



**THE
CONGO
TREE**



ANNUAL

REPORT

2022 – 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE BOARD



As we look back on the first 10 years of The Congo Tree, it's a time for celebration, recognition, and evolution. Celebration of all that has been achieved until now and the real and lasting change seen in the lives of the many young people we've been working with in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Recognition of hard work and dedication - not just of our colleagues and young people in the DRC, but also to you, your support, and your gifts that have made this journey possible. Evolution in how The Congo Tree can build from the strong roots planted in these 10 years and see new branches form in this next phase.



At this juncture it is also a moment of change on the Board of Trustees as some of our longstanding members take a step back and hand over the baton. As such, we (Lucy and Ben) have been elected as co-Chairs, and we are humbled to be entrusted with this role. We'd like to give a special note of thanks to our former Chair, Steve Bavington, for all his hard work, vision and wisdom that he has given to the organisation during his time as Chair. We also want to thank other Board members who have stepped down this year for their dedication and passion for The Congo Tree throughout the good and difficult times.

As we go into 2024, and on behalf of the Board and The Congo Tree, we thank everyone who has been part of the story so far and we look forward to seeing where it takes us in the years to come.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I'm sure I say this every year, but I feel so proud, privileged and grateful to be part of the story of The Congo Tree. This year, the intensity of that feeling is felt ten-fold, perhaps aptly, as we reached our 10th anniversary and completely smashed our target of inspiring, equipping and supporting 1000 young people by that date.

I'll be honest, joy has been tinged with the bittersweet, with not being able to celebrate in person with the team and young people this year - unfortunately insecurity and personal circumstances made it impossible to travel as planned, despite a 9-month sabbatical from paid work to give some concentrated time to the strategic direction of the charity.



However, we have amplified a sense of togetherness through the ever-increasing post Covid-19 technological developments, which have provided more regular and stable options for mentoring, monitoring and just catching up as a 'family' - one of the only immediately identifiable positive outcomes of the global pandemic. This has also boosted options for sharing news with our supporters, which many of you will have experienced with us. This annual report will reflect that and also hopefully remind us of the need to share more than just snippets on social media, and is entirely compiled by our team in the DRC - I hope you will read it and hear the voices of young leaders, telling you what a truly remarkable year, and ten years, it has been.

THE STAFF TEAM AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

DRC TEAM



Medi MUYISA
Assistant Director



Sage DUNIA
Programme Coordinator



Binet Paul
Engagement Officer



Benite KABEZA
Inclusion Officer



Sephorah BILUGE
Organisation Officer

OUR TEAMS IN MASISI AND RUTSHURU



UK TEAM



Harmony NGWAMAH
Supporter Engagement Officer



Chloe RUSSELL
Grants and Fundraising



Heidi BENTLEY
Director

Ben BARTLETT
Co-Chair



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lucy BAMFORTH
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Muhindo MALUNGA



Amy CUMMINGS



Sarah PATEL



Steve BAVINGTON



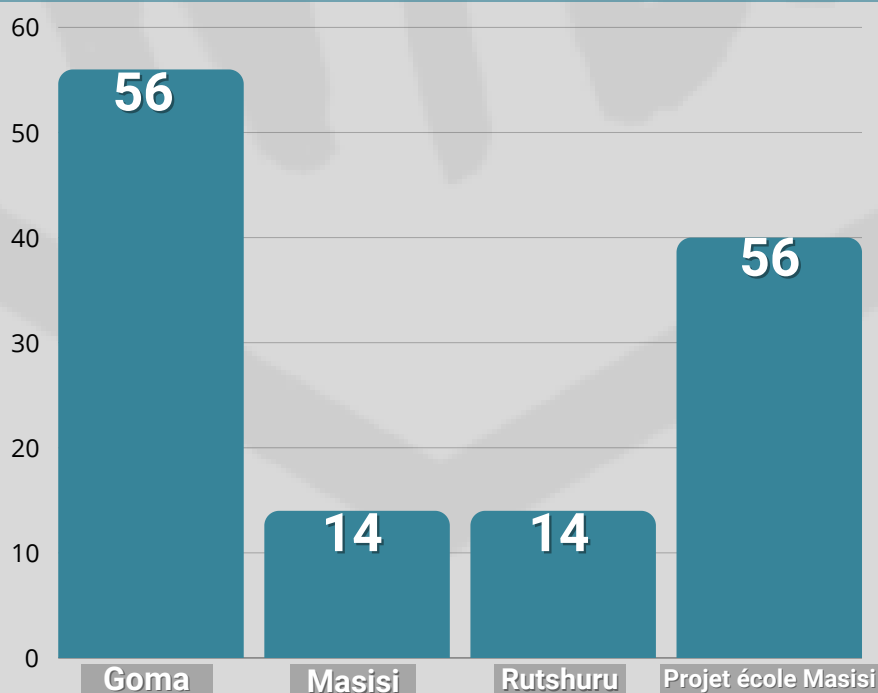
Zach HAIDER

THE WYLD PROGRAMME



Working with young people in the DRC, the WYLD programme uses peer learning and teamwork challenges to help young people develop. WYLD helps them to understand their potential role in solving community problems, positioning them as key agents of change. In a context where over 70% of the Congolese working population is under the age of 30, WYLD responds to current challenges, including armed conflict in the east of the country. Through our vision and mission, we offer young people the opportunity to become builders of peace and catalysts for change by supporting them to develop essential skills and inspiring them to realise greater aspirations.

This year, WYLD has directly reached 124 young people in Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru, having a positive indirect impact on thousands of young people in these communities.



This year has been particularly difficult in the rural areas of the DRC, with serious conflict and armed group occupations of many territories. The Congo Tree team has multiplied its efforts to reach out to young people and develop their resilience through training sessions and mentoring. As well as increases in the five main transferable skills, these were some of the results gathered from our young people:



Said our facilitators were excellent or good



Quality of knowledge development



Appreciation of the content of the WYLD Programme



Improvement in confidence of problem-solving skills



Facilitators in action



With a large team of 40 facilitators, we have not only equipped young people with skills but have also invested in these young leaders, who have now developed their own ways of facilitating. The experience of facilitating sessions with us opens up many opportunities

for our Alumni in employment and community leadership. Our Facilitators act as ambassadors in the community, carrying the values of The Congo Tree and encouraging young people to apply for our programmes.

Testimony

"Thanks to facilitating with The Congo Tree, I've developed my character, but I've also understood that passing on what I have learned to other young people makes me more useful for a better world. Today, I'm a role model for young people and I share my values, which benefit many others. Being able to speak in front of a small number of young people now, my vision is to be a great speaker in the world".

Franck Kakozi, Facilitator

TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life programme is a psychotherapeutic tool, run in addition to the WYLD programme. Tree of Life has been a great support in understanding the life stories of our young people, helping us to learn how they cope with the challenges they face and helping them to develop greater self-awareness. These are key aspects of supporting them to expand their circles of support and influence, as well as character and personal development. Tree of Life is a foundation to the mentoring programme, helping the young people in the WYLD programme to understand each other better and to overcome the trauma of the conflicts experienced individually or within their community.

This is based on :

- Mutual knowledge of origins and identity
- Understanding each other's other skills and having a clear vision
- Being part of each other's history and creating solutions in the community
- Insight into problems and prevention of solutions

144

young people have benefited from the Tree of Life programme, with an indirect positive impact on 1,500 young people in the community.



TEAM OF LIFE

This year, we returned to Nyiragongo after our emergency actions in May 2021. Working alongside our friend and practitioner Michelle Smith, we launched the Team of Life programme, to help children understand community and teamwork. 60 children have been directly reached, with positive indirect impact on more than 400 others.



62

Mentoring pairs, in Goma and Masisi*

From young people's self-evaluations and testimonies:

97%

of young people said that they had broken away from tribalism and now actively promoted working with others from different backgrounds

100%

decided to become actively involved in income-generating activities to support themselves and their families, a decision that came from their mentoring relationships

96%

mentioned the importance of the inclusion of gender in their communities

Mentoring Story

"I've had a great year, and the fact that I've had to adapt my direction to that of a young person has been a great experience. I really like the sincerity [my mentee] showed and the objectives set during the year helped us to understand that Camodry wanted to succeed as an artist, and also wanted to be part of a change in his neighbourhood. He was struggling to fit in within his community, as he felt his youth was a barrier and that others were far more knowledgeable than him. This young man was passionate about slam poetry, and we worked on his confidence; today he is starting to represent the province in various slam competitions. During our mentoring year, he was in his final year of studies. Unfortunately, he didn't pass his state diploma, and that really destabilised him for a while. As a result of the high level of resilience I helped him to develop, he agreed to go back to school and try again to get his state diploma, to complete this part of his education. I'm glad that Congo Tree has given us the space to train and develop our leadership skills."

Blaise: Leader Mentor to Camodry

*Unfortunately, active conflict and subsequent displacement of communities in Rutshuru during the year did not allow for young people to come together in mentoring pairs.

MASISI SCHOOL PROJECT

Our second year with 'Projet Ecole' in Masisi territory has taught us a lot. We met young people in Masisi who had so much potential but no opportunity to discover it: these are young people with great vision but with few people to encourage or guide them. For the second year, we worked with two schools in Masisi, with the aim to support formal education through informal education, working within schools to develop the life skills of young people.

40

young people directly impacted, with an indirect positive impact on more than 1,300 students in two schools



"I am very proud to discover myself and to understand that I am also capable of participating in the development of my community. For a long time, I was in despair because I was born in a small remote village in Masisi with a lot of tribal conflicts, but today I shine with hope and a lot of courage, because I know that change starts with me. My school and my classroom are the first place where I can utilise my skills and influence. Thank you so much to The Congo Tree for this opportunity to be a leader.

Balume, Projet Ecole student

87%

of our students say they have developed their leadership skills

96%

say they are solution-makers in the community

86%

say they have developed in resilience that enables them to face the various challenges in the community.



ALUMNI

Sageesse NYANGE, part of the WYLD Programme in 2014.

I had a big problem with self-acceptance and self-confidence for several years, which meant that I couldn't believe that I could also be an influential person in society. This challenge was linked to the words that I listened to, spoken by my close friends and some members of my family who underestimated me. I believed what they said and these wrong beliefs influenced my life a lot.

In 2014, I was introduced to The Congo Tree when I was going through a very difficult crisis of self-confidence. During the few days I spent with the young people at the training course, I realised that the problem wasn't me, but that I had believed a lot of bad things other people had said about me. Thanks to the session on self-knowledge, I discovered a lot of my strengths and I've been able to focus more on that to develop even further.

This training has been useful to me in several areas of my Christian leadership including what I learnt about leadership in the image of the servant, the shepherd and the steward. These images of the leader helped me to understand my responsibilities as a leader in the community. Today, I work with structures that manage people from different cultures and in different entities. But thanks to the confidence I have in myself, I've managed to be a good leader to take our organisation forward. Today I'm a mentor to a lot of young people, and I'm very proud to be part of this group.

Jemima MITIMA, was part of our WYLD programme in 2022.

In the community where I work, we face a number of difficulties, both personal and collective: the security situation in our province of North Kivu, unemployment and the financial crisis, the lack of respect for social values. The one that has hurt me the most is discrimination against people living with disabilities and albinism...

I first heard about The Congo Tree through my pastor, who was also mentored by TCT as part of the WYLD programme. He gave me my reference for my application and, thank God, I was selected to be one of the 'Warriors' cohort who took part in the training.

I learned a lot from the training I received from the different facilitators, and I appreciated the practical way in which the different sessions were given. This helped me to have confidence in myself, to cultivate determination and courage but also to develop my potential in leadership.

Through the images of leadership sessions, I learned how to be a good leader to others. This helped me a lot in my mentoring role. My mentee has albinism, and being a mentor to them is an experience that has helped me to overcome the discrimination that I saw in my community towards people living with disabilities and albinism. Now that I've finished my studies, I'm serving the community by working at the hospital in the psychology department, where we help people to deal with the different problems they're going through.



SOCIAL ACTIONS AND ENTERPRISE

5

Each year, we give young people the opportunity to solve problems in the community through social action. The objective is not only to solve a real-life problem but also to develop teamwork; for young people to practically experience the strength and the overcoming of challenges by working together.

*social action projects
in Goma and Masisi*

• Goma

1. **Rouge Tabou**: As part of the celebrations for Menstrual Hygiene Management Day, we worked with 60 young female students to try to demystify the *Rouge Tabou*. We ran a workshop that enabled the young women to understand the normality and importance of menstruation, and not something that should be considered taboo. We supported them with information and guided them to know who to talk if they had problems or concerns.



2. **Goma Cleanness's Art**: This social action consisted of distributing a dozen dustbins for primary school classrooms and a large dustbin for collective use, along with a campaign workshop to raise awareness of the need to keep our living environment clean beyond the school - at Institut Majengo in Goma.



3. **Delice Unga** : This project involves producing a ready-to-eat flour with a sugar mixture, the sale of which has given children access to nutritional food product and enabled them to study all year round and develop their intellectual capacity without financial difficulties. In all, 10 children benefit directly, while over 600 people benefit indirectly.



• Masisi

The young people in the WYLD programme in Masisi have each initiated projects using the funds they received. Each young person carried out an action and together they evaluated and supported it.

OUR RESPONSE TO CONFLICT IN NORTH KIVU

Since May 2022, armed conflict has resumed in the east of the DRC, specifically in the territories of Rutshuru and Masisi. Conflict has led to the displacement of more than 200,000 households who are now living in difficult conditions without housing, water or food (stat: *info.cd*) making for serious humanitarian conditions. Living just a few kilometres from the camps for the displaced households, young leaders of The Congo Tree decided to act and organised themselves to support of one of the internal displacement camps. With the aim of alleviating some of the difficulties of people in need, they collected and then distributed some food and essential items.

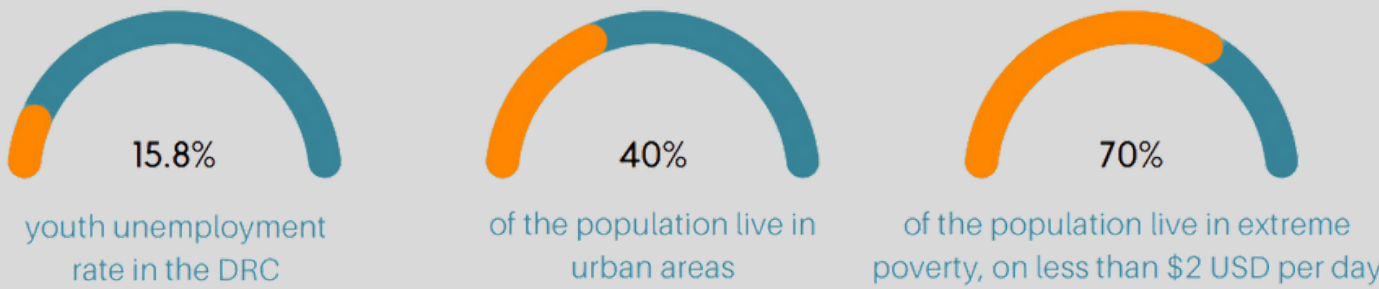


"Among The Congo Tree's sessions, we learned about problem-solving. The best way to put it into practice is to support people who are in difficulty. Giving a little time to spread joy and love to people experiencing sadness is a great achievement for me. We have to be there when they need us. We don't have much to give, but love and hope are very important."

Young volunteer for The Congo Tree

MWANZO ENTERPRISE

In the DRC, unemployment is a serious problem in all urban areas, particularly for young people aged 15 to 24.



As part of the Mwanzo Enterprise programme, we supported 5 companies that were based in our Tree House for their operations. This has enabled these companies to grow and to increase their turnover. The companies:

- Next Entreprises : Technology
- Savoir Plus Corporation: Communication
- Jerdia: Coffee processing
- 2go art: photography and events
- Coiff'Heure : Application mobile de salon de coiffure

We organised training sessions to enable companies to acquire important entrepreneurial concepts and skills, and mentors for the company leaders.

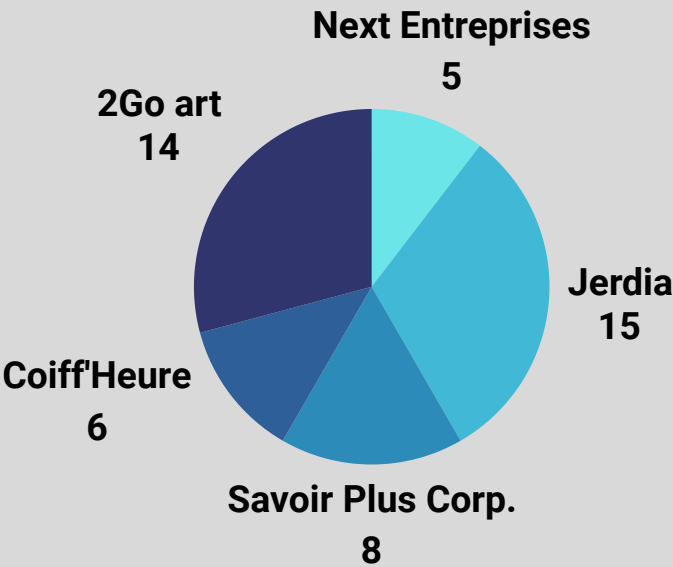


Main Aim: Youth Employability

Designed to help young entrepreneurs, we want to see youth unemployment reduced in the community. In supporting these enterprises, we have supported **the employment of 48 young people:**

JEUNES VISIONNAIRES

We worked with the organisation "Jeunes visionnaires" who provided intensive training in entrepreneurship to all of these companies for 3 months. This was a brilliant partnership, we learned so much and look forward to working with them again.



MWANZO ARTISTIQUE

Mwanzo Artistic is a professional and personal development programme, designed to support young performers and artists. The programme aims to engage and mentor artists in their creative practice, to encourage them to use their art to lead themselves and others towards problem resolution, peaceful cohabitation and mentoring. We also connect young artists with artists from their local community and international artists, to increase their global awareness and thinking together about community engagement.



MUSIKA NA KIPAJI

We supported the Musika Na Kipaji women's festival by providing three days of leadership and entrepreneurship training for young artists.



HUMOUR SLAM FESTIVAL

We supported the Humour Slam Festival, which trains and produces young comedians and slam poets.

ART CONGO LAB

As part of our Mwanzo Artistic Programme, we were pleased to link with Art Congo Laboratories, a platform that works to support and promote young people in the art of oratory. We welcomed them to our Tree House for the audition phase of the "Slameilleur" slam competition for students.



PEACE FOR A FUTUR

Peace For a Future is a programme that aims to put young people at the centre of finding solutions to problems related to peace, justice and inclusion in the community. With experience of both historic and current war and tribal conflict in eastern DRC, young people remain the victims and sometimes the perpetrators in the conflict. We want to break the cycle of the violence that they experience, and see young people at the forefront of peacebuilding in the DRC.

100 +
national and foreign
armed groups in
eastern DRC

+ 600 million
young people living in
conflict-affected
environments

60%
of the population in
the DRC estimated
under 18 years old

30,000
estimated child
soldiers in armed
groups in the DRC



In Masisi

To celebrate the International Day of Peace, the young people of Masisi met the Administrator to commit themselves to being peacemakers in the community. This was also a moment to call for unity for the development of the territory.

In Goma

With our partner SFVS, we had a morning of reflection on the involvement of young people in peace issues and celebrated peace initiatives together. To reach the masses, we organised a show with Mwanzo Artistic, where young people passed on the message of peace through music, humour, slam, etc.



International Youth Day



As part of the celebration of International Youth Day, we organised a cultural event to commemorate the day, with young artists carrying messages of change and peace. The event was attended by the head of the Provincial Youth Division, Mr Guy KIBIRA.

YOUTH FOR INCLUSION

Youth for Inclusion is a programme aiming to break down the various prejudices that are prevalent in the community which prevent people from achieving their potential, such as women and people living with disabilities.



In October 2022, we ran a breast cancer awareness campaign. It was an opportunity to raise awareness among girls and women of the practical steps they should take to remain alert and get checked for this dangerous disease.

International Day of the Girl Child

We took part in a morning of reflection to mark the International Day of the Girl Child. Young people from The Congo Tree met with young Women Leaders for Peace from the SFVS, in collaboration with Jiwe Langu and Action de Protection Mère et Enfant (APME) and discussed the importance of involving young girls in the fight against violence against girls.



Screening of the film BINTI



On the occasion of Ladies' Day, we organised a screening of the film BINTI, a film made by a young person from The Congo Tree, about a survivor of sexual violence. After the screening, we discussed the film with the attendees to raise awareness and discuss practical ways to support survivors.

Enable Disable Action (EDA)



Enable Disable Action (EDA) is an organisation that works with people with disabilities and people who are discriminated against, so we worked with them to organise the various activities.

FINANCE REPORT

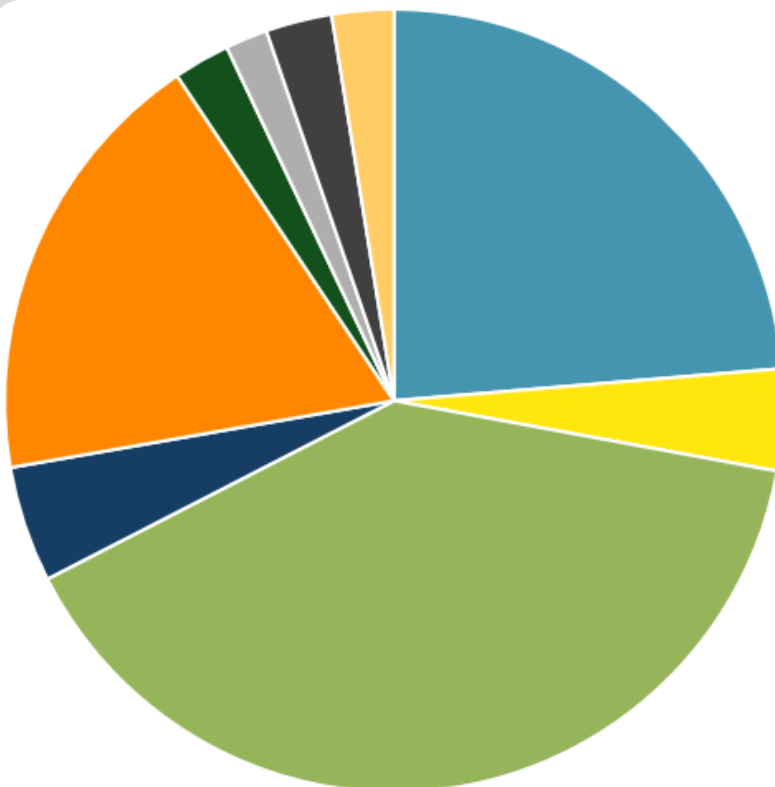
Income: £36,259

- Regular Giving - 26%
- One-off Donations - 13%
- Grants - 43%
- Gift Aid - 17%



87%
to DRC

Expenditure: £28,776



- WYLD programme training and mentoring - 23%
- Social action projects - 5%
- Staffing and HR costs - 39%
- Internship - 5%
- DRC support costs - 18%
- Field trips - 2%
- Insurance - 2%
- Accountancy and Independent Examination fees - 3%
- Bank charges - 3%

PARTNERSHIPS

NGANGI FUND



As part of the launch of scholarships for young people in the DRC, the **Ngangi Fund** organised training sessions to equip scholarship holders to be problem-solvers at the community level. Facilitators from The Congo Tree facilitated sessions on leadership, vision and self-awareness.

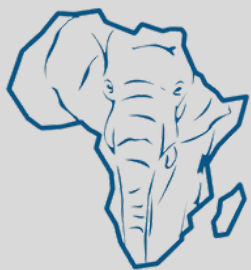
This experience with the Ngangi Fund has enabled us to invest in these young people, in the hope that they will provide a solution in the years to come.

MUSIKA NA KIPAJI

Our partner **Musika na Kipaji**, gave us the space in its programme to coach artists for their teams in personal development, to help them develop their self-esteem and have big visions in their lives. Through this partnership, we have mentored more than 50 young people who are now making a huge impact in the community.



GRAND AFRICAN PROJECTS



GRAND AFRICAN PROJECTS NGO

Together with **Grand African Project**, we have developed our book club and reading programme. The aim of our book club is to give young people the chance to read at least one book a month and thus develop their literacy skills. Every week, we bring together 40 young people for this programme.



#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 2022-2023!

If you are thinking about giving to The Congo Tree, we would like to invite you to come and be WYLD with us, by supporting a place on a WYLD programme for only £120 / \$150 or £10 / \$12,5 per month!

Each cohort in Goma, Masisi, Rutshuru and Sake needs supporters like you to give the young leaders of tomorrow a life-changing experience - through training, mentoring and long-term sustainable support.

Find out more at: www.thecongotree.org.uk/donate

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

- Volunteer with the UK Team
- Get sponsored for us or run a fundraiser for us
- Support a young entrepreneur or team with a specific social action / creative enterprise project
- Gifts in kind - such as laptops, musical instruments or books
- Invite us into your school

Do get in contact to find out more: hello@thecongotree.org.uk

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS:



MUSIKA NA KIPAJI





380 STUDENTS
PROJET ECOLE / MASISI

98 YOUTH
AT MASISI

1.539

YOUNG PEOPLE
DIRECTLY AFFECTED



496 YOUTH
AT GOMA

70 YOUTH
AT RUTSHURU

1st Decade

THE CONGO TREE IN NUMBERS

20 YOUTH
AT SAKE

30 YOUTH
HEAL AFRICA

75 YOUTH
MWANZO ENTREPRISE

30 INTERNS



+10.000

YOUNG PEOPLE
INDIRECTLY AFFECTED



60 STUDENTS
TEAM OF LIFE AT
NYIRAGONGO

70 FACILITATORS

310 YOUTH
TREE OF LIFE /
NYIRAGONGO ERUPTION



**THE
CONGO
TREE**

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Published by The Congo Tree (c) March 2024

Registered Charity Number 1152557

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