



Able and Willing

International Education Foundation

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NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2008

A Word from Puma

Let me begin by saying how much I admire generous spirit and willingness of our supporters to give even when times may be hard for yourselves, as they are for families all over the world. Rising above natural tendencies to focus on oneself and one's own in such times, you have once again demonstrated that we are all one family. This kind of love is not given to all; each one of you is precious to me and to the people of Tshamalale and Poleni villages in the Congo.

I thank you so much for allowing us to help others. My thanks also go out to all *Able and Willing* Board members and volunteers who, regardless of the demands of busy lives, always seem to find the time to help others.

One more time, *Grand Merci* to all for your help,

WaMbuyu



Mbuyu "Puma" Wa Mbuyu,
President & Co-founder

A School For Poleni Village

Friends, because of you, a new school is built and operating in Poleni. Though *Able & Willing* made its construction possible, school operations are already self-supporting.

Poleni village was founded in 1945 by an immigrant family named Poleni that came in search of work. In all that time, the people of Poleni never had a school and many adults cannot read or write.

Seeing the first two grades of a new school ready for students to learn has brought tears of joy and amazement to the eyes of Poleni's parents who had never dreamed of seeing such a thing happening in their lives.

At the opening ceremonies of the new school, the last daughter of the Poleni founder sang a song of joy mixed with sorrow that her father could not live to

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see the happy occasion. She also thanked *Able and Willing* and all of you for making her father immortal. She said that the Poleni school brings her father to life again and forever, and puts him in the history book of the Congo. Moreover, she said, Poleni will be known all over Congo and beyond just by seeing their diplomas and hearing, wherever they go in life, that they got their education in the school at Poleni.

Because of you, our *Able and Willing* supporters, the good people of Poleni sing and dance and thank God that their children will now be spared the long walk to a distant school in bad conditions -sunny and dusty in the dry sea-

son; soaking, muddy and cold in the rainy season.

Because of you, the children of Poleni also sing and dance in the joy of knowing that they will grow up in a different time, that they will learn to read and write and experience new technology, that they will play sports in a way that their parents never could. With your help, we were able to make so many people happy. Let us continue doing the good work.

Once more, from my heart, thank you so much.

WaMbuyu



First and second grade students in the new Myrt extension in Poleni village with teachers and Puma. The school will expand through sixth grade as students graduate to higher grades.

See more pictures on last page.

Teacher Training Seminar

The first Teacher Training Seminar hosted by Myrt School was a huge success while revealing how ill-prepared most teachers are. The seminar taught methods of teaching math and science to 71 teachers from 13 schools, including all 16 teachers from Myrt School.

As part of their training, each teacher prepared sample lesson plans. On the last day, each teacher made a brief presentation of their lesson plans.

Essays Reveal Problems

Prompted by a lively discussion of working conditions faced by most teachers, the trainees were assigned to write an essay describing why they became teachers. The essays revealed many teachers' inability to write a 500-word essay in the language of instruction (French). Their ability to argue and persuade was limited or non-existent. Most of them simply stated that they chose the teaching profession either because of lack of better options or out of love for working with children.



The minimum requirements for an elementary teacher in D. R. Congo is a high school diploma. Over 75% of applicants to Myrt School are rejected because of poor teaching skills or lack of basic understanding of their subjects. Most schools are not nearly so selective.

Waza Alliance

The seminar was conducted by two members from the Waza Alliance, a non-profit organization based in Indianapolis. Mr. Faustin N'Tala, the president and founder, and Sylvia Hyde, secretary, were featured in the Spring issue of this newsletter, available online. Both have extensive international teaching experience.

This was the first seminar conducted by Waza Alliance, which intends to train up to 70 teachers each year in the Congo who will in turn impact up to 4,900 students each year.

Thanks to the Myrt school staff who worked tirelessly the whole summer, the seminar was a great success.



Sylvia Hyde (above left, addressing teachers) and Faustin N'Tala (right, leading graduation ceremonies) conducted a seminar for 71 teachers hosted by Myrt School.

School Exchange Program

Waza Alliance, a partner non-profit organization focused on training teachers in the Congo, is setting up an exchange program between MYRT School and the International School of Indiana. This pilot program will work on solving problems of communication between students and teachers in the two countries and providing expertise to the Congolese sister schools.

WaMbuyu Technical School

A priority objective for this year was to equip the vocational workshops so they could earn money for the school, provide job training for students, and build much needed furniture for other schools.

The Good News

AWIEF purchased over \$10,000 of machinery and received donated equipment worth \$10,000. It traveled over 10,000 miles at sea, 1,000 miles over land and finally arrived four months later in Lubumbashi by mid August. After negotiations with customs (see article below "Taxes and Customs Fees in Congo"), the machines were installed in our shops and the shops were rewired.

The dozen new sewing machines were a huge hit, with 45 young women enrolled in sewing classes

Computers in the lab were upgraded and the lab was rewired. Half of our computers were donated to other schools. (See article below, "Extending Help to Other Schools in Congo".)



A student installs a drill press in the machine shop.

Arrangements were made with the University of Lubumbashi Medical School to begin instruction in nursing next year.

The Bad News

Unfortunately, the machine shops will have to wait until next year for active production. We had planned on starting production in early July to generate income before school started to support operations for the rest of the year.

Several factors led to the decision to postpone shop production. First, the container

arrived six weeks late. Second, inflation costs of other projects meant that funds for purchasing material for production input had to be diverted. Lastly, reliable experienced vocational instructors could not be found because of competition with the booming mining industry. (See following story on new challenges.)



Nine of the 45 young women in the MYRT School sewing classes model their garments.

New Challenges Demand New Strategies

New Ideas Welcome: Board to Brainstorm

After 13 years of steady success, *Able & Willing* now faces some unprecedented challenges. These arise because the neighborhood we have traditionally served is experiencing sudden, unforeseen, and radical changes due to population growth and economic shifts in the area. As a result, we will be obliged over the next year to take a fresh look at priorities and plan new strategies adapted to the new realities.

Tshamalale, the village where most of our previous work was focused, was an ordinary rural village when we began there. It is now being absorbed into the sprawling edge of the city of Lubumbashi. The economy in the region is changing and expanding, creating new job opportunities. New people, many from other cultures and countries, are arriving in large numbers, looking for work and putting a strain on existing resources. The net result is rising costs for everything, destabilization of traditional loyalties and relationships, and weakening respect for traditional leadership.

Able and Willing must adapt. One immediate problem is declining enrollment at the Myrt School. Despite the quality education at Myrt at a very reasonable cost, many parents of former Myrt students have switched their children this year to a new school thrown up by an entrepreneur. Its lower fees look attractive but its quality is very low - no desks, no seats, no books, no computers, and 70-100 students in a class with one teacher. Another problem is maintaining staff numbers and quality when there are many other well-paid opportunities. The same unfortunate circumstance affects the ability of the new WaMbuyu Technical School to meet its goals.

Over the next year, the Board will develop strategies for restoring the Myrt School to its full potential in enrollment, staffing, and technical education. For the longer term, we

will brainstorm on where Able & Willing should go in the future. Should we refocus on new schools further out from the city? More on schools with basic education for only grades 1-6? Or build fewer schools but with more grades and more extensive offerings? If you would like to join this discussion, let us know. All creative thinkers are welcome.

Extending Help to Other Schools in Congo

With the successful shipment containing over 70 computers, Able & Willing donated most of them to ten non-profit organizations and schools in the Lubumbashi area. We thank the International School of Washington and the Bureau of Labor Statistics both located in Washington, DC for the computers.

A Special Girls School

One school stands out for honorable mention. It was started by a widow woman with one sewing machine to teach orphaned girls and teen age mothers. Eventually, a Belgian corporation built a school for her with two buildings, each with 2 classrooms. Each classroom now has 64 girls learning to sew. The sad part is that these girls are not getting an elementary education. On his visit to the school, Mbuyu noted an opportunity for *Able & Willing* to make a difference in their education. Our donated computers are merely a beginning.



Some of the 250 students in the school that teaches orphans and young mothers to sew.

Taxes and Customs Fees in Congo

Many of our friends have asked questions about the customs problems with our shipment last summer. It cost \$8,000 to get the container through customs, a cost shared by the Methodists of DRC and Able & Willing. ***The problem is that it should have entered duty free.*** After

all, that is why Puma created the WaMbuyu Foundation and registered it as a nonprofit organization with the government of DRC.

The simple answer is “government inefficiency”. In order to enter duty free, the

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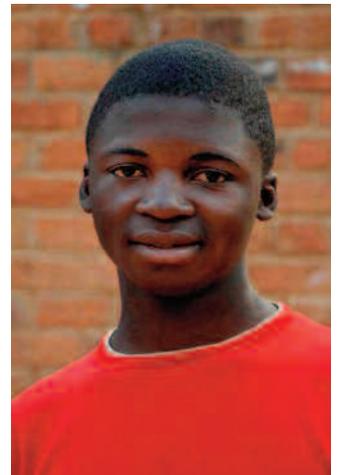
proper paper work must be submitted to government headquarters in Kinshasa, over 1000 miles away. The process can't begin until after the container arrives in Lubumbashi and it would take 4 – 6 weeks to process. Meanwhile, the container must remain on the truck and the driver must be paid overtime and his visa extended until the container is cleared by customs. The process would end up costing a lot of time and money. Knowing this, the local customs officials are prepared to negotiate a “reduced rate”. An \$8,000 “bargain.”

A broader answer would consider how the government raises revenue. The DRC, like most developing countries, has a hard time taxing income and consumption. Most goods and wages are paid in cash and few records are available as a basis of taxation. Imports are relatively easy to tax as they must pass through well guarded borders. There is little incentive for the government to make it easy for a non-profit entity to avoid paying taxes.

With limited capacity for raising money through taxation, there is little money to pay government officials. This results in a rather strange form of pay-for-service. Virtually all government services are paid by “user fees” with the fee often negotiated by the local officials. Complaints result in higher fees as more officials are involved that need to be paid.

Myrt Student Profile: Luke **(son of Modeste Kadibwe and Leonie Kisimba)**

Luke is a 16-year-old student at Myrt School with a warm personality and love of learning. He is the son of Modeste Kadibwe, a brickmaker, whose oldest sister married at the age of 12 and whose other siblings received scattered education. Modeste wants to prepare Luke with a full academic preparation so that Luke may learn to apply his knowledge toward a higher purpose, and not “sell it for a box of cigarettes or a piece of candy”. The majority of Luke’s seven siblings are either tradesmen or married wives, although Luke and his three youngest sisters attend school. They are a rare family, since many children in the village still do not receive formal education. Modeste prefers that Luke study rather than work, since the cost for Myrt School is affordable and the skills complement what he can learn at home. Luke enjoys reading and aspires to study economics at university. Ultimately, he hopes to work as an accountant, although he estimates the goal may take another ten years to reach.



Story and picture by Sylvia Hyde.

Welcome a New Board Member

Vasco Bokella is a new board member from Tanzania with an impressive history of helping his father start and support a vocational school for underprivileged youth and orphans in their home town in the Mbeya region. He graduated from the University of Dar es Salaam in 1998 with a degree in architecture and Maryland University in 2000 in engineering computer assisted design.

He now lives in Frederick, Maryland with his wife and three kids and works as an architect. He continues to send home money to help pay the teachers and buy machinery and returns home to help whenever he can.



Vasco Bokella

“Why I choose Able & Willing . . .”

With Puma and volunteers safely returned, containers delivered, and another year of projects under our collective belt—we turn our attention to the base of supporters that continue to make it all possible. This season, the honorees include:

Brian McNeill

Brian is Manager of Software Development at the IMF and doctoral student in Management at the University of MD, University College, first learned of Able & Willing through a decade of commuting on the MARC train with Treasurer Jim Carpenter. He cites his interest in international development issues that dates back to college

at the School of International Service at American University. ***The delivery model of AWIEF appealed to Brian based on its real-world practicality, a system designed from the bottom-up and congruent with the actual needs and resources of the community it serves.***

He describes the work of several authors who have analyzed the trouble with top-down efforts in which "millions of dollars & euros are effectively air-dropped onto a country lacking the legal and financial systems to manage it". Instead of using flash floods to combat drought, Brian feels that ***Able & Willing "works hard to align what is really needed with what is delivered, and then helps the local people to absorb those changes",***

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Susan Rosen

Susan, a returned Peace Corp volunteer, took an assignment in Zaire at an age when most people would have been planning more golf and less elbow-grease for their retirement years. ***She served from 1982-84 in a remote village about 30 miles from Lubumbashi, working to establish medical clinics.*** She recalls that it was difficult to understand if their group's efforts were truly making an impact until she had to return to the States for her mother's funeral. "No one thought I would come back," she says, "not at my age (late 50's) and with the conditions as hard as they were." But she did return, and to a homecoming she didn't quite expect. "People walked up to 7 days to come and pay their condolences," she recalls, including a local minister who performed a memorial service. "Over 500 people in total came out," Susan says. "I knew at that point we were accomplishing something." The experience left a lasting impression on her. As a fitting gift, she included a medical bag in her donation to the container shipment this spring.

Emma Lou Comstock

Emma Lou, a longtime friend of *Able and Willing*, glows about something we could call The Puma Effect. She recalls first meeting Puma in the early 1990's at an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) work-

shop that she was hosting in Frederick, MD. "Any resistance to this black man in their midst was soon overcome when he first spoke from his heart," she writes. "He got it and he put it out...and his own universal knowledge was soon very apparent. His Affirmation Poster was so unique that nobody wanted to write on it. So, we gave the [other participants] another sheet to put their message on." Some thirteen years later, she remains ***"very impressed with all that has been done...It goes to show what miracles can happen when one has a dream and can convince people to help."***

Your Thoughts, Please

There are certainly a number of common themes that we hear from our donors, but each story has a unique thread. If you have something you would like to share in an upcoming article, please send your thoughts to:



Shannon Murphy
Secretary, AWIEF

AWIEF
PO Box 4303
Frederick, MD 21705

or

AskUs@AbleAndWilling.org



Puma's Kitchen

Dinner to Benefit Education in Africa

Featuring

**Mbuyu "Puma" Wa Mbuyu, Founder, AWIEF
Sylvia Hyde, Teacher, 2008 Congo Project Volunteer
Gospel Chorus from Hood College
Student Interns**

Sunday, November 16, 2008

4 pm - 7 pm

@

Way Station, Inc.
230 W. Patrick St.
Frederick, MD 21701

Serving:

*Pepe Soup (Beef Stew), Pilipili (Hot Sauce)
Muhongo (Cassava), Epinards (Spinach),
other African meat, seafood & veggie dishes.*

Suggested donation is \$35 (or whatever you can afford).

We would love to meet you and share ideas.

If you can't attend, please send donations to

AWIEF, PO Box 4303, Frederick, MD 21701

Phone: 301-685-3282

<http://AbleAndWilling.org>

Help needed to keep construction going on new schools.

The parents in these villages are able and willing to work on building the schools. Won't you help by investing in the start up costs?

With your help, our long standing aim - to build self-supporting, quality schools that can produce human and financial resources to build more schools – is coming to fruition, despite these hard times. This is the way to break the demoralizing and self perpetuating chain of dependency on foreign aid.

I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution of:

\$50.00 \$100.00 \$500.00

\$1000.00 Other _____

My address (if not same as address label on reverse side):

Please use my email to save postage and printing:

Send to: AWIEF
 P.O. Box 4303
 Frederick, MD 21705-4303

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AWIEF, P.O. Box 4303, Frederick, MD 21705



Call 301-685-3282

email: AskUs@AbleAndWilling.org



<http://AbleAndWilling.org>



Able and Willing

International Education Foundation

AWIEF

P.O. Box 4303

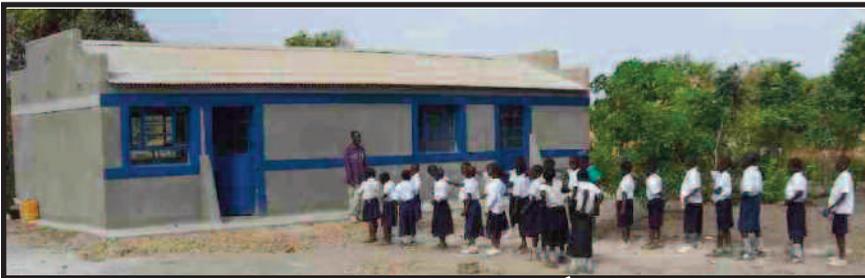
Frederick, MD 21705-4303

Return Service Requested

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<http://AbleAndWilling.org>



A new school...

... for an old village

2008 Projects

Highlights

- New School in Poleni Village
- Teacher Training
- School Exchange Programs
- WaMbuyu Technical School
- Help Other Schools

