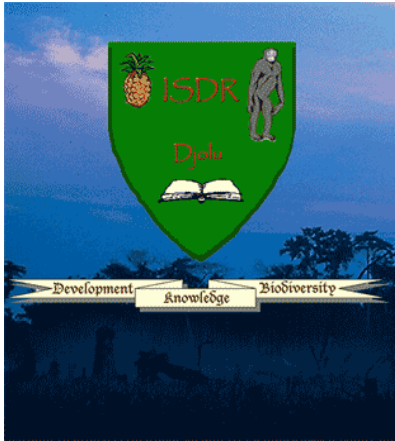


PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

“Make College an Option for 70 Congolese Students”

DJOLU TECHNICAL COLLEGE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Education Where It's Needed Most

In 2003, Djolu Technical College opened its doors with the goal of providing higher education for bright, motivated young people, including women, to support sustainable development and conservation of local communities' traditional forest lands and wildlife in the region. Djolu is located in the Tshuapa district of Equateur Province, in the north central part of the DRC, about 300 miles southwest of Kisangani. The College is the only institution of higher education in an area half the size of New England.

Since its founding, Djolu Technical College has grown to an institution that enrolls approximately 70 students, and employs eight permanent teaching staff, as well as eight visiting professors from the University of Kisangani who travel by motorcycle and dugout canoe for rotations of two months at a time. They willingly forego city and family life in order to support this fledgling college and bring education to a remote area of the DRC.

At this time, the College rents classrooms in a local school, and lacks electricity, computers, running water, phone service, an internet connection, metal roofing, and often even school supplies. Nevertheless, despite obstacles that would be considered virtually insurmountable by western standards, Djolu Technical College is effectively bringing higher education to students in this impoverished region.

Young people in the Djolu area are thirsty for knowledge and a good education. But despite the fact that tuition costs at Djolu Technical College are only about \$100 per year on average, only 15% of students' parents can afford to pay these school fees. About 75% of students require work-study funding, and about 10% abandon their studies due to lack of money, most commonly in the first year.

The DRC is one of the poorest countries in Africa, with a GDP of \$300 per person. The Djolu area has virtually no cash economy and the average household income rarely exceeds \$100 per year. Area families generally cannot afford to send their children to the University of Kisangani, which is a two-week journey by foot over jungle paths. Automobiles are almost nonexistent and even motorcycles are extremely rare in the region, and fuel must be brought upriver at great expense from Kisangani.

The region's economy was devastated by the Congo war, which officially ended in 2003, though fighting continues in the mineral-rich eastern part of the country. The few businesses and international organizations that operated in the Djolu area before the war have been slow to return. There are no large companies providing employment in Djolu, and people rely primarily on agriculture and bartering goods and services. Fewer than 6% of people have permanent employment.

Families sometimes offer livestock and agricultural products in trade for school fees. Unfortunately the school cannot always accept payments in goats and chickens. Due to Djolu Technical College's small size, tuition alone would not be enough to pay faculty salaries and other operating costs anyway. Yet, international funding from foundations and government agencies for African colleges is scarce, and primarily limited to institutions in a half-dozen of the most developed African countries. Thankfully, because a little money goes such a long way in Central Africa, some generous individuals and the Global Giving Foundation can turn this situation around and make a lasting impact for this valiant institution.

Why Here? Why Now?

Djolu Technical College, known in French as the Institut Supérieur de Développement Rurale or ISDR, was established at the recommendation of local Congolese community leaders and regional authorities as part of the agreement negotiating the creation of the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve. This community-managed rainforest reserve near Djolu is one of the richest known habitats on earth for the most endangered great ape species, the bonobo. Other reserves and parks in the region include the Luo Scientific Reserve, and the Lomako Faunal Reserve project. Bonobos, leopards, forest elephants and Congo pea fowl are flagship species that are endemic to the region.

The Congo River Basin is often called "the second lung of the earth," constituting the second largest expanse of intact tropical rainforest in the world, after the Amazon. Over the next decade, these forests are increasingly threatened by large scale logging, commercial agriculture, e.g., palm oil plantations, and other destructive uses.

The importance of educating local youth to manage and protect their traditional rainforest lands cannot be overstated. Without an education, the people who are the ultimate stewards of these lands will lack the means to protect their natural resources.

Key project partners are the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI), an international conservation organization, and Vie Sauvage, BCI's local partner organization. BCI has been a project partner since its inception, providing start-up funding and facilitating partnerships. BCI's mission is to promote conservation of the bonobo (*Pan paniscus*), the most endangered of the six great ape species, and its tropical forest habitat in the Congo River Basin. An important strategy to support this mission is to strengthen regional commitments to conservation and build capacity that empowers local people to manage their natural resources and protect bonobos.

Vie Sauvage is the other key project leader, providing locally-based expertise and managerial support. Vie Sauvage is a grassroots organization established to protect the local Mongandu peoples' traditional land and its wildlife in Kokolopori, a cluster of villages 50 miles from Djolu and, at the same time, to develop a spectrum of opportunities that improve the health and well-being of its inhabitants.

Initial funding support for the College was received from the Bonobo Conservation Initiative, and in 2006-2007 the college also received a grant from the Great Ape Conservation Fund of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. There has been significant investment of time and resources by the local community and its faculty and students, which are deeply committed to the College's success.

Accomplishments to Date

2007-2008 marks the College's fifth academic year with 35 students in the first undergraduate class, 22 students in the second class, and 14 students in the third. Thirteen students graduated during the 2006-2007 academic year with a degree in Rural Development. Requirements for graduation include successful completion of all coursework and a 60-80 page monograph in the student's subject area. The degrees were awarded on the basis of thesis authorship and public defense of the thesis.

The curriculum includes courses in Environmental Management, Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Techniques, Animal Husbandry, Harnessing Technology, Hygiene and Public Health, Mathematics, Demography, Biometry and Statistics, Agricultural Economics, Scientific Research Techniques, Accounting, English, Marketing, Psychology, Community Development, Rural Administration, Regional Planning, Civil and Land Law, and more.

The core curriculum of Djolu Technical College comprises 3,685 hours: 1,830 hours in theoretical learning or classes, 1,080 hours of professional practicum, approximately 500 hours for thesis authorship and defense, and 275 hours of internship in a company or

organization. The first year involves 950 hours for about twelve courses. In the second year, students decide whether to major in Rural Techniques (900 hours total) or Environment and Sustainable Development (also 900 hours). In the third and final year, students in Rural Techniques complete 835 hours and students in Environment and Sustainable Development complete 850 hours.

The core curriculum is mandatory and determined by the national government. Each year, the College reports to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research about the fulfillment of its curriculum objectives.

The College also hosts a number of conferences or workshops open to the public in order to encourage community involvement and support for its activities. For instance, in recent years, such conferences have been held to explain the goals and benefits of ISDR to local residents, the DRC's Constitution and guaranteed civil liberties, improving Djolu's accessibility to urban markets, and teaching math in high schools using real world examples for abstract concepts.

The Djolu Technical College holds a temporary authorization from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The College needs to fulfill the requirement for the definitive decree after hosting an inspection by the Permanent Commission in charge of Curricula Reforms. They will check the programs, infrastructure and qualifications of teachers, and then present their recommendation to the Ministry for the definitive decree.

Next Steps

Donations received through the Global Giving Foundation will underwrite a number of urgently needed operating costs at Djolu Technical College.

Faculty Support: Professors earn \$5 an hour, so the annual budget for salaries exceeds \$15,000. Travel costs for visiting professors amount to roughly \$9,000 per year. High travel costs for visiting professors also raise the question of what would be required for the College to attract more resident professors. Important factors would include such things as (1) reliable ongoing funding for salaries, (2) infrastructure improvements such as sufficient classroom space, availability of guest houses and a cafeteria and (3) an Internet connection at the College.

Books: The College library is in need of technical and scientific textbooks and reference books in French. Scientific books are scarce and too expensive in DRC, especially in Kisangani, and purchase and shipment from the USA or Europe is very expensive as well. Fifty dollars or more for a single technical or science book is not an unusual price. Currently, the College's library houses only 45 books, and the 13 theses written by graduates of the class of 2007.

Building Construction: At present, the College is spread out among three locations: rented classroom facilities in the commercial district of Djolu, a 10 hectare agricultural

concession, and a College-owned administrative building with a multipurpose building next door. The 10 hectare concession is for agricultural studies/practice and ultimately for construction of a campus for the College.

The multipurpose building measures 16 meters x 8 meters, and can serve as a computer room, library and conference center. It is solidly built with baked bricks with a metal roof. The building was constructed with the help of free labor by College students and local people dispatched by the Zone Commissioner, the Catholic abbot and the Protestant pastor. Students and locals helped masons to excavate at the College's land concession in order to make bricks and help carry 12,000 bricks from the concession to the building site.

Over the longer term, the College must have permanent facilities of its own. Based on a preliminary engineering report, the cost to build a full facility with six classrooms, one laboratory, a library, two guesthouses for professors, one administrative building, and a dormitory and cafeteria, is estimated at \$320,000.

Internet and Electricity: At present, the College has neither computers nor Internet access. As a result, students and staff cannot connect to the outside world from Djolu or look up information online, which is critical given the minimal nature of the college's library. Installation of an internet connection, a solar power supply, and the first year of internet subscriber fees would cost on the order of \$30,000, in addition to the cost of laptop computers and software. Internet subscriber fees alone are \$5000 annually.

BCI has donated a biodiesel processor to the College so the students could make their own fuel from locally-grown agricultural products. Funding is still needed to pay for methanol (which is impossible to obtain in Djolu) or highly refined ethanol to process the biodiesel. Solar and wind power are also being explored as alternative options to support a College computer center.

Scholarships: In July 2008, one of our most promising and dedicated young colleagues, Veronique Lilima Lokasola, passed away. Veronique was a conservationist at the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve, working with the local managing organization, Vie Sauvage. The tragic and premature loss of this wonderful young woman left a big gap in the community, and in all of our hearts.

Because Veronique recognized the value of an education for the future of her community and her beloved forests, BCI and Vie Sauvage have created the Veronique Lilima Lokasola Scholarship Fund to support the education of talented Congolese students with a desire to study conservation biology, health



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science or rural sciences at the college or university level. Students from Kokolopori or Djolu are eligible for the scholarship.

Veronique was a passionate and gifted conservationist who showed unrivaled leadership, kept smiling, and instilled hope and courage in her colleagues. She was also a superb role model, especially for women in Kokolopori.

Veronique was one of 13 children, born in 1979 and raised in Djolu. Since childhood, she had shown a deep interest in wildlife. BCI and Conservation International supported Veronique's post-secondary education at the Tayna College of Conservation Biology (TCCB) at the Tayna Gorilla Reserve in the eastern DRC, where she was a talented student and graduated at the top of her class. She was inspired by Dian Fossey's work, which she learned about at TCCB.

Veronique's restless curiosity led her to travel widely in the DRC. She also volunteered for three years as a public relations officer for Vie Sauvage in Kinshasa, the capital of the country, and after her college education at TCCB was employed for two years, until the time of her death, as "conservatrice" in Kokolopori. One of Veronique's achievements in this capacity was to convince people in Kokolopori to extend the reserve boundaries to include some valuable ecosystems not originally part of the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve, which significantly increased its size. She possessed an astute mind, a big heart, and the patience necessary for successful conservation in a remote area.

Through the new scholarship fund, we hope that Veronique's spirit will live on to inspire other Congolese community leaders. Please help us invest in the education of the future stewards of the Congo rainforests. To designate your donation for this purpose, please check the box on the Global Giving donation page for "Gift/Donate in honor of someone" and send an e-card to Veronique's brother, Albert Lokasola at viesauvage@yahoo.fr.

As Sir David King, Science Advisor to the British government, said in July 2007 at the World Bank, anyone who cares about the future of Africa must recognize the central importance of building the capacity of African science and technology. *"Science and technology are vital for good governance, stability and human capital. A technically skilled population is a prerequisite for economic and wealth sustainability, and well being."*