

THE CONGO PEACE SCHOOL

Pursuing peace and equality
through education



The

CONGO PEACE SCHOOL IS:

- **a one-of-a-kind school serving 400 students, providing a life-changing education rooted in peace and nonviolence**
- **a place of healing, where vulnerable children are fed nutritious daily meals and supported by trauma-informed staff**
- **an investment in a peaceful future, where students learn computer skills in a lab powered by solar energy, and receive training in sustainable agriculture**
- **a model for gender equality, where girls and boys enroll in equal numbers, teachers receive equal pay, and students learn together about the rights of women and girls**

The Congo Peace School is a one-of-a-kind primary and secondary school in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a region that has been wracked by violence and insecurity for more than 20 years. The Peace School provides quality education integrated with nonviolence principles derived from the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, based on the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. The school serves vulnerable children and orphans, preparing them for constructive, peaceful leadership to influence the future of their nation, and our world.

Before the children can change Congo they must take care of themselves. With a trauma-informed pedagogy and trained staff, the children receive the emotional support they need as well nutritious meals every day, a luxury most Congolese children are not afforded as millions of children are severely food insecure.

The Congo Peace School helps prepare the children for life after graduation: extra-curricular programming teaches the students practical, vocational skills in organic farming and animal husbandry, as well as computer word processing, powered by solar panels by January 2021. When fully funded and staffed, the Congo Peace School will prepare 480 students in 12 grades (primary grade one through secondary grade six) for a lifetime of leadership and community building, as well starting many students off with the benefit of two state of the art pre-school classes supported by the Pedagogical Institute of Los Angeles. Your partnership invests in the education of peace ambassadors, giving them the tools and sense of agency to be the change they want to see in Congo, and the world.



WHO IS BEHIND THE CONGO PEACE SCHOOL?

Amani Matabaro is visionary leader behind the Congo Peace School, and the founding director of Action Kivu and the co-founder and Executive Director of ABFEC, the local Congolese organization for which Action Kivu, a U.S. based nonprofit, raises funds and awareness. Action Kivu provide the resources for ABFEC's community-based initiatives that foster equality for women and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC].

The Dillon Henry Foundation [DHF], a U.S. based non-profit, engaged with Amani's vision of the Congo Peace School, seeing its alignment with their mission to create a worldwide community of individuals who show compassion and are compelled to take personal responsibility to change the world for the better.



With their foundation created as a legacy for Dillon Henry, the son they lost, Harriet Zaretsky and Steve Henry have made an impact both in the U.S. and around the globe with their mission that is rooted in education. The DHF committed the capital to build the Congo Peace School, and with Action Kivu's additional funding from various donors, the Congo Peace School opened its doors to 160 students in September 2018. Now in year three (2020-2021) with Pre-School 1 and 2, Primary grades 1-5, and Secondary 1-4, the Congo Peace School has pivoted to also address the global crisis of COVID-19, establishing mask-wearing, hand-washing, and social distancing protocols while continuing to provide the students a safe and peaceful environment for learning.



HOW IS THE CONGO PEACE SCHOOL DIFFERENT? A BEACON OF EDUCATION, HOPE, AND HEALING

- **In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) nearly 7 million children aged 5 to 17 are out of school. (UNICEF)**

When fully funded and staffed, each year the Congo Peace School will prepare 480 students in 12 grades (primary grade one through secondary grade six) as well starting 44 students off per year with the benefit of two state of the art pre-school classes supported by PILA. Class sizes are limited to 40 – versus the typical 75-80 – providing better one-on-one attention.

- **Each year of education reduces the risk of conflict by around 20%. (World Bank)**

- **The staff is trained to identify childhood trauma, and students receive support through a trained counselor.**

Though the fabric of Congolese society has been destroyed by war - children recruited as soldiers and rape used as a weapon of war - education is the means to change the equation. The school first educates the students on gender equality and the equal rights of women. Communities in eastern Congo have been and continue to be subjected to high levels of trauma. In response, the school's subjects and detailed topics help the children process and recover from their trauma. Instead of international NGOs arriving in the Congo with experts who then leave shortly thereafter, there will be local, permanent solutions to effectively address local problems.





EDUCATION ROOTED IN FOSTERING CURIOSITY

The Nest: Preschool at the Congo Peace School

- **In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 3.5 million children of primary school age are not in school, and of those who do attend, 44 percent start school late, after the age of six. (US AID)**

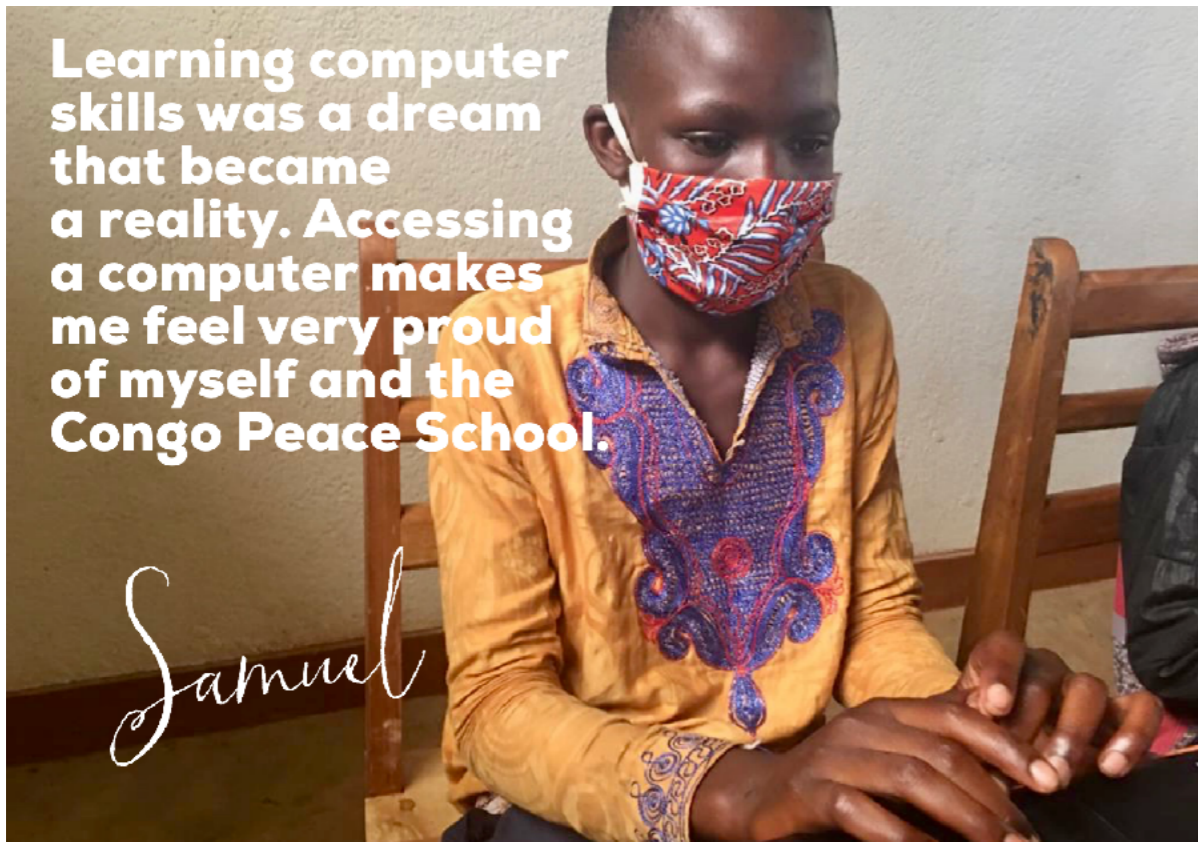
Peaceful conflict resolution, respect for others and self begins early! The Nest, two preschool classes supported by The Pedagogical Institute of Los Angeles, provides for Congolese children the opportunities to develop their own positive voice with which they can eventually shape a just and civil nation. Preschool programs are almost non-existent in this region.

- **If all mothers completed primary education, maternal deaths would be reduced by two-thirds, saving 189,000 lives. (Source: UNESCO)**

We know that quality early education can change the trajectory of a child's life. We affirm that children, regardless of economic or geographic considerations, are entitled to an education that sparks curiosity, wonder and innate desire to make meaning in the world.

(Source: Photos and PILA mission text provided by The Pedagogical Institute of Los Angeles, www.thinkwithus.org)





Learning computer skills was a dream that became a reality. Accessing a computer makes me feel very proud of myself and the Congo Peace School.

Samuel

EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Much like in the U.S. and around the globe, the Democratic Republic of Congo's government had issued safer-at-home mandates, which closed schools in March, restricting public gatherings to no more than 20 people at a time.

"The Congo Peace School may be temporarily closed, but the mission and vision behind the school cannot be shut down."

-Amani Matabaro

Amani and the Congo Peace School staff made immediate changes in operations to meet the crisis, making the most of the resources at hand, utilizing the infrastructure that is in place because of the support and investment our donors have made, providing the foundation for the life-saving work that needs to be done.

The Congo Peace School became a hub of health and education, not just to feed the most at-risk students with meals served to 20 students at a time, but as a resource center for hand-washing stations made possible by an emergency grant from our partners at Jewish World Watch, as well as the ability to distribute the educational information on the how-to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The government has re-opened schools for the fall of 2020, and the Congo Peace School continues its mission of education rooted in peace and equality in accordance with safety protocols and clean, running water.

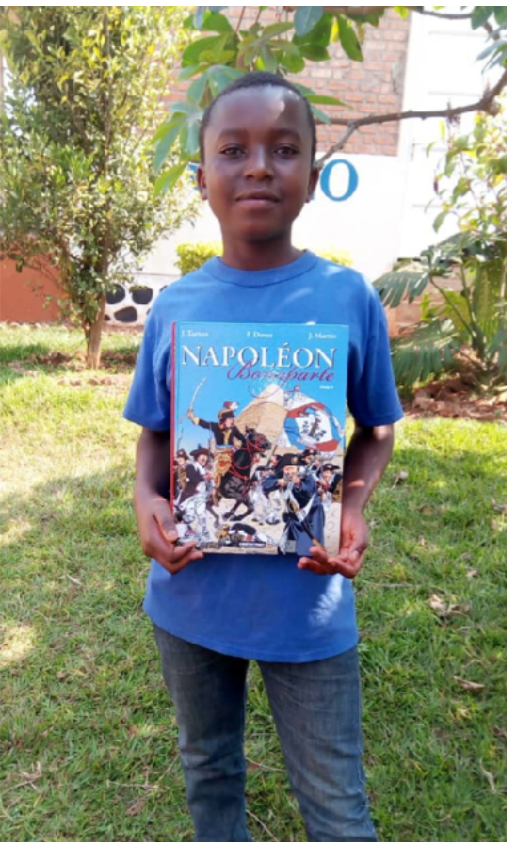


EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

- **DRC is now the second largest hunger crisis in the world after Yemen. Hunger and conflict fuel one another, with armed conflict and widespread displacement prevailing for the past 25 years and multiple other crises compounding DRC's humanitarian challenges. (World Food Programme)**
- **The Congo Peace School's farm is an example, teaching students about the connection between land, animal, and us. The students are trained in organic, regenerative agriculture, fighting malnutrition and ensuring the land will thrive to continue to provide food for generations to come.**

Three dairy cows were donated to the school, to provide milk for the students and potential income to offset the school's costs. As the chicken project grows, more eggs will be available for the students' meals. The cows, in addition to the pigs, rabbits, goats, chickens, provide manure for the compost that helps keep the fishing ponds healthy and provides rich, organic fertilizer for the crops.

As we continue to monitor the crops' harvest yields, we hope to reduce the cost of the student meal program, currently \$25 / month per student. In response to an ongoing problem of excess water on part of the community farm, Amani explains that their approach is that every problem has a regenerative, local solution. Thus - they planted rice fields! The first harvest will take place December of 2020. We hope to source more of the Congo Peace School food from its own land.



We are lucky being at the Congo Peace School, the only school where we are given an opportunity to read books, learn computer skills, and eat a meal.
— Kaliwe, age 13

EDUCATION SUPPORTED BY NUTRITION, SANITATION, BOOKS & SUPPLIES

- **Currently, 43% of households have access to drinking water (69% in urban areas, 23% in rural areas) and only 20% have access to sanitation. (World Bank)**
- Many children in this region eat only one meal a day, if that. Skipping breakfast is associated with decreased cognitive performance (e.g., alertness, attention, memory, processing of complex visual display, problem solving) among students. [CDC] The Congo Peace School provides a holistic learning environment, feeding the minds, spirits, and bodies of our students.
- The school is outfitted with clean, running water for drinking and sanitation, as well as with flush toilets, preventing the spread of disease that can be common in areas without access to sanitation.
- **Literate people are more likely to participate in the democratic process and exercise their civil rights. (UNESCO)**
- Through our friends at Books for Eastern Congo the Peace School has started a library in the auditorium, in addition to 10 laptops for students to learn computer skills. The school is getting a 10kW solar installation in the fall of 2020 that will power our computer learning lab and the dorms (two boarding houses that will eventually serve as a source of sustainable income for the school). The system will replace costly and carbon emitting diesel, representing another element of a peaceful future for the students.

STUDENT STORIES

"If we want a better world, we have to make it ourselves." - Alice Walker

Elysee is 16 years old, starting the 4th grade of secondary school at the Congo Peace School for the 2020-2021 school year.

"In June, I've needed to combine many things almost every day," she says, "learning some computer skills during our half day school sessions in small groups [limited to 20] because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some days I go to the Congo Peace School and community library and read a book. When I am not at school, I have to go and help my mom with farm work, I have no excuse. I have to help my mom because our father abandoned my mom for no other reason than giving birth to only girls.

"I want people outside Congo to know that my dream is big, and it is about a new Congo, stable and well-governed, safe and with no rape against women. May Congo become a country where equality between men and women is a reality. I am very excited by knowing and discovering day by day that it's possible to combine agriculture and animal husbandry. The results at Congo Peace School are spectacular - when I look at the size of the squash leaves that are being grown on our school farm, it is so amazing and incredible. I'm also interested in the computer skills lessons, that make our school unique in the area."

Iragi is 13 years old, and starting the 3rd grade of secondary school for the 2020-2021 school year.

"My dream is big, and it is about a new Congo ... where equality between men and women is a reality."

Elysee



"June has been a very exciting month ... it was the first time I saw and touched a computer! I'm excited to learn as much as I can."

Iragi



JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO CHANGE THE WORLD!

"There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls." - Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

Together, we are making an impact, not only in the Congo, but in the world: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

As we grow to the full capacity of all 12 grades plus pre-school 1 and 2, we need you! Learn more at actionkivu.org/peace-school and dillonslist.org/all-project-list/congo-peace-school/



With gratitude to our partners at Jewish World Watch, Pour Les Femmes, the Guardian Donors via DHF, and all of Action Kivu's family of donors.

To make a gift to either non-profit 501(c)(3) to enable this life-transforming school, please contact Harriet Zaretsky at the Dillon Henry Foundation - harriet@dillonslist.org or Rebecca Snavelly at Action Kivu - actionkivu@gmail.com.