

QCP NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023



For peace, health, education
and the relief of poverty

www.quakercongo.org.uk

Facebook - Quaker Congo Partnership

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VISIT TO BURUNDI

Quaker Congo Partnership Trustees Nigel Watt and Fred Ashmore made a trip to Burundi in early October to meet Friends from QCP's partner church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CEEACO, Community of the Evangelical Friends' Churches in Congo).



CEEACO's Jean-Marie Malenga and QCP's Fred Ashmore sign the new partnership agreement

Congolese Friends made a trip to meet Nigel and Fred in Burundi which is quite close to the eastern end of the DRC. A visit to Burundi is straightforward to arrange (unlike a visit to the DRC which can be quite an effort). Nigel knows these Friends already, but Fred, recently appointed as Co-Clerk of QCP with Catherine Putz, felt a strong wish to meet our partners, and very much appreciated the meetings. We discussed the main strands of QCP's partnering work with CEEACO which are Peace-Building, Women's Development, the local Hospital in Abeka and a project being developed to bring clean water to another community in the area served by CEEACO. Fred also had an opportunity to experience African Quakers' approach to worship, which was rather different from our silent worship, and very passionate and enthusiastic.



DONATIONS

- You may donate online at www.quakercongo.org.uk
- Or send donations or CAF vouchers to the Treasurer at:

2 Hurst Royd, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8HY

Cheques should be made out to: **Quaker Congo Partnership UK**

Registered Charity Number: 1159781

ABEKA HOSPITAL AND HEALTH

Improving health - prevention is better than cure

Since 2009, QCP has supported a 45 bedded hospital in Abeka on the shore of Lake Tanganyika: the Centre Hôpital d'Abeka (CHA). The hospital was founded in 1993 by American Quakers and has operated continuously since, despite civil war from 2006 to 2009. Some support is received from the Zone de Santé (government health department) but most of the running costs are covered by patient fees and recurrent funding by QCP.

Aside from obstetric care, the most common problems presenting at the hospital include malaria, severe anaemia (largely related to malaria), malnutrition, and diarrhoeal disease. The preventable nature of these conditions has caused the doctors to look at ways to reduce them by working with local communities.

The rudimentary public health system includes a cadre of community health workers called "Relais Communautaires" (RCs) whose role is to provide health promotion advice and support to a defined group of households. The RCs are volunteers, selected by their community, and supported in principle by government staff at local Health Posts and Health Centres. However, in practice, they get limited training and support. The doctors sought to improve their effectiveness by collaborating with the Zone de Santé to improve and oversee support, particularly with respect to the most prevalent conditions. They suggested a two year programme to focus on 21 RCs in 6 areas, serving a population of about 10,500 people.



The Relais Communautaires

The proposed support included refresher training, provision of mobile phones to enable contact with health centres and the hospital, and bicycles to enable access to scattered rural households. The refresher training would focus on the following:

- Malaria prevention, including improved access to insecticide treated bednets and treatment.
- Advice on infant diet focussing on locally available foods with links to community agriculture
- A campaign to encourage people with anaemia to seek help at Health Centres/CHA rather than using unqualified private practitioners who give blood transfusions in the community.
- Promotion of access to clean water, with efforts to revitalise local water committees.

QCP was fortunate to receive funding from Education Services 2010 to carry out the work; which began in early 2022. Positive outcomes include a reduction in the rate of high risk transfusions, more timely consultation by malaria sufferers, earlier detection of malnutrition and restoration of meetings of the health development committee. Progress on promotion of the use of bed nets was delayed due to lack of available nets, but this has now improved. The lack of reliable safe water supplies remains a problem, and QCP is planning to extend the provision of clean water to a wider area. It remains a challenge to sustain the programme; and the possibility of a small levy on attendees at health centres is being explored.

ACTION FOR WOMEN'S INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

The AWID projects give women skills and resources to improve their livelihood by providing seed grants to women's groups for income generation and training in literacy, numeracy and technical skills.

Projects are: Soap-making, basketry, tailoring and dress-making and agriculture.

Women's soap making group

For 3 years, local women's groups in DRC have worked hard to obtain training and buy equipment for soap making. In 2020, some 22 women heads of family were trained in soap manufacture, thanks to donations from Friendly Soap of Hebden Bridge and Cosy Cottage soap of Malton. Both companies are craft soap makers in Yorkshire. Following a further appeal in 2022, the DRC soap makers obtained basic equipment and materials to establish a soap making workshop.

They plan to consolidate the workshop by sharing the training with other women craft producers, and extending their equipment and materials base. Soap is an essential item for families to reduce the spread of many communicable diseases and as a source of income at local markets. Surplus soap is also shared with extremely vulnerable elderly, orphaned and disabled neighbours. We are continuing to fund-raise for this important activity, which requires numeracy training as well as practical hands-on skills.



Women's Tailoring and Sewing group



The Tailoring and Sewing group is again up and running. These women have excellent skills in making dresses, jackets, shirts and other garments using textiles which are available locally. They have very viable plans to run their own small businesses, train other young women in tailoring skills, and sell on local markets and to local customers.

However, they shared two dilapidated treadle machines which constantly broke down, making it impossible for them to produce their beautiful garments and since 2017, production had ground to a halt. We were delighted to buy 3 treadle sewing machines and spare parts in 2022, enabling them to set up a workshop for up to 28 families to benefit from the new equipment. This was the result of donations from many individuals in the UK, who were inspired by their story.

Now, the women's Tailoring and Sewing group is up and running again. Many thanks to everyone who helped to make this happen.



Agriculture

The need for improved nutrition continues to be a vital issue, and malnutrition in children under 5 is a serious concern. In 2021, groups of women successfully cleared, fenced, irrigated and planted 2 fields of vegetables and corn in the Abeka and Kikongo area, thanks to fund-raising in the U.K. for basic tools and outlay. They work in groups to avoid the real threat of attacks by militia and kidnapping. With a wider range of vegetables, nutrition improved and allowed them a small income at the market. However, 2022 brought extended drought followed by floods when the rains came. An ambitious but rudimentary system of irrigation pipes broke down and fields of precious green vegetables were lost. Nevertheless, they continue to work with incredible ingenuity using a makeshift irrigation system and by germinating and growing seedlings using black plastic bags. They have a small herd of 5 goats with 2 kids in 2022. QCP AWID is seeking funding in 2023 to improve the field irrigation piping to provide a more reliable system and avoid the loss of many months of work when crops die from drought in the field. Donations welcome.



Vegetables were lost in drought when irrigation broke down

Women's Literacy and Numeracy group

Our DRC partners report that as the soap making activity is taking off, there is a need to build the capacity of the soap making members in literacy and numeracy. All of the women's groups would benefit from an opportunity for the most basic education and QCP AWID is also planning to seek funding to support this activity in 2023.

Donations to all of these activities are welcome and small contributions can make an immense difference to lives of the most disadvantaged families.

If you wish to donate to a specific project, please write its name - e.g. SEWING - in the message box on the website, on your cheque or on the bank transfer form. You may donate at quakercongo.org.uk or by bank transfer or cheque - see end of newsletter.





CENTRE FOR EDUCATION, PEACE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT (CEPAP)

The CEPAP project is building peace, working with young people, preventing sexual violence and providing one to one psychological support.

Campaign to protect mental health and dispel rumours in relation to persecution of witches

Funds are needed to start a campaign and work aimed to prevent mob violence directed at those thought to be witches in the eastern part of DRC. In the past in Africa sorcerers, mostly women, were honoured as guardians of wisdom and protectors of family members. Now they are hunted as devil worshippers and receive horrific treatment and deaths by shootings, burning alive or stabbing. Out of fear, other people commit suicide. Between January to November 2022 in the village of Makebola seven people were attacked and killed as they were thought to be witches.

CEPAP aims to bring people together to raise awareness and change patterns of behaviour and thinking, the project wants to address issues of drug and alcohol addiction, to stop people cursing others, to give hope to those suffering from chronic disease, and prevent violence that arises from government inaction and failure to bring those to justice who commit gender-based violence. The people who will benefit from this work will mainly be women. The initial day training meeting will look at factors that lead to individual or mass violent behaviour, and help raise community consciousness in order to identify possible traumatic situations. It is hoped there will be a decrease in extent of trauma. The vision is to change the situation and causes of mob justice and community violence.


At this stage we request \$1070 (£870) to bring 50 people together for a day of training and awareness raising.

Peace building work

There are two main strands to the peacebuilding work: Youth peace committees and peace clubs for girls in schools. In the autumn there were two events which brought members of these groups together.

International Day of Peace

A Conference on peace, security and development of young people was held on 13th October. This was to mark the International Day of Peace and funded through African Great Lakes Peace Trust. 'It is a blessed day of grace to work together reflecting on the promotion of peace.' This was an opportunity to strengthen the peace network and it opened the door to hearing the expectations of young people, their work, through face-to-face meetings with state leaders as well as other local leaders. The theme was: "**Youth, Let's Work Together for Peace**" 50 people attended. The participants welcomed the theme and 'They decided to abolish village and community boundaries to form a strong and viable circle of youth for peace.' The members of youth peace committees and girls' clubs are proud of their work and welcomed the chance to talk about it to local leaders.



"We are very actively encouraging such initiatives and pledging support for your social actions," said the Secretary of Tanganyika Sector on behalf of the state authorities. CEPAP staff will follow up this pledge.

Conclusions and recommendations: The girls would like to learn French and English. They asked for meetings to be organised to motivate young people and other community members not to bow to the mentality of failure; increase the confidence and self-esteem of Club members in order to break the silence about gender based violence; to accompany young people in the evaluation of the work of local and state organizations; to interest other organizations and people of good faith to be able to enhance the actions undertaken; to be able to make funds available for the World Day of Peace; to organize exchanges of experiences between young people.

"My name is VICTORINA, I am a member of the Club Amis des Filles. I know that Peace is a treasure to be jealously protected. But custom and our environment stand in the way of our involvement. Nevertheless, I will ask to multiply awareness among our parents to show them our usefulness in the practice of peace. I will also try to recruit other girls to the campaign".

Peace building training 22nd – 24th November

A three day training event was held in November funded by Radley Trust. There were 14 members of youth Peace Committees and 12 members of Club Amis des Filles.

Content of training:

- Knowledge and Skills Revision
- Information Management
- Psychoanalysis
- Poetry at the Service of Peace Education
- Exploring Trauma Healing
- Education between People of the same Generation (Peer Education)
- Conflict Resolution: A procedure to follow to resolve a conflict or problem
- Learn to explain to the other what bothers you
- Learning and wanting to listen positively to others
- Be prepared to find and protect the solution found
- Promote community trust
- Restoration of the Responsibility to Act among young people: The topic sparked a collective debate on the engagement of young people from peace committees and those of Club Ami de Fille in improving communication and trust between different voluntary actors working in peacebuilding.



THE DEVELOPING SAGA OF THE AMBULANCE

One of our Clerks visited Bujumbura in October and met friends from CEEACO to discuss the projects we are supporting and the many current issues that CEEACO is coping with.

We learned that the Centre Hospitalier Abeka has recently applied to become a General Hospital which seems appropriate in terms of the range of services it provides and the level of skill of the staff. We very much hope that this enhanced status will enable the clinic to attract funding from other sources to cover its many needs.

One of the needs for a proper hospital is an ambulance service. QCP helped the CHA in the past when the existing Land Rover ambulance broke down and could not be repaired locally. We funded the considerable cost of a motor cycle ambulance of a type that is widely used in other areas of Africa. It has a sidecar stretcher for the patient. Sadly it has not been easily accepted by the people in Abeka who have found it challenging to drive and difficult in the severe local conditions particularly in the wet season. We have had discussions about supporting enhanced training for drivers, but this has not yet happened.



During the discussions with QCP in Bujumbura, ambulance service was one of the hot topics. It is lamentable to hear about patients dying because they can't be transported. We discussed with them the issues with the broken down ambulance and some possible ways to restore service.

Later in the autumn, CEEACO staff decided that making progress on repairs depends on first getting the ambulance to a location with good mechanical services. The Nundu Medical Centre mobilised their vehicle and helped CEEACO by towing the old ambulance to Uvira. The picture shows the old ambulance on the dusty road to Uvira. The present plan is to get it to Bujumbura and a competent garage where it can be fully checked out and hopefully restored to service under the watching eyes of CEEACO staff.

We have been fortunate to have an anonymous donation to cover the suggested £6500 preliminary budget for the towage and costs of attendance and - possibly - some of the more critical repair items.

There is another option on the table which would be to part exchange the old ambulance with a used vehicle offered by one of our friends in Bujumbura. Regrettably the payment suggested to cover the difference between the old ambulance and the newer vehicle is very substantial and QCP doesn't currently have enough funds to provide that payment. Watch this space and also watch for a request for contributions.



VILLAGES OF ABEKA, MUKWEZI AND AKE HIT BY TORRENTIAL RAINS

On the morning of Saturday, November 26, 2022 there were black clouds accompanied by a strong wind. Suddenly, a torrential rain fell and caused huge humanitarian disasters.

Houses collapsed, roofs were washed away, two schools needing repair. The villages of ABEKA, MUKWEZI and AKE were the most affected where nearly 141 houses were damaged and were uninhabitable. The village of Abeka is close to Lake Tanganyika and is where the hospital supported by Quaker Congo Partnership is located and also the base for peace activities. This happened at the beginning of the rainy season but a storm like this had not happened before. Many people were in their fields so not able to rescue their possessions, and things were 'carried away by the wild waters.' The roofs of houses are either corrugated iron or straw so very vulnerable in heavy rain and gales.

Individuals linked to QCP sent some donations immediately for repairs but this kind of incident demonstrates the impact of extreme weather due to climate change and the precariousness of people's lives.



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Quaker Congo Partnership UK



News

Appeal launched after large fire destroys many homes

A large fire broke out in the city of Bukavu, DRC on October 27, 2022 from around 7pm until the next morning. These are poor people whose houses were made of wood and easily destroyed by the fire. 90 households, including 832 people, were affected. The victims are traumatised. All of their belongings were burned and the children have lost their school materials. More than 440 people are now homeless and left outside with no shelter. You can see some of them in the video below.



WATER PROJECT

We have made substantial progress with our project to extend the clean water supply that now serves Abeka and the hospital to the village of Mukwetsi nearby. We have a good grasp of the likely route of the new supply and where it would serve, but before embarking on detailed costings and fundraising, we require accurate information, on the GPS coordinates and elevations of the key points of the new water pipework.

Our friend Yutu Welongo, who has worked with us on various projects for many years, knows the area and the people well, and will support the project by carrying out the basic survey. A key requirement for this is a modern smartphone with the right software for the survey. It isn't very fancy software, but Yutu has been handicapped by not having any suitable smartphone at his disposal. We have been able to provide him with a new phone which will provide the necessary functions, and agreed on the scope and costs of carrying out the survey.

We hope that by the time you read this newsletter, we will be reading the survey report and be able to make progress on project costs. And of course, once we have the project costs, we will be inviting our Friends to help us build up the funds needed to actually achieve this important project for improving health and saving lives. As always, clean water saves lives.



Yutu Welongo

Please contact QCP (quakercongo@gmail.com) should you have any suggestions or are willing to contribute to the cost of this important project.

Thanks to trustees

At our meeting in December we said farewell and thanked two longstanding trustees. Andrew Gregory was the QCP treasurer for several years and together with his wife Margaret Gregory visited Abeka in 2016. The photos he took then have been very useful since especially in relation to bringing in clean water. As our treasurer we appreciated his eye for detail and record keeping

Nigel Watt brought much experience from his work throughout Africa and in particular in Burundi during his career in international development. He visited the QCP projects in DRC and met project leaders several times. He often helped with translation from French to English and vice versa. He will stay involved as an associate through being part of sub-group supporting peace building and his links with Conflict Minerals Campaign.

We thank them both for their valuable service.



LOOKING FORWARD IN HOPE AND TRUST

Holding an Awayday

Our Trustees decided that it is high time we took a hard look at our long term position as a charity, taking account of the impact of the pandemic, the ways in which Quakers are changing and developments in the world. This process is something definitely recommended for every charity - and indeed we have done this before in 2019. At the Trustee meeting in December we invited Wendy Hampton, BYM's Local Development Worker for Friends in NorthWest England, to assist and support us in our desire to think and talk about our images of the future. (Strategy development of this type is not a planning task, it's about visions and imaginings and possibilities. All these need to be overlaid with realism and knowledge; and it all requires significant time together to explore our views and attitudes.) This is not an easy exercise and requires significant time to explore our views and attitudes.

We held our conversations around our December Trustee meeting. Wendy shaped the meeting for our time together, planning to be with us twice over the weekend for several hours. Unfortunately Manchester weather thought differently, so our first session was carried out by Zoom with most Trustees gathered in the hospitable house of the Gregorys and Wendy snowbound at home. But it worked well.

Our second session was held at Mount Street Meeting House and this time the weather was kinder so that we were all together and Wendy could meet the Friends she had been talking with on Zoom the previous day.

We imagined we had reached 2027 and were looking back at the years between 2022 and 2027, reviewing the work, its problems and its successes, how we responded to challenges and what we needed to reach our goals.

The conclusions we reached were summarised by Wendy. (Wendy's summary at the end of the meeting identified several points which seem extremely important to us.)

- Profile raising for QCP
- Fund raising for specific goals.
- Communications within our group and with the DRC
- Skills building for us and for the DRC

These were developed in her fuller report on the work.

Trustees will consider specific actions so that we can take this learning further, and make sure that QCP is known and the work is visible and effective.

We acknowledge with warm thanks our debt to Wendy for her hard and skilled work with us and record our gratitude for the way she shared her insights and perceptions with us. We particularly appreciated her joining us at our meeting while in the middle of a house move. Combined with a bout of absolutely awful weather, this must have made the experience unforgettable. And we shan't forget her, I can tell you.



QUAKER CONGO PARTNERSHIP

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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, or will take place about three times a year on Zoom.

