



**THE
CONGO
TREE**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Ben Bartlett &
Lucy Bamforth



In many ways, 2024 was as unpredictable as all the years that have come before it – not just for the young people we serve in the DR Congo, but for millions of people around the world. For us, that unpredictability most often came in the form of insecurity in the communities where The Congo Tree works. Sadly, there were points last year when young people we serve were forced to flee their homes in search of safety, amid the ongoing conflict in North Kivu province. That unpredictability meant that our incredible colleagues in the DR Congo had to adapt our programming to make it deliverable to a population on the move, or else postpone activities altogether for the safety of our colleagues and the communities we serve.

At other points, that unpredictability has come in many other forms as well. In 2024, we celebrated more than 1,200 graduates from our WYLD programme since we first began operating in 2013. That is 1,200 lives transformed through access to leadership training, communications and conflict management sessions, and healthy relationships support. In spite of the odds, our colleagues in the DR Congo have continued to deliver high-quality programming in one of the

most challenging contexts in the world. In turn, that programming has led to WYLD graduates taking up leadership positions in cultural festivals in Goma, becoming young entrepreneurs, and even running for political office. We never could have imagined that our humble charity could have had such a huge impact! How is that for unpredictable?

Within the pages of this annual report, you'll read about the other incredible impacts we've had throughout 2024. We could not meet those challenges without the generous support of the people who believe in our work. We are so grateful to the those who share their gifts and talents with our team, no matter where in the world they are. Above all, we are grateful to our colleagues in the DR Congo and to the hundreds of young people that we serve. Our work would not be possible without their heart, dedication, and trust in our work.

We know the coming year will continue to bring unpredictability. The security situation in the DR Congo continues to be an ongoing challenge, and there are global shifts that will almost certainly have an impact on us and the young people we serve. But unpredictable can be positive, as you will soon see as you read through this report - it can make us think on our feet, rise up to meet new challenges, and celebrate the wins – big and small – that we meet along the way.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year has been marked by new challenges, new partners and new projects. The ongoing insecurity in eastern DRC has forced us to find creative ways to engage with young people in our programme sites outside of Goma, while taking the opportunity to train and mentor more facilitators. Reduced

regular income and exciting ideas for programming have contributed to brilliant new partnerships with other organisations and donors, with whom we have been privileged to work. Pilot programmes designed by and for our young people have had such a significant impact that they are now part of our long-term strategy and offering for young people in the DRC. I hope you enjoy discovering them!



The challenges remain in 2024 – conflicts in the region fluctuate daily and it is difficult to find funding to continue operating. We will need to continue to think creatively, act responsively and hold on to our values. Values we have recently reflected on, in response to where we have come in ten years and where we would like to go. Following conversations with our youth, our team and the Board of Directors, we have added two: “in service to others” and “Inclusion”. Despite all the challenges, we are committed to being a safe space for all youth and serving our communities to the best of our skills, strengths and vision. I hope you will see these values infused throughout this report.

Before you get reading, I want to take this moment to thank the team who started this all with me, so many years ago – Amy Cummings, Muhindo Malunga and Hebdavi Kyeya. After 10 years of unwavering support, at different points in the year and for very different reasons, they have each decided to step back from their roles as Trustees. Additionally, Jane Searle, who has been with the Board since the very beginning, willingly taking on any role we have asked of her, has decided that it’s time for new Trustees to take the reins. I want to express unending gratitude for these four fabulous humans – for the passion, dedication, and solid foundation that they have given to The Congo Tree.



OUR TEAM

DRC TEAM



Medi Muyisa
Assistant Director



Sage Dunia
Programme Coordinator



Binet Paul
Engagement Officer



Irène Barhabula
Finance Officer



Sephorah Biluge
Organisation Officer

UK TEAM



Harmony Ngwamah
Supporter Engagement Officer



Heidi Bentley
Director

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Ben Bartlett
Co-Chair



Lucy Bamforth
Co-Chair



Steve Bavington



Zach Haider
(to November 2024)



Hebdevi Kyeya
(to January 2024)



Muhindo Malunga
(to January 2024)



Hywel Gadd
(from January 2024)



Ai Salt
(from January 2024)

THE WYLD PROGRAMME



**BE PART OF
THE STORY**

Working with young people in the DRC, the WYLD programme uses peer learning and teamwork challenges to help young people develop their transferable skills. 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 workforce is under 30, WYLD responds to current challenges, including the armed conflict in the east of the country. Through our vision and mission, we offer young people the opportunity to become peace-builders and catalysts for change by helping them develop essential skills and inspiring them to achieve greater aspirations.



This year has been particularly difficult in the rural zones of the DRC where we work, with serious and ongoing conflict, and the occupation of many areas by armed groups. The Congo Tree team has increased its efforts to reach out to young people in their, developing their resilience through adapted training and mentoring sessions.

In addition to increasing the five main transferable skills, here are some of the results collected from our young people:

98 % finished their programme

100 % want to continue with the Congo Tree as volunteers

100 % of our young people developed in resilience

100 % have improved their acceptance of others, despite their differences

97 % decided to break their fears and face their challenges



40 Facilitators in Action

The current team of facilitators continues to support with training sessions. Having completed their first year, this team accompanies the young people in the training activities that we organise and each offers **6 volunteer hours of facilitation every month.**

Testimony

For me, facilitating at The Congo Tree is a double opportunity, firstly, it helps me to support new mentees to strengthen their leadership knowledge that I myself have benefited from, and secondly, I am constantly learning from other leaders in the programme. This is a huge benefit for me.

AMINA MURHEBWA

GRADUATION

We are proud to present the 2023 WYLD graduates. These exceptional young people have come a long way and have developed leadership skills that will guide them into a bright future.

We celebrated their determination, commitment and passion for positive change. They have taken on challenges, pushed their limits and flourished as true agents of social transformation.



SAKE

Through our partnership with Uhuru Knowledge Center, we have met resilient youth in Sake. Building confidence and self-esteem is our priority. Through our pilot WYLD programme in this area, we are mentoring a new generation of leaders who can impact the city of Sake and be part of history, thanks to funding from **Travers Smith**.



TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life programme is a psychotherapeutic tool that complements the WYLD programme. This program has been of considerable use in this period that has been very difficult, full of atrocities and conflicts, which has caused many people to lose their lives, and others to lose their family members due to the negative forces that operate in our areas. The young people, who are in shock from violence, have received this training as a way of standing with them in their trauma.

This approach is based on:

- Mutual knowledge of origins and identity
- Understanding each other's skills and a clear vision
- Being part of each other's story and creating solutions within the community
- Understanding problems and the blockages to finding

Testimony

"The Tree of Life programme made me discover that challenges always exist in our lives, and I understood that the way I face these challenges will make me a good leader or a bad one. I chose to be a good leader and keep my head high."

68

young people in the Tree of Life programme. This training has been an important asset for the psychological and emotional development of the young people.



34 *Mentoring pairs, in Goma and in Masisi**

Based on self-assessments and testimonies from young people:

97%

Young people said they had broken away from tribalism and now actively encouraged working with others from different backgrounds

100%

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

96%

mentioned the importance of integrating gender and gender positivity in their communities

Mentoring Story

Evodie et Plamedi :

I found my mentoring year an important element that I experienced on my journey. It was an opportunity for me to respond to all kinds of personalities that I might meet. I found that, in my habits, I didn't really let people from certain backgrounds integrate into my life, but finally, I understood that it is quite normal to succeed in living with everyone, without problems and without letting bad influence invade the heart.



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



ALUMNI

SALEM MUKOKO, cohort 2022-2023

I got to know about The Congo Tree through a friend and it was an unforgettable encounter because The Congo Tree first welcomed me as an intern and then I benefitted from the training in the WYLD program.

At the end of this training, I understood the importance of teamwork but also of having self-confidence as a young person, because with these two elements we are guaranteed to be part of the history of humanity.

Thanks to all that I learned at The Congo Tree, today I am able to positively influence others by initiating different actions such as the peace and security think-tank that I was able to start including all the faculties of the University of Goma, awareness campaigns to raise awareness in order to vote wisely during elections and several other projects in the interest of the students I represent.

To try to solve this problem of tribalism in my circle of influence, I work with several young people from different cultures without any discrimination on the "zero dirt in our avenues" project - not only in my neighborhood, where I am the president of the latter, but also in certain structures such as the Pole Institute in the Access to Justice programme. All this thanks to the training I received from The Congo Tree, which showed me that a leader should be the person who brings solutions and influence others by my actions and not just in words, which is why I will always be grateful to this organisation for everything it has done for me.

SALAMA MULWAHALE Dorcas, cohort 2022-2023

I heard about The Congo Tree from a sister I admire a lot, and I was really interested so I applied for the training and luckily I was selected, and that's how in August 2023 I started the WYLD programme as part of the 'Warriors' promotion with other young people, with whom I learned a lot.

I did not have an easy childhood since I am an albino because many people have a bad conception of us and others are even afraid to approach us and talk to us. All this caused a lot of frustration in my heart and hurt me a lot but with time I grew up and I understood that I was a normal person like everyone else, only with a melanin deficiency.



I really liked the atmosphere in which we spent the training at The Congo Tree because I felt comfortable in the family without being judged. This training on leadership motivated me much more and helped me understand that I am not limited in achieving my dreams and especially the qualities of a good leader that we were taught inspired me and I am determined to put it into practice, to achieve my dreams.

I thank The Congo Tree very much for its support and I am sure that everything I have learned will stay with me even after my studies and into my professional career because I want to work to help others at the international level, and also to support albinos and build an orphanage to bring smiles back to these children.

SOCIAL ACTION AND ENTERPRISE

Each year we provide young people with the opportunity to solve problems in the community through social action. The goal is not only to solve a real problem, but also to develop teamwork; for young people to experience first-hand the power of team strength and the ability to overcome challenges by working together.

• GOMA

1. LISUNGI: This action, which consisted of subsidising women with families in a less stable financial situation, was of great importance to these women and a success.

In total: 5 women were direct beneficiaries of this action, hence 5 households supported.

2. AFIA BORA: This project involves transforming peanuts into peanut butter, under the direction of youth from the WYLD programme. This creative project allows these youth to offer consumers a natural and organic consumer product.

3. Usafi Kwetu : The young people have worked hard to set up this exciting project to provide an innovative cleaning product for households, starting with training on how to make the product to ensure its quality and effectiveness, as well as knowledge and practice for all.

In total, 12 young people were actively involved in social action projects, which ended with a visit to an orphanage of more than 70 children in difficult situations.

• SAKE

In Sake, the "Vazi Business" project selling clothes was already underway, but unfortunately the security situation disrupted the young people continuing with this project, as it did the other market gardening project.

4

Social Actions carried out



OUR RESPONSE TO CONFLICT IN DRC

The young leaders of The Congo Tree and those of other organisations, took joint action to bring smiles back to women and girls displaced by the armed conflict in eastern DRC at the Bulengo displaced persons camp, near Goma.

After identifying the real needs, we distributed food and some clothes. We also added to this a short training and information session on sexual health.

We hoped to increase resilience and we believe that this response was an important support during these difficult times these people are going through in displacement camps.

Assisted more than 200 households with required food and non-food items.

More than 50 young people and Alumni of The Congo Tree volunteered at different displacement camps to support vulnerable people.



ACT OF KINDNESS

**Near to 25 children
(direct beneficiaries)**



We are filled with joy to have been able to organise our act of kindness for this year. Spending this day with the children was so rewarding, as we were able to bring smiles to their faces and provide psychological assistance. Their happiness and gratitude are the greatest reward. We are proud to support this cause and hope to continue to bring joy and comfort to these exceptional children. Thank you to all the young people and third-party donors.

MWANZO ENTERPRISE

With the aim of supporting young people with business ideas, we organised an enriching exchange session with young businesses that participated in the Mwanzo Enterprise pilot programme, as well as with other young entrepreneurs. These inspiring entrepreneurs shared their experiences, the challenges they overcame and the successes they achieved through this innovative programme. In preparation for the second cohort, this evaluation session promises to further strengthen the positive impact of Mwanzo Enterprise on the empowerment of youth-led businesses.

➔ We have created more than **25 stable jobs** and more than **30 occasional jobs**.

➔ We have supported more than **30 business ideas** that today want to materialise in the community.



MWANZO ARTISTIQUE

Mwanzo Artistique is a professional and personal development programme designed to support young artists. The programme aims to engage and mentor artists in their creative practice, encouraging them to use their art to guide themselves and others towards problem-solving, peaceful co-existence and mentoring. We also connect young artists with artists from their local community and international artists, to increase their global awareness and shared thinking about community engagement.



A discussion meeting with a number of artists to reflect on the Mwanzo Artistique programme. This was an opportunity to evaluate together the achievements of the previous year and to make a projection for the year to come.

PEACE FOR A FUTURE

Peace For a Future is a programme that aims to place young people at the center of finding solutions to problems related to peace, justice and inclusion in the community. With the experience of historical and current war and tribal conflict in eastern DRC, young people remain the victims and sometimes the perpetrators of the conflict.



Today we are the champions of Resolution 2250 of the UNSC (Youth Peace and Security) because we have supported and accompanied the process of the Implementation of the National Action Plan in the DR Congo (PAN 2250) and also participated in the development of the Operational Plan in the Province of North Kivu (POP2250). We participated in several advocacy, awareness raising, popularisation for the effectiveness of the R2250 of the UNSC.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

We realized that peace can only be achieved if we have the courage to look beyond our differences, listen to each other and recognize the intrinsic value of each individual. The youth emphasized the importance of interfaith and intercultural education to promote mutual respect and acceptance.

Together, we are committed to working hand in hand to build a peaceful future for the DRC.



YOUTH FOR INCLUSION

Youth for Inclusion is a programme aimed at breaking down the various prejudices that prevail in the community and prevent people from realising their potential, such as women and people living with disabilities.

THE SISTERHOOD TABLE

As part of our partnership with Uhuru Knowledge Center for the second cohort of The SisterHood Table program, we facilitated sessions on transformational leadership from April 11-13, 2024.

Together, we worked with young women to cultivate their leadership potential and create lasting positive impact in their communities.



ENGLISH AND BOOK CLUB



Our English and Book Club offers young people a unique opportunity to improve their English skills while cultivating a passion for reading. Each session is designed to encourage active learning and the exchange of ideas, enriching their vocabulary and cultural understanding.

UK EMBASSY

We had the pleasure of receiving the delegation from the UK Embassy in the DRC in our "Tree House" office. This was for a moment of exchange with young people but also to understand the impact of our programmes in the community. We were very encouraged by the strong messages of support from this delegation for our work in the DRC.



INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

We were among the organizers of the great Summit "Intergenerational Dialogue in Goma 2023"

This was an opportunity to bring together young people and decision-makers to reflect on the major development issues of the country.



This is an initiative of one of our Alumni, Smith Etumba, who is today a defender of the African Union charter on youth.

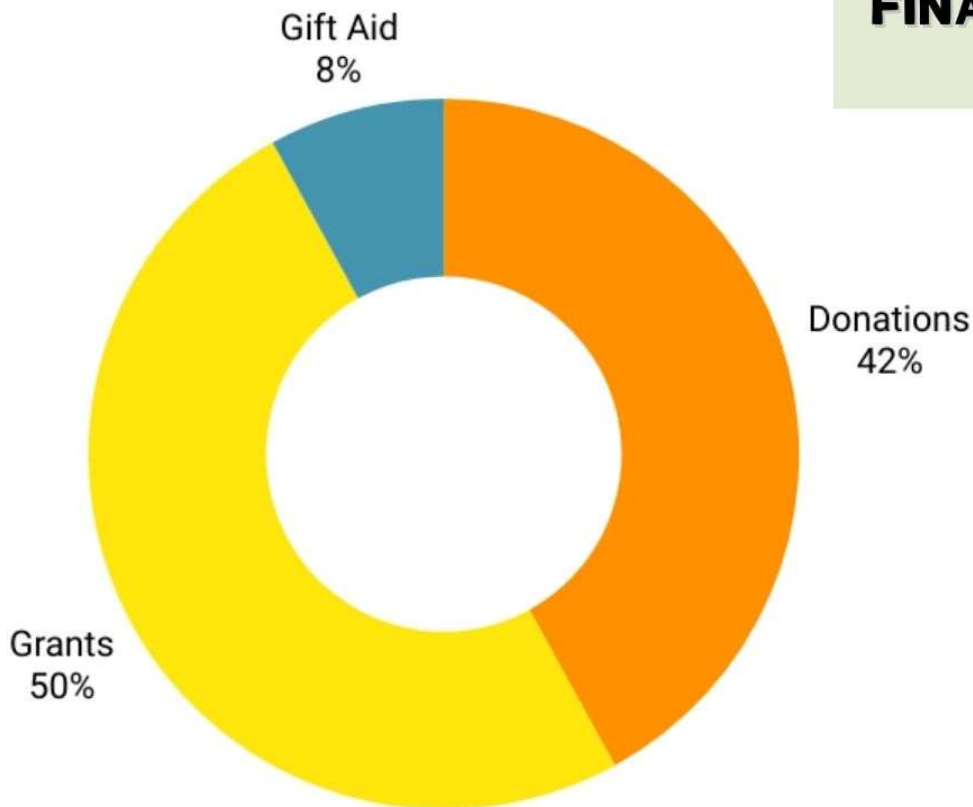
FONDS NGANGI



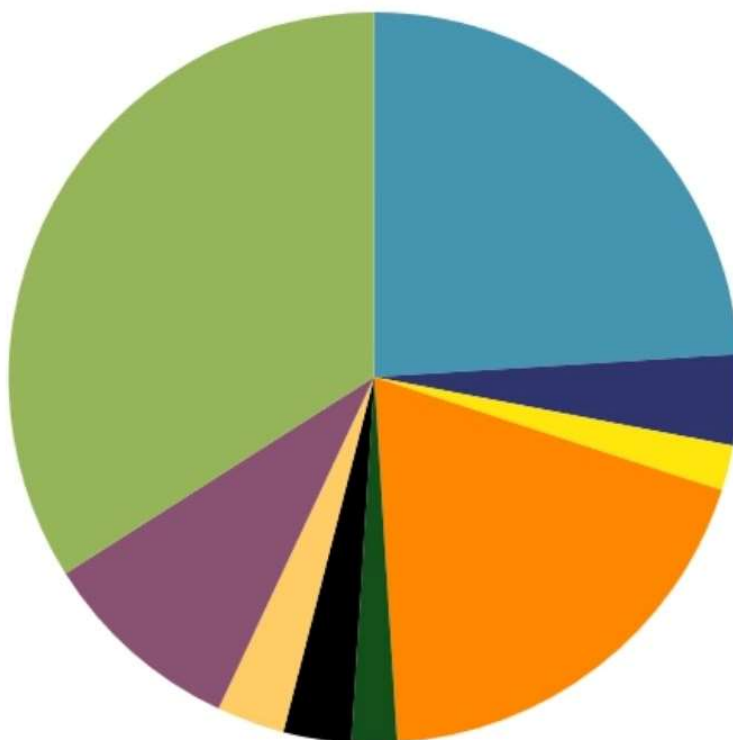
We are happy to be part of the story of these young beneficiaries of the Ngangi Fund scholarships. We spent a few days with them to equip them with leadership skills but also to allow them to have visions that will help develop the community.

This is an initiative that is currently led by one of our Alumni, Olivier Simweray.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2023-2024



Income: £31,839



Expenditure: £30,043

WYLD programme training and mentoring - 24%

Internships - 4%

Social Action Projects - 2%

DRC support costs - 19%

Events, marketing and visibility - 2%

Accountancy and Independent examination fees - 3%

Bank charges - 3%

Professional fees - 9%

Staffing and HR costs - 34%

PARTNERSHIPS



We were proud to announce our partnership with AVSI/DRC this year in the implementation of the WING DRC project for the development of personal and technical skills of young people. This programme aims to provide young people with transferable leadership skills for positive change within the community.



Through this partnership, we will work together to:

- Provide youth with leadership training and comprehensive monitoring and support
- Create apprenticeship opportunities in manual trades.
- Promote youth participation in community change and problem-solving efforts.
- Develop young innovators who inspire and transmit good values.
- Promote entrepreneurship initiatives.
- We extend our congratulations to three of our Alumni who were interviewed and selected by AVSI as mentors for the programme, giving them a paid role that utilises the skills they learned while with The Congo Tree.

OUR MISSION

Equipping, inspiring and supporting young leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

OUR VALUES



INSPIRATION: Everyone can be inspired and be inspiring, and everyone is called to inspire in their own environment – it comes from a heart of integrity and plays out at home, in the community and beyond.



STAY YOUNG: We want to embrace the energy and drive of youth, the passion and determination of youth, and capture the hope of youth, who look at the world with fresh eyes – no matter our age.



TOGETHER: We believe we thrive when we come together as individuals, each bringing their own unique qualities that make a strong team. We work together. We think together. We journey together.



INCLUSION: We celebrate the diversity of every individual. We strive to be an organisation that provides a safe, equal and welcoming space regardless of background, experience, race, tribe, ability, wealth, gender, ethnicity, beliefs or of no faith.



CREATIVITY: We believe that everyone is creative in their own way. We know that change often comes from approaching things in a new way. We encourage creative thinking and action.



SERVANT-HEARTED: We aspire to embody and promote leadership that serves with honesty, integrity and compassion. Our actions promote the wellbeing of others in our families, communities and the world.

OUR FOUNDATION

The Congo is rooted in the desire to see positive change in the DRC by developing the skills and realising the potential of young people – the next generation of leaders.

We work to promote leadership that serves with honesty, integrity and compassion. We believe that the figure of Jesus Christ embodies these characteristics, and his example of leadership is reflected in our programmes and organisational values.



#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:

**Let Yourself
Trust**

Providing a choice and a chance



Network
for Social
Change

Souter
CHARITABLE TRUST

**TRAVERS
SMITH**

 **benevity**


Stewardship
Active generosity



People for development



**CENTRE POUR
L'EDUCATION
CIVIQUE**



FONDS NGANGI



**Consulat de UK
en RDC**