

MENELIK EDUCATION LTD

SUMMER SCHOOL DRC 2011

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Summer 2011 marked the second year of Menelik Education Ltd Summer School programme in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Summer School programme works with children from the Charity's partnership schools in areas of extreme poverty and deprivation in the city of Kinshasa and nearby areas. The Summer School activities are open to all children who attend the schools and those who wish to join in who may not receive any formal education during the rest of the year. The Summer School is informal and includes a mixture of teaching English; creative work; play and sporting activities. The age range of children attending is 3 years to 18 years of age. Many street children who do not attend school during the academic year are also welcome to attend. Menelik Education Ltd has recently established a partnership with a new school located on the outskirts of Kinshasa, St Rita School, and this was the venue for the Summer School 2011. The Summer School Programme for 2011 was devised by Menelik Education Trustee and Fundraiser, Sally Nott assisted by volunteer support from the UK and in particular volunteer support from Congolese students some of whom are training to become teachers.



BACKGROUND TO ST RITA SCHOOL, KINSHASA

St Rita School is located in Bandallungwa district a 45 minute drive from the Menelik Education headquarters. Approximately 800 students attend the school aged between 5 and 18 years of age. Approximately 40% of the students are girls. The average income of families in the DRC is in the region of £20 per month, many families in this area of the city fall below this average. School fees for one child for one academic year average at £300. Families are therefore often forced to choose which children to educate, therefore the girls are often overlooked as they have value in the home. A small percentage of students with disabilities attend the school. This is not commonplace in the DRC, most disabled children and their families are ostracised by their communities and considered a curse. Many families will reject a disabled child for the same reason.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Summer School is informal. The main aim is for the children to have fun, learn some English and to benefit from activities and resources that they would not normally be able to access. Older children expressed an interest in learning computing, history, geography and more formal subjects.

The Congolese interpretation of a Summer School differs slightly from that of the UK. The expectation is more formal but staff are very receptive to the more European style of a Summer School which is based on learning through play and outdoor activities. The objectives are to encourage an interest in learning and a desire to attend school on a more formal basis. Feedback from Lembo and St Georges Schools in 2010 illustrated an increase in student recruitment of approximately 5% as a consequence of the Summer School events of 2010

PROGRAMME

The Summer School took place over a period of two weeks in July 2011. Some British volunteers who had been due to work on the programme had withdrawn for a variety of reasons (mainly obtaining employment shortly after graduation), the activities therefore were reduced to a period of 6 days, partly due to lack of volunteer support and sufficient resources. Two grants given for the project had not been received in the UK by the time the programme commenced so the charity was unable to purchase as many tools as it would have wished had the grants been received in advance of the project. All teaching materials, including those for sport were purchased in the UK and transported in volunteer luggage. In addition items such as paper and drawing materials came from the Charity's own supply which has been donated over a period of three years and brought out to the DRC for each partnership school on an annual basis.

The Summer School is advertised at the school two months in advance of the event. Staff and students are made aware of the timing of the school and are requested to give ideas on any particular activities they wish their students to experience. It is not possible to know in advance the total number of students likely to attend or the age range or activities requested so the programme is devised in general terms with an outline for classes and activities and resources required, but on the basis that the plan would be reviewed each day and adjusted according to the numbers and ages attending.



OUTCOME

The Summer School at St Rita's was a resounding success. Numbers of children participating increased from 40 on Day One to approximately 110 by the end of the programme. In the first two days the percentage of older students (i.e.15 years +) was greater than younger children. By the final two days of the school over 60% of the children attending were in the 7-14 year bracket. A percentage of those attending were children from the streets who do not normally attend school (not possible to accurately quantify). Those participating were predominately male, approximately 75%. The head of the school was pleased with the turnout of students and the range of activities undertaken. He would have wished for the summer school to continue for a further two weeks but this was not possible this year due to volunteer numbers and sufficient resources.



CONCLUSION

The format of a mixture of English teaching, creative art work and play works well. The programme benefitted enormously from the input by a team of enthusiastic and dedicated Congolese volunteers. There was an excellent exchange of knowledge, expertise and working practices between the British and Congolese volunteers. This also met the overall aims and objectives of the charity – two cultures working together for a common aim and giving the Congolese staff and volunteers an opportunity to work with and for their community and be actively responsible for such a positive outcome. This inspired confidence and a further commitment to continue this work during the year and, in particular in the Summer School in 2012.

The range of activities was good. A potential difficulty in being able to cater for the needs of the older students was overcome by the enthusiastic participation of Congolese student volunteers who were able to conduct slightly more formal teaching in both French and Lingala. We wish to continue this participation in future years.

IDEAS FOR 2012

The reputation of the Menelik Education Summer Schools has grown in the city over the past 18 months. More schools have expressed a desire to participate. The charity will be planning a more extensive programme in 2012 to cover a longer period of time and work in more than one school. The only potential obstacle to this would be the provision of sufficient teaching resources which have to be brought from the UK in luggage. This would be dependent on the numbers of volunteers able to attend in 2012 and the securing of sufficient funding for the work.

The Charity would like to be able to recruit more British volunteers for 2012. An ability to speak French would be an advantage. It is hoped to recruit trainee teachers from the UK next year as volunteers.

None of the disabled students from St Rita's attended the Summer School. A Centre for homeless disabled children, located next to one of the Charity's partnership schools in the city centre will be a potential venue for a Summer School in 2012 with play activities tailored to children with physical and learning difficulties plus massage therapy. This is a particular area of expertise of one of the Trustees who was able to recruit support from one other Congolese student during her visit this summer. During the summer 2011, Menelik Education established a new partnership with an orphanage on the outskirts of Kinshasa. The orphanage currently has over 200 children ranging in age from 6 months to 22 years of age living in cramped conditions with minimal facilities or opportunity for any meaningful form on education. It is planned to hold a summer school within the orphanage in 2012. Menelik Education has already begun to equip this orphanage with goods such as books, toys and kitchen equipment and will be continuing to do so in a more extensive programme of support over the coming year.



HOW SAFE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROGRAMME

The grant received from CUSAFE was used to purchase materials for specific art activities which included t shirts; fabric paints; art materials for making masks and greetings cards. (See Appendix A) A small proportion of the grant was also used to pay for water and light refreshments for the children who would not otherwise have any lunch on the activity days. A great benefit in the purchase of t shirts was that the children were also able to take home an item of clothing that they had designed and would be able to keep.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF CUSAFE GRANT

- T shirt design
- Making greetings cards for DRC Parents' Day
- Making animal masks
- Making finger puppets
- Creation of a Menelik/St Rita banner for the school
- Out-door sack races/football/baseball

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

The grant from CUSAFE gave a tremendous boost to our funds for this summer which enabled us to devise more creative and long-lasting activities (T shirt design) as well as provide food and drink for the children who live in such extreme poverty that they usually

only have one meal a day. The children were able to engage in activities that they would not normally enjoy. Resources at the school are minimal – children do not have exercise books or text books so to be able to play and use a range of art materials and outdoor games gave them an added experience and dimension to their education. They were also able to take home the items that they had drawn/designed which is a complete novelty in the DRC. The pride and excitement displayed by the children in this respect was humbling.



COSTS

**Please see attached Appendix A for itemised costs of the project
Appendix B is an outline of the activities planned for the project in 2011**

Sally Nott
Trustee: Menelik Education
September 2011