



RAFIKI

the Quaker Congo Partnership Newsletter

WINTER
2024

For peace, health, education, and the relief of poverty

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JOURNEY TO ABEKA

A Visit to our Projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In July 2024, Catherine, a trustee of Quaker Congo Partnership (QCP), and her husband, Mark, went on a journey to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to visit CEEACO, QCP's partner organisation, and projects. Their travels took them to the small village of Abeka, where QCP has been supporting local health, education, and peace building initiatives since 2005. The journey was both an adventure and an opportunity for insight and connection, highlighting the challenges, resilience, and hopes of the communities involved.

A Challenging Journey

The adventure began at the border between Burundi and the DRC, where rising water levels in Lake Tanganyika had submerged the road. The border could be crossed only by wading or travelling by 4x4 vehicle or boat. Upon arrival in Uvira, the couple spent a day in discussions with local church and project leaders before continuing to Abeka. The journey to this lakeside village included a bumpy car ride, a 15 kilometre journey by motorised pirogue (a type of canoe), and the final stretch on a motorbike.

DONATIONS

Projects cost over £40,000 a year. Please support us to address inequalities between global north and south. We can always do more and our partners are keen to develop the work.

Donate online

- Donate to the Water Appeal at: bit.ly/QCPWaterAppealDonate
- Donate to our other projects at: quakercongo.org.uk

Donate by post

- Mark donation with the name of the project - e.g. **Water Appeal 2024** - or **General Purpose**
- Cheques should be made out to: **Quaker Congo Partnership UK**
- Send your donation or CAF vouchers to the Treasurer at:
2 Hurst Royd, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8HY



Supporting Health and Peace in Abeka

The Centre Hospitalier d'Abeka (CHA) was one of the key destinations of Catherine and Mark's visit. The CHA, currently supported by QCP, plays a vital role by providing healthcare and medical treatment to the local community. The hospital, however, faces ongoing challenges. A new toilet and shower block is under construction, but additional funds are needed to complete a paediatric ward and renovate other buildings. CHA staff reported that malaria, anaemia, and malnutrition remain widespread in the community, underscoring the importance of expanding healthcare facilities. Catherine and Mark had a useful discussion with the head of the health local authority to discuss plans for the future.

Catherine and Mark were met with warmth and generosity at the Centre for Education, Peace and Psychological support (CEPAP). In Abeka, they attended inspiring presentations from local groups. There is a network of youth peace committees and school based girls' clubs - les Clubs des Amis des Filles - and representatives from both of these make up the youth peace council.

Addressing Water Needs and Environmental Challenges

Another important stop was in Mukwezi, where the QCP team discussed their plans to provide clean water to the village. The community is reliant on lake and river water, and there have been recent outbreaks of cholera and other waterborne diseases. Mark and Catherine also visited the site of a health centre destroyed by floods, where a replacement structure is being built as funds become available.

Their journey back from Abeka included a visit to agricultural projects in Kikongo, led by AWID (Association for Women's Integral Development), which cultivates cassava and fruit trees and plans to diversify its produce. Despite some setbacks, such as a failed maize crop due to inadequate irrigation, AWID aims to introduce more vegetables, improve fruit production, and expand animal husbandry. Soap making and tailoring initiatives in Uvira, also run by AWID, provide essential income for women, and the organization hopes to establish a dedicated space for these programmes, with the addition of a juice-making enterprise if funding allows. A priority is funding for a new building in Uvira; to bring together these enterprises in one place. AWID's other aspirations include training local women as teachers and providing literacy and numeracy classes.

Strengthening Partnership and Capacity Building

Catherine and Mark's final days in the DRC focused on workshops and discussions around strengthening the partnership between QCP and local organizations. They held training on governance, management, and effective fundraising; all designed to build capacity within the community. A conversation about the future of the QCP-CEEACO partnership emphasised the mutual goal of finding additional funding sources to reduce dependency on QCP.



A Joyful and Hopeful Conclusion

The visit concluded with a vibrant Sunday church service in Abeka, where the community gathered to worship through song, dance, and reflection. Catherine and Mark were invited to speak on a passage from Proverbs: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country," a sentiment that echoed the community's enduring spirit and the partnership's mission of peace and justice. As a final gesture, the congregation carried stones uphill for a new building - symbolising the collective effort to build a brighter future.



The journey back included another border crossing with a brief glimpse of hippos basking by the lake — a fitting end to a trip filled with discovery, dedication, and a renewed commitment to positive change. Catherine and Mark's visit showcased both the depth of connection and the challenges faced by the DRC communities, with QCP's work offering vital support on the path toward health, peace, and sustainable development.



CENTRE FOR EDUCATION, PEACE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT (CEPAP)

Community Initiatives to Build Peace and Resilience

CEPAP run an extensive number of projects to promote peace, prevent violence, and empower young people and women. Catherine and Mark's visit offered an opportunity to assess progress and strengthen collaboration on these initiatives.



Psychological Support and Violence Prevention

One of the activities of CEPAP is psychological support, particularly to help youth and vulnerable populations. Prevention of sexual violence is a critical focus, especially in secondary schools where young people face unique pressures and risks at the end of the school year. Through peace actions and the work of network of Clubs des Amis des Filles (Friends of Girls Clubs), schools report no recent cases of sexual violence, and local authorities actively support the initiative to ensure that the educational environment is safe for girls.

Strengthening Youth Engagement in Peace and Environmental Efforts

During their visit, Catherine and Mark met members of the Youth Peace Council, including participants of the Turning the Tide peace training programme. These young leaders presented their reports and shared recommendations, emphasising their commitment to peace and community service. They requested funding to celebrate International Day of Peace and proposed an environmental project involving tree planting. The young people also expressed the need for mobile phones to better coordinate activities and communicate updates, as well as for small motivational funds to support their work. Funding has been sent for four smart phones but we are still looking for funds for the tree planting project. Since the visit, Quaker Peace and Social Witness has funded a five day workshop to train trainers for Turning the Tide. This workshop enabled the team to start applying and sharing the skills and knowledge of nonviolence with others in their respective communities. It will contribute to community cohesiveness, and a reduction in cases of community and domestic violence. Another five day course is planned for February: funding is needed for this.



Local leaders and state authorities shared positive reflections on CEPAP's impact, noting that the programmes have inspired a deeper moral commitment to peace. Community members, including state officials, have also shown strong support for CEPAP's ongoing efforts to address pressing issues like violence against women and degradation of the environment.

Empowering Women Through Education and Teacher Training

An inspiring aspect of the visit was hearing from young women engaged in the teacher training programme, an initiative that aims to empower women by giving them career opportunities in education. The programme, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, recently completed its second phase, and five young women are now ready and

willing to complete the final stages of training at a cost of \$500 each. We have recently received a generous donation towards this.



Catherine and Mark also met members of the Clubs des Amis des Filles, where young women told them of the pressing need for support in education and job opportunities. Additionally, the community faces severe resource shortages as people return to villages where infrastructure and homes were destroyed, leading to what locals describe as a “douleur de coeur” — a heartache borne from limited food, housing, and economic opportunities.

Key Challenges and Urgent Needs

The community's resilience is admirable but significant challenges persist. Funds for tree planting project, and training trainers in peacebuilding (Turning the Tide) are still needed. There is also a need for funds for the ongoing work to support victims of sexual violence and those targeted as “witches”.

This work serves as a reminder of the resilience and optimism in DRC communities striving for peace, safety, and education amid complex challenges. From supporting youth peace committees to building a stronger foundation for women's education, these initiatives reflect a commitment to lasting, positive change. With continued financial support, the work of QCP and CEPAP holds promise for a more peaceful and empowered future.



WATER PROJECT

A Special Visit to Mukwezi: Progress Towards Clean Water

Catherine and Mark's recent trip to the DRC included a memorable visit to the village of Mukwezi. Here, they witnessed firsthand the daily challenges faced by the community as women and children gathered water and washed clothes at the river. Their arrival sparked excitement, as they were quickly surrounded by a joyful group of children. During their visit, water consultant Alpha Zaki, along with Blaise and Ebulo, conducted an important assessment of the village's water needs. This work is part of the Quaker Congo Partnership's initiative to bring clean and safe drinking water to Mukwezi.



An older woman from the community shared her thoughts:

“The population of Mukwezi thanks QCP for bringing drinking water, which will be of lasting benefit. At the moment, we have to go to the river. There are risks, as it isn't drinking water, and there could be cholera. For now, people are patient, even though they must wait a long time for the supply to be installed.”

This visit reinforced the urgency of the work being done and the transformative impact it will have on Mukwezi. Clean water is not just a necessity; it is a lifeline for the entire community.



QCP ONLINE

- Website quakercongo.org.uk
- Youtube [Quaker Congo Partnership UK
bit.ly/QCP-YouTube](https://bit.ly/QCP-YouTube)
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- email quakercongo@gmail.com

Clean Water Coming to Mukwezi: A Three-Phase Pipeline Project

In a groundbreaking development for public health and community well-being, a comprehensive water pipeline project has been greenlit for the village of Mukwezi. This ambitious initiative aims to bring clean, accessible water to residents, addressing long-standing health concerns and improving the quality of life.

A Collaborative Effort

The project's inception stems from a detailed report by a water specialist employed by CEEACO. This expert update to the original survey has been meticulously crafted, taking into account the needs and preferences of the Mukwezi community. Extensive discussions with villagers and their leaders have ensured that the proposed locations for water outlets, known as "borne-fontaines," meet the community's expectations.

QCP Trustees' Involvement

Upon review of the specialist's report and proposed design, QCP trustees recommended several changes, further refining the project to best serve the village's needs. This level of scrutiny and collaboration underscores the commitment to delivering a high-quality, sustainable water solution.

The Three-Phase Approach

The water pipeline project will be carried out in three strategic phases:

Phase 1: Install main pipeline from reservoir above hospital to borne-fontaines around the village.

Phase 2: Extend the pipeline supply and additional borne-fontaines as far as the Mukwezi river.

Phase 3: Construct a pipeline crossing over the Mukwezi river, completing the network to the proposed endpoint beyond the river.



A Milestone for Public Health

Residents of Mukwezi have long expressed their desire for clean water, recognizing its crucial role in maintaining good health. This project is a significant step to meet this essential need.

Official Start

With the Water Project Agreements now signed in both French and English by all parties, the stage is set for a transformative journey towards improved water access. Work started on November 5th 2024. It is progressing rapidly; with full participation of the people of Mukwezi, and cooperation between local Quaker churches of CEEACO and the water engineering company KMS. Frequent reports to QCP UK show their determination to finish the work as soon as possible. At the latest report the pipeline has made excellent progress with 2.4km laid. It has reached the northern outskirts of Mukwezi where the first borne-fontaines will be installed. We look forward to completion and will report to our generous supporters as the work progresses.

ACTION FOR WOMEN'S INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Supporting Sustainable Livelihoods: A Glimpse into Women's Projects

Recent updates from the community-driven women's projects highlight a range of activities aimed at building sustainable livelihoods, improving education, and fostering the development of skills. These initiatives support agriculture, professional skills' training, education, and livestock farming. Together, they are enhancing community resilience and economic stability for vulnerable populations.

Agricultural Development: Nourishing the Community and the Land

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the project work. Recent activities focused on maintaining cassava and fruit tree crops, including orange and lemon trees. Regular weeding was carried out, and protection of the plants from pests, particularly green aphids. Efforts to secure the farmland were also

emphasised and fences were repaired to prevent animals from wandering into crop areas and damaging plants. These practices not only ensure better yields but also strengthen local food security and provide valuable income sources.



Skill-Building and Economic Empowerment: New Professional Opportunities

Professional skills' training is opening doors to economic self-sufficiency within the community. Soap-making continues to be a successful initiative, with proceeds from sales reinvested to sustain the project. The team has also begun raising awareness around juice production, encouraging community members to explore this as a new source of income.



Tailoring and Sewing: Empowering Young Women

The tailoring and sewing programme provides another valuable avenue for skill development, particularly for young women. To support the growth of this program, the project is actively seeking funds for three treadle sewing machines to enable the newly qualified young women to set up on their own. Meanwhile, the project will continue to train and mentor new trainees in tailoring, to start their journey to economic independence through the mastery of a practical trade.

Education: Building the Foundation for a Brighter Future

Education initiatives within the project aim to address literacy and numeracy for women who missed out on basic education. Local training, delivered through the women's agriculture, tailoring and soap programmes, are underway. This enables the most marginalised women and families to pursue literacy education, fostering greater independence and opportunity.. Additionally, the project is raising funds to cover school fees for orphans and other vulnerable children, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent them from receiving an education.

Expanding Digital Literacy

Digital skills are increasingly essential in today's world. Recognising this, the project has made significant efforts to increase digital literacy among local youth. They are actively seeking equipment and donors to support IT training, as well as conducting awareness sessions on the importance of computer skills. As the team notes, "those who do not know how to handle the computer will be illiterate." This push towards computer literacy empowers young people to access more opportunities in the modern economy.



Livestock Farming: A Small Yet Growing Venture

The livestock farming programme has also seen encouraging growth. From January to March, the project had eight goats, but four new births have increased the herd to twelve. This small-scale livestock farming is another way the community can improve food security, generate income, and diversify their livelihoods.



Overcoming Obstacles: Challenges on the Path to Progress

Despite the progress achieved, the project continues to face several pressing challenges. A lack of irrigation infrastructure has impacted crop resilience, especially during the dry season, which recently led to damage to maize plants and reduced yields. Additionally, the initiative has encountered difficulties due to limited equipment, which hampers efforts to expand agricultural and vocational training programmes. The expiration of the lease on the Kigongo field in June 2023 has further limited available farmland, intensifying the need for stable access to land for cultivation. Another setback is the absence of a dedicated building for professional skills' training and project activities. Addressing these issues is crucial for the sustainability and growth of these community-led efforts, and the team continues to seek support to overcome these hurdles and ensure the project's long-term success.

A Comprehensive Approach to Community Empowerment

Through these coordinated efforts in agriculture, skill-building, education, and livestock farming, the AWID project in the DRC is providing essential support to its women members. By offering economic opportunities, improving food security, and investing in education, the initiative is helping families to build more stable, self-sufficient lives in a challenging environment. These programmes stand as a testament to the power of community-led development and the hope that it brings for a sustainable future.

ABEKA HOSPITAL AND HEALTH

Working Towards District Hospital Status: Progress But Much Still To Do

The Centre Hospitalier d'Abeka (CHA), a key healthcare provider in this rural region, has been supported by QCP since 2009. It also receives some limited support from the Zone de Santé (government health service) but they have indicated any increase in such support (and hence reduced dependence on QCP), is dependent on the hospital achieving the standards set by government for a district hospital.

The main improvements identified by our healthcare partners in Abeka relate to infrastructure (primarily buildings), a reliable and sustainable energy supply (there is no mains electricity in the area) and equipment. Equipment needs have been significantly helped recently with support from the World Bank. Donations included new beds and mattresses, surgical and delivery kits, microscopes and a spectrophotometer for the laboratory, and clinical examination and operating theatre lamps. Unfortunately, some of the electrical equipment cannot currently be used because of the limited capacity of the hospital electrical system.

Over the past few years, QCP has been able to support modest improvements in infrastructure including electricity supply (solar panels and batteries) and equipment (e.g. ultrasound) and has supported community health worker training; but much remains to be done. An urgent project is in hand to provide the buildings and power supply required to make best use of the new equipment. The medical staff have also requested specialist medical advice (remote or on site) and we welcome enquiries from any interested party.



QUAKER CONGO PARTNERSHIP

2 Hurst Royd, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8HY

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I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

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Please notify the charity if you:

- * want to cancel this declaration
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If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

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If you bank online, set up your Standing Order there and send us the details.
Otherwise, please complete this form.

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Name of Bank

Account Sort Code ___ __ ___

Account Number ___ __ ___

Account Name

Beneficiary Quaker Congo Partnership UK

Beneficiary Sort Code 08 – 92 – 99

Beneficiary Account Number 65725825

Reference (inserted by QCP UK)

Amount: £ Amount in words

Each (month/quarter/year) on ___ __ / ___ __

From date of first payment ___ __ / ___ __ / ___ __

Payment to be made until further notice

Signed

Date ___ __ / ___ __ / ___ __

TO RAISE AWARENESS OF OUR WORK

A slide show of our projects is available

One of our trustees, Catherine Putz, has made a slideshow of the work of the Quaker Congo Partnership. If you would like to raise awareness of the work of QCP, perhaps to aid in fundraising, then please contact Catherine on 0778 306 0088 for details.

Shows can be arranged specifically for a meeting or a group.

