

End of Programme Report
The British and Foreign Schools Society

Programme supported: School building in conflict affected communities in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Funding provided: £30,000 - in support of the building of Mushegereza Primary School.

Reporting period: January 2014 – January 2015

Overview

Children in Crisis (CiC), alongside our local implementing partner Eben-Ezer Ministry International (EMI), has been building and rehabilitating dilapidated schools on the Plateau of South Kivu since 2007. Over three years (January 2013 – March 2016) the current phase of the programme aims to repair and rebuild nine Plateau schools. The rehabilitation of Mushegereza Primary School, generously supported by the British and Foreign School Society, was undertaken as one of three schools involved in the second year of the programme.

We are pleased to report that building work on the school was able to take place as planned, with the programme across all three schools coming in slightly underspent for the year. Due to low-level damage caused by the storm in May, the rehabilitation of Mushegereza was slightly over budget, but this was offset by savings against the other two schools. The fully rehabilitated Mushegereza Primary School was handed back to the community in January of this year and is once more holding lessons.

Outputs Achieved Against Outputs Proposed

The rehabilitation of Mushegereza Primary School has seen the following outputs achieved:

- Six fully furnished classrooms with desks and blackboards
- A head teacher's office
- A staff room
- Separate latrines for girls and boys

As the pre-build photos below and overleaf illustrate, Mushegereza Primary School was in a state of significant dilapidation, and considerable time, effort, and resources were required to transform it.



Before building work started on site, Mushegereza had one existing structure. This existing building has been extensively renovated and is now the main school building, containing six classrooms – one per year group. A second building has been built to provide a staff room and a meeting room. The latrines stand as a third separate structure.

As you may remember from the interim report, after the initial building materials had been delivered in July, August saw our experienced

contractors arrive in Mushegereza to begin construction work. The contractors' first job was to strengthen and heighten the walls of the current structure, and to fix its roof. Given the Plateau's erratic weather, this was a priority.

The construction of the school's classroom was the main focus of September's activities. In October work began on the construction of the separate building to hold the school's staff room and meeting room. Once the walls of both structures had been built and the roofs secured, the contractors worked steadily to cement the floors, fix the doors of the existing classrooms and to build the latrines.

With all three structures completed by early December, the floors cemented, the walls rendered and the furnishing constructed, one of the final jobs left was to paint the school. The importance of this task should not be overestimated. In these impoverished communities most families are living in simplistic huts made of semi-durable materials such as mud. Our reconstructed schools may be the only durable, decorated buildings in a community and as such their appearance is important to communities such as Mushegereza.

BEFORE



AFTER



All that remained in January was to install the school's water tank. The inauguration ceremony took place on the 23rd January 2015 with CiC represented by Amy Parker, Programme Manager for DRC and Koy Thomson, CiC Chief Executive. The inauguration ceremony was a joyous occasion, well-attended by the local community as well as by local authority figures (such as pastors and customary



leaders). The ceremony was also attended by the region's Education Officer, stationed in Uvira, and the CEPAC¹ Education Co-ordinator.

The ceremony was opened by the community's choir. Speeches were given by representatives of the different parties involved in the programme. A particularly memorable speech was given by the head of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The community were passionately reminded of their history, the years of conflict they had suffered and the many times that they had been thwarted in their attempts to rebuild their school. Community members were thanked for their assistance in collecting the building materials and pride was expressed in the new school and what it symbolises for their children's future. The speech stands testament to the optimism brought by this build.

This determination and hope for a better future was further demonstrated by the announcement that the community's next aim and ambition is to start a secondary school!

Expected Programme Outcomes

The generosity of the British and Foreign School Society has contributed to much more than just a new school building. The impact of this intervention will see the quality of life increased for vulnerable women and children for years to come.

➤ **Increases in enrolment and attendance**

At the outset of the programme Mushegereza Primary School had an enrolment of 171 children (76 girls and 95 boys). As a result of the programme 13 more children – seven girls and six boys - are already now attending the school, bringing enrolment to 184 children (83 girls and 101 boys). Whilst this initial increase is relatively small, as the section on sustainability below highlights, it is anticipated that this number will increase in the upcoming years.

➤ **Improved quality of education with reduced teacher absenteeism**

At the inauguration ceremony Amy Parker had the opportunity to run a focus group with several pupils at Mushegereza Primary School. They told her that in the old school, rain used to wash mud into the classroom, meaning they were constantly dirty, and that there were no desks so they had to sit on sticks or stones. The classrooms were small and dark, making it hard to see the small pieces of slate used as blackboards by their teachers.

The children were unanimously happy with their new school. They said that it is well-lit, comfortable and that they are now protected from the cold and wet. They told Amy that the new building shows them that adults value their education.

Emmanuel Baleke, grade six pupil, aged 12 - *"A good environment helps good learning."*

➤ **Increased awareness of the importance of education, with parents more closely engaged**

The condition of the old school was resulting in children from Mushegereza not being enrolled in school. Rather than sending their children to study in cold and wet conditions, parents were choosing the short-term financial benefits of having their children work alongside them in the fields.

¹ CEPAC is the Pentecostal churches in central Africa.

As so eloquently expressed by the children during their focus group meeting with Amy, the community's assistance in the building of the school shows their awareness of the importance of education. Having invested so much time and effort in its construction, parents now want to protect it for future generations.

Sifa Luguvi, one of the children involved in the focus group, told Amy that her parents were now actively supporting her and her siblings in their education by paying school fees, buying school equipment such as satchels, pencils and workbooks, and by ensuring that they have enough time to study. She also mentioned that her father, who has a basic education, sets aside time to help her with her homework wherever he can.

Sifa's positive story of parental engagement was echoed in the focus group discussion held with parents. They spoke of how they will do everything they can to ensure that their children – both girls and boys – are able to make the most of the opportunity the new school has provided. The engagement and hope expressed in these focus group discussions is a positive sign for the children of Mushegereza.

“What is the point of education? It helps you in your life. It helps your family, if you have studied you can find work and this means you can also work for the population – you can contribute.”

Angela Bidedwa, parent and committee member.

➤ Increased Community Cohesion

South Kivu, like most of DRC, experienced horrendous ethnic conflict during the country's civil war. Mushegereza was no exception. As a headquarter of a particularly vicious colonel of the Mai Mai Kayamba fraction, killing was a daily reality for those living in Mushegereza. Whilst the past few years have been relatively peaceful, the after effects of the violence experienced by the community means that the potential for mistrust and ethnic tension to resume is large. This build has helped counteract this threat.

Firstly, by bringing community members together for a shared purpose and by ensuring that they worked together during the collection of materials and on the construction site, goodwill and community cohesion has been enhanced.

In the longer-term the new school will be part of the movement for maintaining peace. All of the teachers active at Mushegereza have been involved in previous phases of CiC/EMI's Teacher Training Programme, which include a component on peace education. The improvement of the school's learning environment will improve teachers' ability to deliver this module, contributing to greater unity in Mushegereza.

Mushegereza Primary School will stand as a beacon of learning and pride. It will be a visual symbol of what can be achieved by working together. It will give the community a reason to maintain peace and to invest in further development in the area.

The project has also been a large step towards addressing the community's gender imbalance. With minimal external contact on the Plateau, much of South Kivu remains highly patriarchal. In combination with our Teacher Training Programme, the School Building Programme has served to boost the voice of women and to increase female participation in decision-making. The success of this outcome can be seen in the school management committee consisting of an equal ratio of



women and men. Equable representation on this prominent community-led committee will act as motivation for greater gender equity in Mushegereza.

➤ Increased Governmental Attention on the Plateau

A major issue at the outset of CiC's intervention on the Plateau in 2007 was the lack of attention and resources dedicated to the Plateau. The conspicuous absence of regional authorities was contributing to schools falling into dilapidation and the perpetuation of bad practice in school management and teaching practices.

It was therefore significant that Mushegereza's inauguration was attended by the region's Education Officer, stationed in Uvira, and the CEPAC Education Co-ordinator. Their attendance indicates that our advocacy is having an effect and the heads of local authorities are turning towards South Kivu.

Whilst this process will be a slow one, we are confident that through our continued presence on the Plateau we can build on the positive developments that are taking place.

Lessons Learnt

To ensure that the School Building Programme, and CiC's other programmes on the Plateau are impactful and achieve their intended outcomes, we continually evaluate and reflect on our successes and the challenges we have faced.

➤ The unpredictability of the Plateau

As you might remember from the interim report, the build at Mushegereza was endangered by a significant storm in May. Whilst we were well aware of the Plateau's erratic weather conditions, this storm was a fierce reminder of the Plateau's unpredictable nature, reinforcing the importance of having contingency plans in place both in relation to working plans and budgets.

➤ Communities' desire for education

The villagers of Mushegereza went above and beyond to facilitate this build. As detailed in the interim report, the villagers were required to provide the water, sand and stone required for the build as a condition of our assistance. In the case of Mushegereza the nearest source of these resources was a three and a half hour round trip on foot. Despite the challenges and difficulties associated with such a lengthy trip, the village never faltered. A 60 strong team ensured that the contractors always had the water needed to mix cement and that all the sand and rocks required was collected well in advance of the build.

The dedication shown by those living in Mushegereza affirmed what we have seen elsewhere, namely the extraordinary lengths communities will go to provide an education for their children. It reinforced our belief that community inclusion must be at the heart of this programme if these new school buildings are going to deliver sustainable outcomes.

➤ Best practice

With seven years' building experience, we are confident in the mechanisms we have in place. In February 2015 Amy Parker attended the *Community-Based School Construction: Technical Consultation Conference*, a global workshop led by RiskRED and Save the Children with the support and guidance of UNESCO, ARUP International Development and GFDRR. This event was the first of

its kind, where many of the top development actors in the school building sector came together to share learning and experiences on community-based safe school construction. During the conference our approach was lauded as an example of best-practice in conflict-affected, remote communities. We are currently looking into ways we can further strengthen our processes to ensure that our school builds have the lowest possible environmental impact and to explore the possibility of developing a vocational training element. As part of this process we are currently in discussions with ARUP about the possibility of forming a partnership.

➤ Formalising reporting process

Given the distances between EMI's office in Uvira and the schools on the Plateau, the capture of impact data is a lengthy and costly process. To overcome this we have decided to take two steps; firstly EMI will soon be opening a field-based office on the Plateau; secondly we have formalised an annual reporting system for all of our school builds to enable us to better track impact.

Future Activities

Mushegereza Primary School has now been involved in both CiC's School Building Programme and our Teacher Training Programme. In the coming years it will also be included in our on-going monitoring and evaluation process so that we can assess how our intervention is benefitting children in the community.

To complement our on-going work on the Plateau, for the past year CiC has been running a pilot Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) project. VSLAs are a self-managed and self-capitalised



A VSLA in action

microfinance model used in 61 countries worldwide. They are a structured forum where members pool their low-level savings into a communal pot from which loans are distributed. These groups strengthen members' financial resilience, enabling them to invest in fledgling business and to cope with shocks (such as medical expenses).

With the pilot phase drawing to a close, we are currently seeking funding to expand the pilot across the Plateau. Mushegereza has been identified as one community that will be included in the scaled-up VSLA

project. The increased financial stability that membership in VSLAs would bring parents, and especially mothers, would see more families able to meet the costs associated with schooling and the household burden placed on children reduced, enabling more children to enrol in the refurbished primary school. VSLAs are particularly cost-effective and require no further financial investment before the first year of intervention.

Construction work at the two other schools involved in the second year of the School Building Programme has been completed. In January 2015 an assessment of potential schools to be involved



in the third and final year of the programme was carried out. Finalisation of the three communities to benefit from the programme in the year ahead will take place in the upcoming months.

Beyond the current phase, and depending on the availability of funding, we hope to launch a further three year phase of school building (May 2016 – April 2019) which will see us rebuild another nine schools.

Sustainability

Community consultations at the outset of the programme made it clear that inhabitants of the Plateau responded best to programmes that they were actively engaged with, rather than simply beneficiaries of. Therefore community inclusion has been at the heart of the Mushegereza build since its conception. This was achieved by community members becoming labourers on the build, regular meetings being held between the contractors and the community, villagers supplying the water, sand and stone and the establishment of the school management committee.

Schools on the Plateau require significant maintenance to avoid falling into disrepair. The poverty of many communities and their restricted income generation abilities mean that they struggle to meet these costs, and rely on continued external assistance.

To counter this sustainability issue, as part of our engagement with each school's community we form a school management committee made up of local community representatives. These members are given a one-time start-up grant of \$1,500 (£1,013)² and are trained in Income Generation Activities.

The school management committee at Mushegereza has so far spent \$1,100 (£743) of their grant (73%). With this they have bought seven goats for \$300 (£203), two cows for \$500 (£338), and have invested \$300 (£203) in growing coffee. This is a very sage approach, mixing larger investments and smaller investments. Coffee is a slightly riskier activity to invest in, as harvests can fail, but if managed correctly it will reap significant rewards.

It is too early to tell whether the establishment of this committee and their investments will ensure that the school is financially sustainable in the longer term. The committee has made a commitment to ensuring certain jobs (painting walls, repainting blackboards etc.) are done annually. In addition, the committee will be reporting back on activities – both expenditure and gain – in September.

Long Term Impact

By March 2016 CiC will have built or rehabilitated a total of 18 schools on the Plateau. To assess the impact our school builds have had on these communities, and to determine the sustainability of our intervention, we have undertaken impact assessments across 10 of the schools.

Following CiC's systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures these visits collected data from a range of sources (lesson observations, exam results, interviews with key stakeholders such as the PTA and focus group discussions with pupils, parents and teachers).

² £1: \$1.48

Throughout these assessments it was expressed to us that our model of intervention on the Plateau, school building coupled with teacher training and community awareness-raising, has resulted in more children attending school and better learning taking place once children are there.

Before the school builds, 1,551 children were enrolled in these 10 schools (673 girls and 878 boys). At the time of our visits 2,168 children were enrolled in school (1,084 girls and 1,084 boys), an increase of 28% (617 children - 411 girls and 206 boys).

Complimenting this quantitative data, during focus group discussions children expressed their pleasure with their new schools and clearly stated that the new building had brought about a positive change in their education. They mentioned that their learning was no longer weather-dependent as the roof does not leak and wind no longer blows through broken doors and windows. With well-insulated classrooms and more space, they said they are no longer sitting on the floor or disturbed too much by their neighbouring classes, enabling them to study in comfort and to better engage with their classes.

Parents were found to be more engaged with their children's education. This engagement, with parents helping their children with their homework where they can and allowing them more time for their studies, is ensuring that children are able to make the most of the opportunity now available to them.



Photo from the Focus Group which took place at Mushegereza Primary School

The results of these assessments allow us to say with confidence that the school build at Mushegereza will bring about improved learning outcomes for children for years to come once our direct involvement in the region has concluded.

Financial Report

The financial report is attached as a separate Excel document. Explanations have been included alongside variances greater than 10% against budget. Across the three second year builds the programme is underspent by 3% (£5,016). This underspend will be carried forward to the next programme year.

British and Foreign School Society

We hope that this report serves to demonstrate the huge impact that your generous support has had on the education available to children in Mushegereza. On behalf of the parents, teachers and children of Mushegereza, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for your kindness. Thank you ever so much.