

Improving schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Interim Report – May 2007 to October 2007



BEFORE AND AFTER: Kimbanseke primary school in March 2007 (left), and in September 2007 (right) after renovation. **Photo credit: Oxfam.**

The Background

School facilities are extremely poor in the DRC. Children share very over-crowded classrooms in run down or derelict buildings. Teachers lack support, training or knowledge of the national curriculum. Only half of children in the DRC attend school, and many drop out within five years. The lack of adequate schools is keeping future generations locked in poverty.

The Project

Oxfam and our partners are renovating school buildings, training teachers, supporting parents' committee members, and promoting girls' education in Kinshasa and Mbandaka – simple measures that are making a remarkable difference.

The Activities:

- Renovation work has been completed in 30 classrooms and is progressing well in 8 classrooms.
- Latrines are being constructed in Kimbanseke primary school and teachers and pupils have been trained in basic hygiene.
- Fifty-two parent committee members have been trained in Mbandaka and Kinshasa.
- Forty nine teachers and eight head teachers have been trained in Mbandaka

The Impact

Renovation of classrooms and offices

We held consultations with schools, parents committees and local authorities to agree the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the renovation of the schools: Oxfam agreed to supply building materials, provide technical support and help the community to put effective systems in place to help them manage the materials; the parents' committees took the responsibility of supplying the sites with water; and the schools took responsibility for securing the building sites. Fifty-five local builders were recruited to work on the renovation sites, which provided some income for their families.

Renovation work has been completed in thirty classrooms. Walls have been reinforced and painted white to improve the lighting; blackboards have been improved and widened; roofing has been replaced and new doors have been installed. The renovation work still to be completed includes

improving the flooring and painting in some classrooms and the finishing touches in others. All renovation work will be completed before January 2008.

Over 3,000 children are already benefiting from the vastly improved conditions in their schools. Classes are no longer disrupted by children having to shelter from the frequent tropical storms that affect this part of the country. Schools will now be able to provide uninterrupted study and this will vastly improve school performance. Classrooms are lighter, cooler and better aired so children can now concentrate on their work and no longer have to suffer stifling heat and poor lighting. The blackboards in the classrooms can now be easily read. The doors have improved security so school books and equipment can now be stored safely and parents won't have to contribute towards replacing missing items.

Construction of six latrines has started at Kimbanseke primary school. Teachers at this school were trained in hygiene practices and health education to ensure proper use of the latrines and also help reduce water borne diseases. They were taught how to keep the latrines clean and also some basic hygiene principles including the importance of washing hands and keeping food clean. The teachers passed these valuable lessons on to the children in their classes.

Refresher training to parents' committees

Fifty-two parents' committee members were given further training on their roles and responsibilities. 17 head teachers also attended this workshop. They were shown how to monitor the schools' budgets and lobby for better spending on education. The training also clarified the roles and responsibilities for both teachers and parent committees and other issues they had struggled with.

The parent committees are planning projects that will help them raise funds for the schools to buy much needed equipment.

The committees participated in the preparation of the school budget, during which, they were able to ensure that the school fees charged were not too high and that the school was clear on how they would spend these fees.

The inclusion of teachers in the training of parent committees created common understanding about each other's role on managing school resources and diffused any confusion and lack of trust that had existed.

Training teachers and head teachers

An agreement was signed with CCEPT, a local training organisation, for them to train the teachers and head teachers in Kinshasa and Mbandaka. The planned training has been successfully completed in Mbandaka and CCEPT will train teachers and head teachers in Kinshasa in December 2007.

Forty-nine teachers in Mbandaka were trained in: the use of the national curriculum and the relevant textbooks; effective and innovative teaching methods; classroom management and techniques to manage large and overcrowded classrooms. Eight head teachers were trained in school management and administration and advised how to support their teachers. None of these head teachers had received this kind of training before and welcomed this new initiative.



Parent Teacher Association members in Mbandaka being trained on how to assume their roles and responsibilities better and how to monitor the schools' budgets and lobby for better education. Credit Oxfam

Most participants of the training in Mbandaka fed back that the training they received had helped them to discover new ways of teaching or that it had simply improved the way that they teach. Pupils reported an improvement in the way that they were treated and supported by their teachers and said that more attention was given to them as individuals. Pupils also said they had noticed improvements from their head teachers, stating that they visited their classes more often and that this motivated both the teachers and the children.

Trainers visited 92 teachers in Mbandaka, who had been trained by the project in the previous year. The trainers reviewed the progress of the teachers and discussed any difficulties the teachers were having.

Inspectors reported that they have noticed great improvements in the teachers' preparation of lessons since the training, as they had previously been teaching without planning their lessons.

Teachers said that they had not previously known how to support children who were having difficulties or how to manage overcrowded classrooms. Since being trained, teachers have made tremendous efforts to support every child equally. They are actively involving children in the lessons and use more visual instruments such as pictures and other innovative materials. This has increased the children's motivation and participation during the lessons.

The head teachers now support teachers to structure their lessons. Teachers have said they are glad to see their head teachers give them this much-needed support.

Supporting meetings between committee members and education officials.

This activity will take place in the coming months, now that the first training sessions for the committees have been completed.

Raising awareness about the importance of education for girls

Discussions have taken place with three local organisations and debates and campaigns have been agreed. The first debates will take place in November 2007, and the campaigns will begin in December. Teachers will also be trained to ensure that girls and boys are treated equally in the classes.

Financial Report

Activities	Full year budget	Expenditure to date
Renovation of schools	£69,000	£51,169
Training and support given to teachers and parent committees	£37,000	£10,291
Campaigns and debates to raise awareness of girls' education	£6,000	£949
Project staff and running costs	£21,000	£15,497
TOTAL	£133,000	£77,906

Thank you for your generous support of this project.

The people

Janeline Bosombo, Mompepe primary school

Janeline is 12 years old, and studying in the fourth grade at Mompepe primary school in Mbandaka. He is enjoying the improvements to his school.

“Our school’s environment has really improved since the renovation. We can now read what is written on the blackboard, we can breath better in our classrooms, as they now have proper windows and doors. Even the bad smell has gone as the roof was infected with bats”



Janeline Bosombo. Student at Mompepe primary school. Credit Oxfam.

Pauline Bakonga, Mompepe primary school



Mrs Pauline Bakonga, teacher at Mompepe primary school. Credit Oxfam.

Pauline is a 5th grade teacher at Mompepe primary school in Mbandaka. She attended the eight-day teacher-training course provided by Oxfam.

“Before being trained on how to use the national curriculum and manage a classroom, I used to take ages to prepare my lessons and sometimes I did not do it as it was simply too hard. Since this training, I do not take hours anymore. In fact, I now meet together with the other teachers, to prepare lessons and this is a great learning exercise”

[Kokola Mavindi] – Deputy Head teacher at Kimbanseke VI Primary School

“The rehabilitation brings me joy,” enthused Kokola Mavindi, the deputy head teacher at Kimbanseke primary school “Before, the children sat in the dirt. Now they sit on benches. Their output is better. In the past, the school looked like it had been through a war. Now, it has a new ‘face”

