

VENTURES in the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of CONGO from 23 October to the beginning of December 2007

The Oil Palm Trees planted for the “100 Hectares for 100 Years of the Rotary” project are developing nicely in Kisantu and on the Bateke plateau. However, we need to stimulate their growth by adding urea (one kilogram per tree). This plantation served as a model for the World Bank’s 2000-hectare plantation in the Bas Congo province, and more recently for Israel’s two 50,000-hectare plantations of oil palm trees cultivated to produce “Bio-Energel.”

The **women’s Literacy program** in 10 disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Kinshasa was a success, as were the sewing machines given to newly literate mothers to ensure their independence. I attended sewing lessons with the enthusiastic participants.

I am going to finish the **Incinerators** which will destroy organic waste from Kinshasa hospitals. It’s an important project, particularly because of AIDS. Out of 450 children at Kimbondo hospital, 50% are HIV positive!

But, everything is complicated in Africa: shortage of cement, which has sharply risen in price, near-impossibility to find firebricks, malaria outbreaks among the personnel ...

The proposal to create **150 fish farms** to respond to malnutrition in Lodja and Tshumbe, in the center of the Democratic Republic of Congo, was accepted by Evanston (15,000 euros). The contract has been signed by the Kinshasa RC. I’m also going to run it by the Grenoble-Belledonne, Romans and Grenoble-Sud RC’s.

Ten fish farms have been completed thanks to the Annecy rotarians’ “Bol de Riz” (Rice Bowl) operation held at the Ecole des Tilleuls.

The handing over of “medical beds” was a success in the four main hospitals in Kinshasa, in the presence of the Minister of Health, local authorities and national media. Action is great, but communicating around action is even greater.

With the agreement of the Minister of Health, the PRONANUT (National Health Program), I visit all international organizations in Kinshasa (UNICEF, OXFAM, ACF, MSF, HKI, CARITAS, BDOM, COOPI ...), to maximize the distribution “foliation extracts” (concentrated vegetable protein), to respond to chronic malnutrition, a large problem here after five years of war which left 4 million dead ...

I’ve put in place 7 groups of “mums” : “BOBOTO mums” (BOBOTO = Peace), “Market Gardener Mums” ... With our Rotarian friends (Arne Thies, Harmut Heuser, Jacques Valette and Guy Plantier) we want to put new ventures into place, with a view to create new jobs by microcredits. Here we lend only to the poor ... Jean-Baptiste Lumumba, President of the Kinshasa-Binza RC, and Victor Alvès, Treasurer, will organize training in family and association management for these women.

I’m setting up two matching grants:

1. A Literacy Program for at-risk youth and women in the disadvantaged area of Kinabwa, under the direction of the Breton Sisters of Kermaria, and for the building of “Toilets”, Cost 25,000 USD.
2. Drilling for drinking water for the orphanage of ELEMBO (= Sign) des Passionistes in Kinkole, 30 km from Kinshasa. Cost: 15,000 USD.

