: Roof for new two room school provides shelter for villagers to make bricks during the rainy season.



Photo: Women whoop for Poleni village chief clearing land for the school.

Work in U.S. and Other Countries

Able & Willing obtained nearly 200 surplused Dell computers from a government agency and placed them in schools in Cameroon, Liberia, Nicaragua, and a learning center in Washington, DC.

Puma and board members hosted or participated

in ten events this year to spread cultural awareness and inform the public about our mission. Events included USA-Africa Day, Season for Non-violence Program, and presentations at middle schools, churches, and U.S. Dept. of State.

Building Human Resources

In addition to the planned construction projects, there were a variety of other low cost projects to help build human resources.

1. Local nonprofit foundation. The staff of MYRT School set up the Wambuyu Foundation in the DRC. The mission is (1) to promote the idea of partnership with Congolese business, and (2) help people take responsibility and free themselves from self pity and depending on foreign aid and to become productive members of the human family. The primary goals are: (1) to help teach and finance students and local people to form business partnerships, (2) to encourage and support extracurricular activities, (3) encourage other organizations to sponsor the education of orphans. The foundation will also serve as a means to legally transfer resources from Able And Willing to schools and educational institutions in DRC without being subject to Customs fees.

2. Communications class. Jim Carpenter, a volunteer from Jefferson, Maryland, taught communications topics to a class of six students. Each student completely configured one of the new computers, for use in later exercises, and connected it to a local area network. Students then learned critical and creative thinking skills for looking at photographs through a self discovery process called



Photo: Jim taught a class in communications with the aid of a translator.

“Visual Training Strategy”. After learning basic theory and operation of a digital camera they practiced interviewing each other and taking portraits that the captured character of their subjects. Their last assignment was to document some aspect of village life. Unfortunately, Jim was evacuated for medical treatment before the assignment was completed. Some of their pictures and essays were used in the first school newsletter.

3. Extracurricular activities. The local board decided to increase the amount of extracurricular activities available to students.

- Production of a school newsletter was approved and financed and the first issue was published.
- Each class must now make at least one field trip per month.
- The school must participate in one regional competition every three months by first organizing competition within MYRT School.
- Each student must read and report on at least one book per week.
- Funds were approved to build a shelter for students during the rainy season which can also be used to house a ping pong table. The shelter and table were built and ping pong has become a popular sport for the whole village.

4. Technical School Charter. The technical school charter has been changed from the High School Education Administration to the Social Division, both within the Ministry of Education. This change removes enrollment barriers and allows young people without formal education to learn a skilled trade. Previously, only students who had completed 7th grade were allowed to enroll. This solves a big problem for many young mothers and disadvantaged teens who otherwise would not be eligible to learn a trade at our technical school.

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Building Human Resources (continued from page 5)

- 5. School administration.** The MYRT board handled issues relating to hiring and firing, fees, salaries, discipline, and sanitation.
- a. Fees for elementary school were raised to \$10/month due to higher demand for education and higher wages in the region.
 - b. Salaries were increasing above the \$100 per month minimum required by the government of the Katanga Region.
 - c. A teacher selection team interviewed a dozen applicants and five new teachers were hired. The staff now totals 30 people.
 - d. A new position of Director of Discipline was created to enforce school policies and regulations.
 - e. All staff are now required to participate in school cleanup program (2-3 hours) every Saturday.

Future Plans

It took 12 years to build MYRT School and turn it into a profitable and innovative educational center. Our next major goal is to duplicate that success and more in three years using the talents of our graduates with capital from our friends and new sources.

Our next project will be scheduled between July and September of 2008 so as not to conflict with the MYRT school year and availability of labor.

Here is a preliminary plan for 2008 with cost estimates.

- 1. Kipopo School.** \$100,000 for elementary school and dormitory. The chief of Kipopo village has allocated 100 acres of land to build a school and associated enterprises. We plan to build the elementary school in 2008 with a dormitory for orphans and students who live a distance from the school. This school will expand over three years to become the hub of local partnership enterprises.
- 2. Poleni School.** \$10,000 to finish the building for grades 1 & 2, along with the well and toilet facilities. The school will eventually have grades 1-6 for local kids who can walk to school. The school is situated between the villages of Tshamalale (our first school) and Kipopo, providing three education centers to service a 50 kilometer corridor.
- 3. Transport Truck.** \$20,000 to buy a new flatbed truck with side racks for transporting heavy loads. The local board has proposed this as a project to earn money hauling lumber, gravel, and other construction material. They estimate that it can pay for itself in three months through new money earned as well as \$6,000 saved in transportation costs for materiel in next year's projects.
- 4. Books, tools, and shop equipment.** \$10,000 to cover buying books locally and tools from the U.S. that are not available locally at reasonable prices.
- 5. Other Program Expenses.** \$20,000 to cover all travel, telephone, medical, per diem and program services in U.S. and other countries. (Revenue will come from volunteers who pay their own way.)
- 6. Non-program expenses.** \$5,000 to cover office supplies and fundraising.

Our goal is to raise \$165,000 by August 1, 2008.

We plan to submit our first grant applications to several foundations. A substantial pledge donation from The Five Together Foundation provides a great incentive for other donors to multiply their investments in the future of children in the Congo.

Congo at a Crossroads

A Troubled Past

“A vast country with immense economic resources,..., at the centre of what could be termed Africa's world war,” says the country profile of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the web site of the BBC.

The war has sucked in the armies of DRC's neighbors who have seized on the opportunity to exploit diamonds and gold. Since 1998, nearly 4 million people have died as a result of the war. “The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo remains the world's deadliest humanitarian crisis” concludes a report in Lancet medical journal in a nationwide mortality survey done in 2004.

While the area near our school was spared the deadliest consequences, many orphans and families fled to the region.

Now is the critical time to invest wisely in education in the Congo.

A Model for Educational Investment

Congolese citizens make it work

We believe that we have successfully demonstrated a model for effectively leveraging foreign investment in education. The model relies on maximizing the indigenous human potential and limits investment to the infrastructure of new schools that can generate human and economic capital. We provide the capital for material infrastructure, Congolese citizens make it work.

Hope for the Future

Despite the Congo's long history of sorrows, there is now reason to hope for its future. This year, the DRC has dropped to number 7 on the list of Failed States Index, down from the number 2 slot where it had been since the index was first published in 2005 by the Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy* magazine. This improvement is partly due to the first national elections in over 40 years and the presence of U.N. peace keeping forces, the largest U.N. commitment in the world.

Large multinational mining corporations are poised to invest billions of dollars pending key signs of political stability.

The DRC desperately needs an educated citizenry to insure good government and to safeguard its vast natural resources.

In Search of Dreamers

We confess that the model has so far relied on the talents of one Congolese man who has faithfully returned to his native country every year since 1995 with the aid of a network of friends. Our long term plan is to search for, inspire and assist people who have emigrated to the U.S. but harbor similar dreams and a strong desire to carry on the work in their native countries.

Photo: Angus Givens, in white, is a volunteer from Washington, DC. He instructed local workers how to bend pipe to make frames for student classroom furniture.



Breaking the Chains of Illiteracy

Just as hard labor in construction produces finished buildings, and as mature trees produce fruits, so too are the fruits of education coming to maturity at MYRT School. In November of this year, the school published its first newspaper, called “Wambuyu Kioto” – a title reminiscent of old traditions for passing on knowledge, like story telling around the fire. In our paper, students, teachers, and villagers write about their thoughts, ideas, criticisms, or just observations about life in the village.

The day after the paper was distributed, students were instructed to take it home, share it with their parents, discuss or debate interesting points at home, and study the education page for a test in class the next day. The next day came with quite a surprise, one telling us that our newspaper had indeed had an impact on people beyond those immediately involved with the school, although it was not the impact we might have expected.

It was around 10 o'clock in the morning when a young mother came to school. As soon as she entered the office, she started to cry, telling me that her husband had announced that he was ashamed of her and was therefore going to divorce her. Why? Because someone from the village had told him that her picture was in the school newspaper. Knowing there had to be more to the story, I asked her, did your husband read the paper himself? No, she replied, however the person who had told him about the paper said that the picture showed how skinny she is. From that, the man concluded that her husband does not take good care of her and her children. The man found additional “proof” in the fact that the woman makes gravel to sell for a living. (The article in question had been written by a 10th grade MYRT student and it discussed the advantages, disadvantages, and reasons why the Congo has so many unlicensed, unregulated, untaxed makers and sellers of goods operating outside the official economy.)

Looking at the lady, I had tears in my eyes. Together with the school staff, we sat down with the lady and gave her a copy of the paper. I read the article related to her picture, then explained to her what it was all about and also showed her other pictures that were in the paper for the same article. She went on to tell us how the paper had caused other women to be humiliated and embittered by their husbands and even by acquaintances that night. What they thought they saw in the paper was an insult to the people in the village because the paper had exposed their poverty to everybody. It seemed to imply that the men in the village are not taking good care of their families. This is not at all what the related article said, but judgments were made by looking at the picture in the paper without reading it.

This event brought both sadness and joy to me and the staff present in the office. Sadness knowing that even now a significant number of parents still cannot read and write. They looked only at the picture and imagined the story that went with it. Sadness too over the propensity of some people to believe and speculate on the story in a less than positive way and without any regard to the words in the paper. Our greatest sadness arose from the speed with which the fabricated story spread around the village.

At the same time, we found joy in the event. Joy from seeing the village light up with interest and engage each other in discussion. Joy in the courage of the woman who had come to school and ask for the truth. More joy to see that children from the village, MYRT students, had a new opportunity to learn about the power of thought, to realize how knowledge of reading and writing can wake villagers up from the unfortunate consequences imposed by illiteracy, and to gain a new appreciation of the value of education.

So to make the matter clear and avoid similar con-

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Breaking Chains, (continued from page 8).

flict in the future, the school staff and I decided to call for a meeting with all the parents and students. In the meeting we explained what the article in the paper was all about, who wrote it, and how a good education can help avoid misunderstanding or even more serious consequences. With the help of other educated parents, we came to an understanding and saved the marriage of the young lady. Also we stopped the speculation and perceptions of humiliation of the people. We gained the support of all in the village to continue publishing the paper.

Parents agreed to contribute stories – about their dreams, about their desire for a better future and commitment to work for it, and about their opinions of what stands in the way of their own self-improvement and that of their neighbors and fellow Africans. Our hope is for the paper to help pave the way to more responsible citizenship and a better appreciation of the interdependence between the health of the public at large and the well-being of individual families.

Mbuyu Wa Mbuyu

Board Business

We welcome two new board members.

Dr. Mielzynska

Iwona Mielzynska-Lohnas is from Poland and has degrees in Biology and a Ph.D. in Medical Sciences. Her expertise is in Women's Health with a focus on diagnosis and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases such as Human Papillomavirus, Chlamydia and HIV.



She has lived in the U.S. since 1989 and works in the biotechnology industry in the area of clinical diagnostics.

Iwona and her husband, Gerald Lohnas, say they would like to participate in the 2008 projects in the Congo.

Rebecca Macina

Rebecca Macina, Ed.M., has 10 years experience in international development. She currently works in the Bureau of International Labor Affairs for the US Department of Labor. Prior to that she was an education consultant for the World Bank, Communications Manager for the Baha'is of the United States, and has worked for USAID and non-government organizations. From 1988 to 1990 Ms. Macina was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali where she lived for three years. Ms. Macina has a Masters Degree in Education from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education (1998), and a B.A. in English from Barnard College (1985). She resides in Takoma Park with her daughter Kadidja.



Finances (Jan. 1 - Dec. 6, 2007)

Income	\$83,867		Expense	\$59,988
Cash donations	\$61,090		Administration	\$2,040
Non cash donations	\$ 2,777		Fundraising	\$1,112
Pledges	\$20,000		Program services	\$56,836

Net Income: \$23,879

Note: Numbers above do not reflect the value of donated computers or the \$20,000 that MYRT School raised for construction expenses. Part of the school's revenue was credit from a local supply store where they purchased much of the construction materials.

“Why I choose Able & Willing . . .”

As we draw to the end of a record year, and look forward to our best financial start ever in 2008, we just simply want to say “thank you”. Thank you to all the friends who have attended our dinners, answered our calls, and continued to support us over the past twelve years. ***Please take pride in the direct and tangible difference that you make.***

Much has been written about the philosophy of giving, but at the end of the day it remains a deeply personal thing. In honor of that diversity, we offer perspectives from a few donors who went above and beyond this year...

Family connections to former Zaire and a long relationship with Puma have cemented a “special place in my heart” for Able and Willing, says **Eleanor Milligan**. “My feeling is the same as so many others—this organization is really the best and most complete use of any money you can give”

Richard Gallivan also holds a special place for the Congolese and the land he called home for two years in the Peace Corps. After graduating with a Masters in Foreign Service, spending a year at the World Bank, and starting a life in investment banking on Wall Street, Richard has seen himself as lucky in life. “There are very few ways,” he notes, “that I can find to give back on a meaningful basis.” Able & Willing is one of those. “I believe what the organization is doing is fantastic, and I really enjoy seeing the fruits of labor from this dedicated team of people.”

Bill Guyton, President of the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and a former Peace Corps volunteer, met Ruth and Puma during the late 1980s while working on a USAID sustainable-agricultural project outside of Lubumbashi. Bill recalls a deep respect and admiration for Puma, citing his quiet leadership, gift for teaching, and ability to “fix anything!” The topic of education in Africa remains of sincere interest to Bill and his staff at World Cocoa.

Beth & John Willis speak of investment, versus choice, when donating to AWIEF. “We use the word invest quite explicitly,” they write, “because our intention has been to see our contributions enable a growing and vibrant education activity that will pay dividends in the future.” The self-sustaining approach, exponential impact of teaching, and rapid conversion of donations to actual change continue to impress. “Dollar for dollar and pound for pound, it’s hard to find a better example of how the developed world can contribute”

Tom Kloc, on the other hand, tells the tale of a final wish. After the passing of his aunt (the final relative in a family estate), funds became available for charitable use. Having attended Puma’s presentation at the *2007 Season for Nonviolence* event, Tom developed a strong sense for the work being accomplished abroad. “It fit best with the mission of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, which is at the heart of our Season of Nonviolence,” he explains. When AWIEF broadcast its special plea this summer, the timing was perfect. Tom clarifies that the true benefactors of Able & Willing are **Anna, Edmund, and Christine Pronobis**, “not me. I just guided the gift in their honor, because I knew it would be put to very good use.”

To go on might seem self-indulgent. So, we will simply acknowledge special friends who put us over the top: **Tuckey & Associates, Jacob Toll (The Five Together Foundation), and Friends of Congo** (Steven Most, president, Joey DiCesare, treasurer). And of course a final thanks to our field team—**Jim Carpenter, Angus Givens, and Puma Mbuyu**—who not only donate their time, labor, love and skill—but who also donate funds to pay their own travel expenses.

Shannon Murphy
Secretary, AWIEF

With MYRT School supporting itself and even contributing to new construction costs, AWIEF plans to continue building schools and duplicate our success in other villages and employing low-cost and bio-friendly methods of construction. Your invaluable support makes it possible.

I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution of:

\$50.00 **\$100.00** **\$500.00**

\$1000.00 **Other** _____

Gift on behalf of: _____

Send to:

**AWIEF
P.O. BOx 4303
Frederick, MD 21705-4303**

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AWIEF, P.O. Box 4303, Frederick, MD 21705
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AWIEF

International Education Foundation
Able and Willing



2007 Congo Highlights

I. Completed MYRT School

- Made 100 student desks & more
- Finished 2006 building projects
- Improved electrical systems
- Upgraded computer lab
- Equipped workshops
- More teachers & books

II. Began Construction at Poleni

- Prepared site
- Built frame & roof
- Dug well & septic pit

III. Other Projects

- Local foundation & school charter
- Communications Class
- More



2008 Plans for 3 schools & more...