



Cinderellas of Bukavu

Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC

Summary of Action

The goal of this project is to strengthen the educational program for young girls accused to be witches by local superstitions in Bukavu, Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As modern-day Cinderellas, they are confined to isolation by prejudice, serving as servants for other families.

COOPI is supporting a special center in Bukavu named "Ek'Abana", run by Sister Natalina Isella. The center offers shelter, psychological support, school support and vocational training, family mediation and reconciliation, with the goal of preparing the family and the girl for a positive reintegration, allowing these girls to return to their families and communities.



Project Activities

In Bukavu, DRC, COOPI provides shelter and education to more than 100 young girls accused to be witches by local superstitions. These girls, some as young as six years old, have been forced out of their homes and shunned by their communities. Any time a family tragedy occurs, such as the death of a family member, a severe illness or a financial loss, it is common for ignorance and superstition to blame a young girl, holding her responsible as an “evil witch”. The reason is often to be found in the complex socio-economic and cultural environment of deprivation in which many families are forced to live.

These girls are totally shunned from their families and communities, and denied their right to study, play or just grow up as normal individuals.

The center “Ek’Abana” was created in the year 2001 by Sister Natalina Isella, an Italian Missionary Sister. Thanks to the solidarity of many people around the world and to the support from COOPI, the center was able to grow and take care of hundreds of young girls.

Today the center offers a series of services for these girls:

- ✓ Appropriate shelter;
- ✓ Medical and psychological support;
- ✓ Educational support and vocational training;
- ✓ Family mediation and reconciliation, with the goal of preparing the family and the girl for a positive reintegration, allowing these girls to return to their families and communities.

The center currently houses 42 girls, while another 70 have already been successfully reintegrated into their families.

Need for support

COOPI is not receiving any institutional support for this project, and is struggling to find private supporters just to secure the daily activities of the center.

A detailed budget of 20.000 USD has been devised to identify the most urgent needs of the children and girls been supported by the Center: school materials, school fees, nutrition meals, psychological and educative support.

We really hope you can be our partner in the challenge of offering a proper education to these girls.



BUDGET "CINDERELLAS OF BUKAVU"

Costs Description	Details	sub-total
School materials	<i>25\$ x 100 children (40 internal+60 external)</i>	\$ 2,500
Clothes, school uniforms, basic personal needs	<i>100\$ x 40 girls hosted at the Center</i>	\$ 4,000
Psychological support	<i>50\$ x 12 months x 2 people</i>	\$ 1,200
Educative support	<i>Extra staff during emergencies or events</i>	\$ 1,300
School fees for secondary education	<i>approx 250\$ per year x 20 girls</i>	\$ 5,000
Nutrition meals	<i>approx 500\$ per month for the all Center</i>	\$ 6,000
Total expenditures		\$ 20,000