



THE CONGO TREE
Be part of the story

2020-2021

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



**THE
CONGO
TREE**

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Through a year of global and local turmoil, our team has carried on their fantastic work with the young people in the Congo. I'm constantly inspired by the creativity and dedication of the team and the young people. In Masisi, some inspirational young people started a microfinance project enabling 6 widows to develop small enterprises to support their families – this has now grown to 16 women who are better able to provide for their families.

One alumni commented on, "...the *hope* that the Congo Tree has given me..." and another was now able to, "...give *hope* to others and call them to change". The writer of the book of Proverbs says this, "Hope delayed makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life." My prayer is that The Congo Tree may be a tree of life, and an ever more powerful agent of hope in the years to come.

I commend this report to you. It contains so many stories of changed lives, and communities that are changing because of the inspiring and courageous young people that are part of the story. Finally, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for the part you play in making this happen.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's clear that this year has been unlike any other in our experience. We've faced challenges, learnt about resilience, and probably felt emotions more keenly than before. We may have developed new skills, connected or reconnected with friends, or finally had a chance to explore things we are passionate about. Hopefully we have uncovered new ways to feel joy, peace and hope. Perhaps in some ways, this year has been like a virtual WYLD programme for us all.



At The Congo Tree, 2020 was a year of creatively exploring how to do what we do in new ways and how to reach our communities from a social distance. We filmed our training sessions, developed poster campaigns to share health information, and sent thousands of WhatsApp messages to support as many young people as possible. This was no small feat, and I am hugely proud of both our team and the young people we work with. In the midst of lockdowns, our programmes remained active with smaller group meetings and many, many phone calls. Developments in technology allowed our teams to connect regularly to problem-solve 'face-to-face' and share messages of hope.

This Annual Report for 2020-2021 is not about the influence of a virus, but about the infectious, empowered, world-changing passion of young leaders for their family, friends and communities.

MESSAGE FROM THE DRC TEAM



It is a great joy for us to be part of the story of so many young people through the WYLD programme in the year 2020-21, a year that has seen many challenges with COVID-19. The months of lockdown encouraged us to be even more creative in our way of doing things, especially to inspire young people to think ahead and persevere to achieve great things. We applied the proverb that says, 'great evils require greater remedies'.

Several strategies were put in place to ensure that we could continue to mentor young people during COVID-19. During this period, security situation did not improve much in the eastern part of DR Congo, with conflict and violence occurring in Masisi and parts of Rutshuru. Our young people have been peacemakers by passing on messages of peace through their families and this has had a considerable impact. This year, we saw first hand that young people remain the only hope to solve many problems in the community and it is our role to boost them so that they can have the confidence, knowledge and skill to take things in hand.

Many thanks to all the friends of The Congo Tree who have accompanied us to be part of the story of the young people in DR Congo in 2020-21.

THE CONGO TREE STAFF AND BOARD

ORC TEAM



Medi Muyisa



Sage Dunia



Liz Kitholu



Toussaint Muvuye

UK TEAM



Philippa Walusimbi



Harmony Ngwamah



Chloe Russell



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Zsuzsanna Jakabfi



Muhindo Malunga

THE WYLD PROGRAMME



The World Youth Leadership Development (WYLD) Programme is the core pillar of The Congo Tree's way of working, enabling us to work towards our vision of inspiring, equipping and supporting youth. Through activities, challenges and discussions that catalyse peer learning, this programme helps young people to understand their roles in solving problems in the community. We know that young people are going through many challenges within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and

our role, as an organisation, we are committed to the empowerment of young people, to walking alongside them on their journey and supporting them as they choose the best paths to follow.

This year, The Congo Tree continued with the WYLD Programme in North Kivu, with two cohorts in Goma, and one cohort in both Masisi and Rutshuru. This has allowed us to work with 80 young people, who have actively taken part in the programme and are taking on many of the challenges in the community with visible and considerable impact. In the following pages you will see the results of this year's evaluation of how our young people got on.

Our young people are fully committed to The Congo Tree, to their WYLD programme, and to each other; mentoring has created a bridge and an informal platform between young people from different ethnic groups and backgrounds, particularly in Rutshuru and Masisi; two areas still coping with active violence and conflict, as well as dealing with their respective histories.

Through the WYLD programme, young people learn to regard each other as valued individuals, and as part of a team. They share their perspectives, listening to other points of view and learning from each other. In these conversations and in the supportive, neutral space created by our team, young people are beginning to understand and safely confront their histories, and agree to live together in a peaceful way. Together, they can meet the challenge to fight for a better life and discover the huge and positive impact they can have on building a better world, for themselves and others.



THE WYLD PROGRAMME

The WYLD programme helps young people develop a variety of recognised transferable life and leadership skills including: communication, creativity, problem-solving, entrepreneurial capability and leadership with integrity.

97.5%

said their level of knowledge developed during the WYLD programme a good or a vast amount

94%

said their capacity to resolve problems improved to a good or vast amount

98%

said their leadership skills improved a good or vast amount



THE WYLD PROGRAMME

97.5%

said they were mostly or completely pleased with the programme

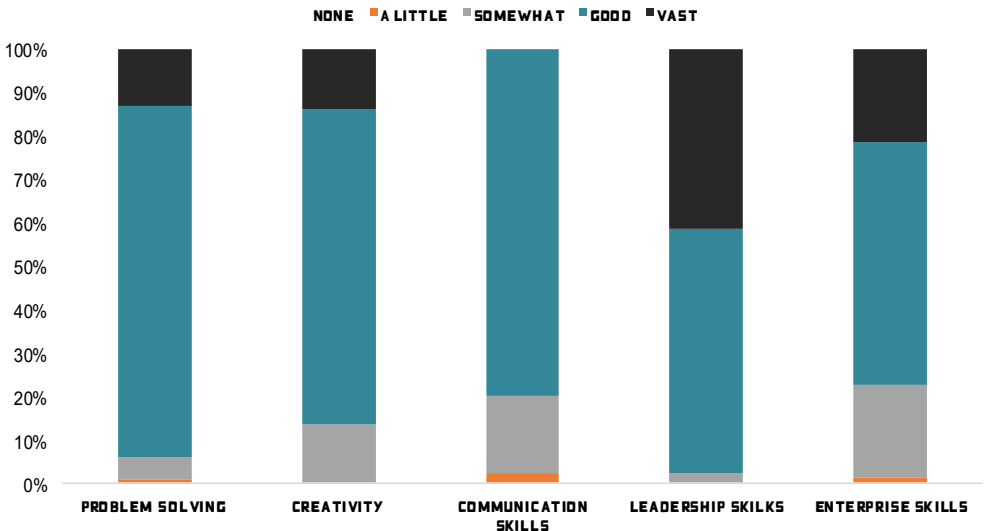


96.25%

said that the quality of learning was good or excellent

The WYLD Programme helps young people to develop five recognized transferable life and leadership skills: communication, creativity, problem-solving, entrepreneurial capability and leadership with integrity. Each year we ask our young people to evaluate their progress in the aforementioned skills. We have recorded the results below:

Q. HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOUR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED THROUGH YOUR TIME WITH THE CONGO TREE?



THE WYLD PROGRAMME

TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is a narrative and art therapy programme aimed at helping people deal with past trauma and move on with a better sense of identity, increased resilience and hope. As part of the WYLD programme, each cohort goes through a Tree of Life session before their start their mentoring journey.



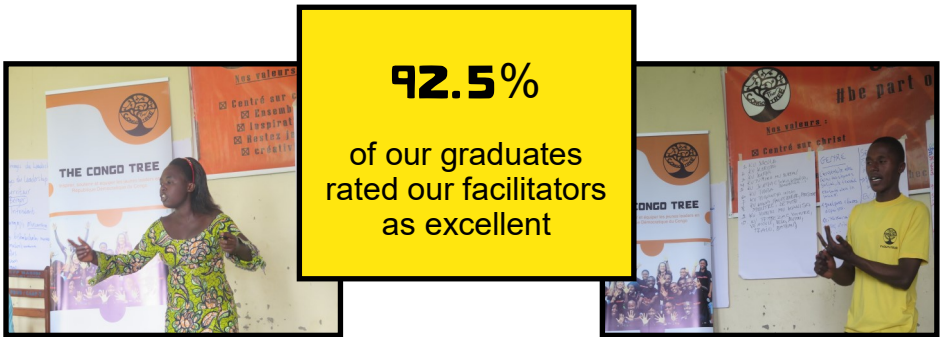
For so many of the young people, the session has been a helpful and important session in beginning to understand themselves personally, and in getting to know their teammates and mentors. Some of the young people were surprised by other people's stories; to discover how and why others made the decisions or acted in the ways that they did in the situations they faced. They also recognised that life always has its 'storms' and troubles that happen, as well as many moments of celebration and joy.

Through sharing stories with one another, the young people could recognise the challenges that individuals encounter in their communities, to know that they are not alone, nor the only person to experience difficulties.



There is more information on The Tree of Life approach at: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/

FACILITATORS



Our WYLD programme would not be possible without the outstanding dedication of our Facilitation Team. These leaders have all graduated from previous WYLD programmes and have chosen to give their time voluntarily to share what they have learnt with many more young people in our new cohorts.

Graduates from WYLD can apply for Facilitator Training. Being a training style distinct from teaching or preaching, facilitation requires training, practice and development. At The Congo Tree, we do this with two days of initial training, followed by six months of practicing and developing the skillset alongside our experienced facilitators, who observe our trainees to share feedback and encouragement. After six months and if they have passed our internal assessment, they will have earned their coveted yellow facilitator t-shirt to become an official part of the team!

In December we organised a training session for our team of facilitators in Masisi. This was an opportunity for us to strengthen our existing team of facilitators and equip three new facilitator trainees.



MENTORING

100%

Intend to stay in contact with their mentor or mentee after graduation

From April 2020 to March 2021, we had **40 Young Leaders (YLS)** who were mentored by **40 Leader Mentors (LMs)** in Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru.

Every participant in our WYLD Programme is put into a mentoring pair, either as a Leader Mentor or Young Leader (mentee) based on their age, experience and capacities.

The mentoring aspect of our programme is an essential part of each young person's year-long journey, during which Leader Mentors take time to share life with their Young Leader mentees, for at least one hour per month. The majority of mentoring pairs meet beyond one hour per month because of how valuable they found the experience to support them attaining their goals.



Goma

In Goma we had two cohorts participating in the mentoring programme. Each group was made up of 26 young people (12 girls and 14 boys) who are divided into Leader Mentors and Young Leaders.



Masisi and Rutshuru

In both Masisi and Rutshuru we had 1 cohort which comprised of 7 mentors and 7 mentees.

ALUMNI

We are so proud of our alumni and we have close to 1000 alumni since starting our work eight years ago. Our alumni love to stay in touch with us and share their stories of how The Congo Tree has changed their lives and those around them. Here are three stories from this year:

Amos* is a mentee who took part in our programme as a result of our partnership with Heal Africa. Thanks to the social action project challenge run by The Congo Tree, Amos was able to start a small business. They are now making baskets and selling them to support their basic needs.

"For me, the hope that The Congo Tree has given me has allowed my life to have meaning and to discover that, in my weakness, I can still fight hard and become a role model for many people."



Chantal has been gathering young people in her local community to start discussions around personal values and values that are acceptable in the community. She tells us that she was inspired by the mentoring sessions and monthly meetings that she took part in with The Congo Tree to start her own personal project of informing and influencing those close to her - her family and her neighbours.

"I try to be a role model to influence them positively, as well as to see them change, especially in their way of thinking. I would like them to understand community and to make changes according to their individual talents."

Javan says that he was inspired by The Congo Tree to start his own business. In October 2019, Javan started with 5 chicks and at the time of getting in touch with us he had more than 50. He is currently supplying his chickens to different hotels and restaurants in the Rutshuru area, which has enabled him to provide for the needs of his family.



"The challenges we had in the training allowed us to open our eyes and see far into the future because, as leaders, we need to have a vision but also to know how to achieve this!"

SOCIAL ACTION AND ENTERPRISE

The Congo Tree provides each team of young people on the WYLD programme with \$100 for the development and delivery of a social benefit project that they design and run. This 'Be Part of the Story Challenge' has three main aims:

- To inspire young people to be a part of changing society from within by modelling what it is to work creatively together for peace, with integrity and for the benefit of their team and the wider community,
- To be a safe space for developing skills and building resilience through the learning around success and failure, and how to support each other in this,
- To be able to support themselves and their families, to practice their skills and create opportunities for future employment.

Marie is a young woman from Rutshuru who is now selling bags of cassava flour. When she spoke to us she was happy to tell us that her bags of flour are the most in demand in her village, because of the quality. She first started with one bag and when she spoke to us she was able to supply five bags. Not only that, she set up a group for 30 young women who want to learn how to better manage their finances so that they can save money for their future plans.

"So my work all day long is to give hope to others and call them to change because they are also capable of doing powerful things and having value in the community."



SOCIAL ACTION AND ENTERPRISE

MASISI

Microfinance: One of our other groups in this cohort identified six women who lost their husbands as a result of war and thus became the main providers for their family. Our young people gave each of these women a portion of the money to start their own businesses. With this input, the women have been able to purchase food for the family, pay for health care and schooling.

Each month the women reimburse the young leaders and then the young people select other vulnerable women that they can support to start a business. They have encountered some challenges due to insecurity, which meant there was a break in repayments. However with an increase in stability, the projects have been able to continue as planned. At the point of writing they have supported 16 women in total.

GOMA

Ndazi (donuts) : One of our groups identified that one of the biggest problems in their community was children dropping out of school due to a lack of financial provision.

This group decided to use their money to make and sell donuts commonly known in Goma as Ndazi. With the profits made they were able to cover school fees for five vulnerable children.



Miel (honey): Another group identified the need to substitute sugar for honey to improve the diet of the local population. As a result they created their own honey and distributed among 20 pilot households, educating each of them of the importance of the substitution for their health and wellbeing.

COVID-19

CAMPAIGN AGAINST COVID-19 (CAMPAGNE ANTI-COVID-19) JUNE 2020

In April 2020 we launched the Anti-COVID-19 Campaign. There were two main aims of the campaign. The first was to make people more aware of the necessary hygiene measures in order to protect themselves and others from the virus. The second aim was to guard people against the misinformation that was circulating in the community by providing the right information and myth-busting.



Several strategies were employed to spread the message in the community. This included sharing images on social media, Google forms, a video message and a message of hope. Our campaign engaged people far outside of Goma and beyond the Democratic Republic of Congo, reaching all the way to organisations in France and the US.

Social Media: within three months, more than 7458 people were reached via our Facebook page, including 723 young people who have gone through the WYLD Programme. We recorded over 6000 views of the social media posts detailing the importance of wearing masks, washing hands and respecting social distancing rules.



Google Form: In May 2020, our team launched a Google form to assess the level of understanding of COVID-19 and to better understand the false information that was being circulated in the community. Over 427 responses were received. There were many messages of gratitude and the team made sure to respond to participants with the correct information.

Video Message: In June 2020, the team created different videos illustrating the best personal responses in different social scenarios and shared them on social media. Scenarios informed about and highlighted the importance of hygiene practices and wearing masks.



Message of Hope: These were formed and delivered by the young people themselves. They shared them with each other and with supporters around the world.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

ACTS OF KINDNESS

As we do every year, our Day of Kindness with gave our young people the opportunity to show love to other people in their community. In 2020, we visited 90 vulnerable children to give them clothing, food and shared a message of hope for a better future. We also played games and saw many smiles!



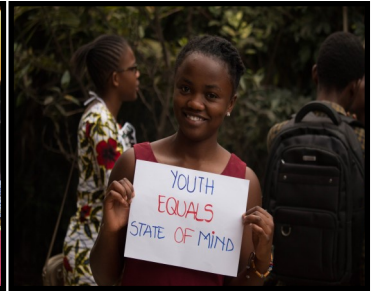
INDEPENDENCE DAY

30 JUNE 2020



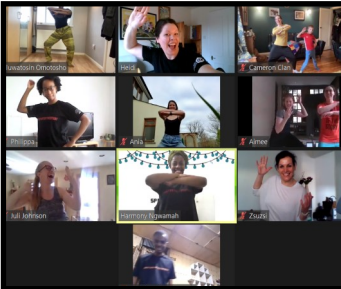
BOOK CLUB

15 JULY 2020



WORLD YOUTH DAY

12 AUGUST 2020



BEWYLD SPRING FEST

20 MARCH 2021



AYA

JULY 2020



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 MARCH 2021

PARTNERSHIPS

BBOXX



In February, we had the pleasure of meeting with BBOXX. They are an energy company that has taken on five of our WYLD alumni as staff. Like us, BBOXX work to equip and inspire young people. We wanted to acknowledge this amazing work with a certificate.

“We find a big positive difference in the way young people who have gone through The Congo Tree work: they are innovative, can work well in teams and above all, know how to discover a problem to which we can find solutions.

Their way of communicating with others is unique and this makes them more accepted by their colleagues.” - Mrs Divine Alice Kabolette, Chief Of Culture and People at BBOXX.

Administration of Rutshuru

We have been working in Rutshuru for three years and in that time we have developed a good reputation, to the extent that the Administrator of the Rutshuru Territory had some encouraging words to say about us.



“You are a great organization and you have been doing great things for the community. All these young people that you are mentoring are useful for the development of our territory. The youth has the strength but also has great visions for considerable change.

Investing in youth is a huge benefit for the country. I am simply asking you to continue to do even more, to reach out to areas of conflict, to talk with youth and inspire their way of seeing things. Any problem in our community is first and foremost an economic one. If you work with young people and they can be creative and solve their economic problems themselves, you will be doing an extraordinary job.”

PARTNERSHIPS

Butembo-Beni



In February 2021, the DRC team visited the towns of Beni and Butembo to do a study and assessment of the areas' needs. The towns of Beni and Butembo have been through the Ebola virus crisis which led to many deaths in the community with more than 2500 deaths. The crisis put a stop to many activities, halted economic growth, in turn affecting the development of the young people in the area.

We hope that with the programme that we run at The Congo Tree, we can adapt our programme to support the specific needs of the young people in the towns of Beni and Butembo. The visit in February 2021 was the beginning of our conversations with the administrative authorities on the possibilities of organizing the WYLD Programme for the young people of Butembo. We also had a meeting other organisations that work with young people and presented them with certain methods they could implement to encourage the young people that they work with.

RAKI

We were proud to take part in the 2020 RAKI conference in Goma, where we sat on the expert discussion panel and took a number of our young entrepreneurs and their goods to share ideas with and learn from others.



FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME

Total income: **£20,216**



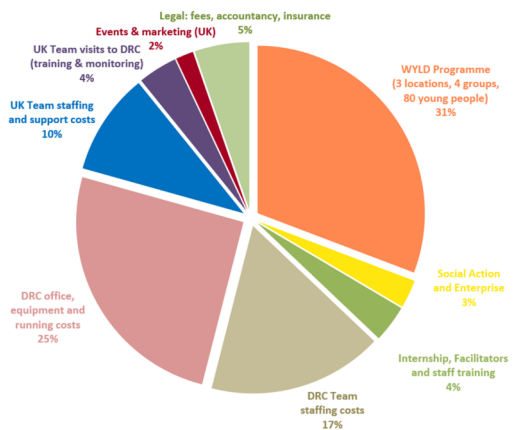
Many thanks to our donors:



EXPENDITURE

Total Expenditure: **£23,825**

83%
TO DRC



Carried into 2021-22: **£2,140**

STRATEGIC REPORT

In May 2019, we established a new three-year Strategic Plan for the sustainable development and expansion of The Congo Tree in DRC.

Our Aims 2020-21

Aim #1: Growing the WYLD Programme

- ⇒ We continued the WYLD Programme by recording short videos of our monthly meetings in response to the COVID-19 restrictions.
- ⇒ Whilst working with restrictions, we managed to start two new cohorts in Goma in July and September 2020.
- ⇒ We were unable to hold graduation ceremonies this year due to public gathering restrictions. All of our programmes were extended by three months to support young people during this difficult time, and as soon as we can, we planned for future celebrations. The first of these celebrations saw our young people in Rutshuru receiving their certificates in February.

Aim #2: Supporting our Alumni

- ⇒ A good response from our alumni to our Anti-COVID-19 Campaign.
- ⇒ We continue to see good engagement from a number of our alumni who have returned to join our Facilitation Team.

Aim #3: Sustainability, securing our future and good reputation in DRC

- ⇒ We have had much recognition for our efforts in COVID-19 prevention. We were asked to attend an invite-only meeting with the North Kivu Governor's Office with around 20 specialist INGO's, to discuss how young people could be involved in informing and educating communities. We shared our activities so far and also learned what others were doing - it was encouraging, good for networking and potential partnership working.
- ⇒ We received the Hope Prize by the organisation Congo Excellence for the positive way in which we represent young Congolese people to the world.
- ⇒ We are now officially registered with the Division of Youth in North Kivu province.

Aim #4: Supporting our teams: staff and volunteers

- ⇒ The UK and DRC teams increased their use of Zoom meetings to get to know each other better, strengthen the teams and instigate more shared working. We also undertook virtual training together.

STRATEGIC REPORT

Aim #5: Programme Development

- ⇒ Our Mentoring Pack has been reviewed as we work towards further development of the mentoring scheme.
- ⇒ We recorded key aspects of our monthly meeting sessions as videos that could be shared on social media while restrictions prevented us from meeting together with our young people.

Aim #6: Creative Enterprise and Social Action

- ⇒ COVID-19 limited the activity of some of the projects, with restrictions in mind, it was reported that the teams performed well in most locations.
- ⇒ New projects were set-up by the new WYLD programmes, including the Ice Cream project and other case studies shared in this report.

⇒

Aim #7: Partnerships

- ⇒ Relationships with existing partners such as HEAL Africa have been solidified following the success of the joint WYLD programme, whilst new relationships have established with a number of other youth development organisations - both local and international.
- ⇒ A new partnership was established in Butembo in order to prepare for our pilot programme.



#BEWYLD



Come and be WYLD with us and support a place on a WYLD programme for only £100 / \$120 or £8 / \$10 per month!

We have cohorts of young leaders in Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru. We need supporters like you to give these leaders of tomorrow a life-changing experience.

#BEPARTOFTHESTORY

We couldn't do any of what we have reported on without the amazing financial support of generous people - thank you to everyone who has given to us in 2020-21!

If you would like to start giving, or even increase your support, you can find all the information you need at:

www.thecongotree.org.uk/donate

And there are loads of other ways that you can get involved!

- Volunteer with the UK Team
- Join or support our Board of Trustees
- Get sponsored
- Host us or run a fundraiser for us
- Support a young entrepreneur or team with a specific social action / creative enterprise project
- Gifts in kind
- Invite us into your school

**If you're interested in finding out more, please contact us at:
hello@thecongotree.org.uk**

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS:



www.savoirplusblog.art.blog



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