

BALOU CENTER:
SUPPORT FOR 200 KIDS WITH DISABILITY
IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Title: Balou Center - support for 200 kids with disability in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Organization: Aleimar – Voluntary Organization

Local representative: Kayombo Musole Maguy – Director of Balou Center of Lubumbashi

Representatives of the project in Italy for Aleimar: Francesco Moroni (Country Representative) and Ilaria Ventura (Project Office Director)

Place of realization: Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo

2. SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS



The project is located in the **suburbs of Lubumbashi**, the second biggest city of the Democratic Republic of Congo and it is the county seat of the southeastern province of Haut-Katanga. Although the Country is rich in natural resources, raw materials, forests and water resources, about **62% of the population lives below the poverty line and one in six people live in extreme poverty conditions** (source: World Bank). Unemployment involves 23% of the entire population (source: International Labour Organization), but this figure does not consider most of the workers operating within the informal economy and they are not included in this estimate. During the last three years the Democratic Republic of Congo has faced a difficult crisis situation from an economic and social point of

view, worsened by the long term consequences caused by the pandemic, national and international conflicts and by the exit from the Country of several foreigner companies and investors who left unemployed a great number of people.

Moreover, the local population has to daily face **internal conflicts** that witness the involvement of rebel armed groups and regular forces that every day cause civilian victims. Because of clashes about **5 million people have been forced to migrate** from their territory of origin, becoming Internal Displaced People or moving to the near Uganda. Evacuation and escape of a great number of people, of which a lot of school-aged children, implicate the worsening of their health conditions, increasing the risk of spread of communicable diseases and the possibility of being victims of abuses and traffics.

However, the largest number of victims is not caused by clashes, but by really **high malnutrition rates** and by the **collapse of health facilities**. In 2021 UNICEF estimates that 79 Congolese children out of a thousand die under the age of five and most of these deaths is caused by malnutrition, poor diets, poor sanitation, the spread of communicable diseases and the lack of maternal pre and post-delivery education. In January 2023

25.8 million people live in a situation of **food insecurity** (source: IPC: Integrated Food Security Phase 2023) and 40% of children suffer from malnutrition. **Children have to face the biggest obstacles:** the greatest part of children in the Country have to work and forced labour reduces the possibility of attending school (only 77% of the population is educated).

In addition, **children with disabilities are even more excluded** by the social and school life: in Congo disabilities are perceived as a fatality for its bearer, a course and a calamity for the family and for the entire community. These traditional beliefs lead to social marginalization or abandonment of the disable children by the family. UNICEF estimates that in the Democratic Republic of Congo 60-70% of children living on the streets are in two of the biggest cities of the Country: Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, where Balou Center is located. The Center aims at providing medical care, education, food and a safe accommodation for abandoned disable children. In the province of Haut-Katanga and in the city of Lubumbashi a high number of people suffer from congenital and/or acquired disability due to various causes: the increase of road accidents, accidents in mining activities, irradiation, physically exhausting jobs, limited access to medical cares and the lack of rehabilitation facilities.

3. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Premise: in Balou center the supply of energy was a significant challenge. The electricity grid was available for less than an hour a day and, since the old generator was not powerful enough, the Center was experiencing significant problems. Especially the hospital and the dormitories that host children suffering from epilepsy and sleepwalking were always in the dark. Thanks to GlobalGiving donors, Aleimar has been able to install a photovoltaic system on different buildings of the center, guaranteeing the electricity supply in the center. After the last needs analysis undertaken with the local representative Kayombo Musole Maguy, Director of Balou Center, a more general support to the center is really fundamental. For this reason, Aleimar wants to continue to work with Balou Center thanks to this project.

GENERAL GOAL: improving health and well-being of children with physical and/or mental disabilities of Lubumbashi.

SPECIFIC GOALS:

1. Guaranteeing psychological and physical health of the children hosted in the center;
2. Promoting social inclusion and access to education for all the recipients of the project;
3. Reducing child malnutrition and avoiding food insecurity for all the beneficiaries of the project.

4. RECIPIENTS

200 children and young people with mental and/or physical disabilities.

5. ACTIVITIES

- 1.1 Providing medical cares and rehabilitation sessions to the children hosted in the center according to their disability and needs;
- 2.1 Payment of school taxes and organization of workshops and inclusive activities inside the center;
- 3.1 Supply of daily meals and food supplements, improving the canteen service.