

**INVESTING IN CHILDREN – INVESTING IN THE FUTURE**  
**SETTING UP THE FIRST KINDERGARTEN**  
**BEL-AIR DISTRICT, LUBUMBASHI (D.R. CONGO)**



**SALVATORIAN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT**

## 1. Executive Summary: the Only School for 8,000 Children

After repeated requests of many parents, the Salvatorians in Congo have decided to build and manage a kindergarten for children in the district Bel-Air II in the city of Lubumbashi. This will partly remedy the lack of educational facilities for a very young population of more than 60,000 inhabitants (including approximately 8,000 children): there is no kindergarten, and only one primary and one secondary school. The new kindergarten will be built in two phases (2009 and 2010) on our land. It will consist of 6 classrooms for about 250-300 children between 3-6 years old, as well as an administration building, a play area and bathroom facilities (see annex plan 3). The kindergarten will be part of a larger school complex, which will also include a primary school for about 800 children between 7-12 years old. This primary school will be built in three phases (2011, 2012 and 2013) and will have 16 classrooms, an administration building, a multipurpose hall and bathroom facilities (see annex plan 7).



(<http://www.somika.com/images/dr-congo-map.jpg>)

## **2. Applicant and Manager of the Project**

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## **3. Place**

Democratic Republic of Congo, Lubumbashi

## **4. Organization that Promotes the Project**

SOFIA – Salvatorian Office for International Aid

Dr. Arnout Mertens (contact person in Europe for the project)

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## **5. Owner of the Project**

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## 6. Description and Background of the Project

### *1) Lubumbashi: Population Explosion and Crisis*

Lubumbashi, the capital of the Katanga province, is the second largest city of the D.R. Congo. In 2003 its population was estimated at about 1,140,000 inhabitants. Since then the number has increased sharply: currently there are approximately 4 million residents. Consequently, the districts have become small cities themselves: Bel-Air II, for instance, one of the 7 districts of Kampemba (which in turn is one of the municipalities of Lubumbashi), officially had 62,802 people (of whom 14,619 men, 13,790 women, 17,087 boys and 17,306 girls, according to the city report: see annex) in 2008.

Amenities usually available in communities with large populations are totally lacking. For instance, besides the lack of schools, the district of Bel Air II has no health centres or maternity rewards. There are some small private clinics and pharmacies, but their services are insufficient.

Apart from such 'normal' growth pains of a metropolis in a developing country, the current economic crisis makes the situation worse. As the Congolese mining industry collapsed, the crisis is most strongly felt in the Katanga province due to its heavy dependence on copper and cobalt mining. Over half of the 75 copper and cobalt companies in Katanga suspended or reduced their production, which resulted in at least 300,000 people losing their jobs. In addition, the already weak Congolese franc lost about half of its value while prices for products such as food, coal and cooking oil went up. Since the vast majority of people in Lubumbashi earn no more than 50-100 USD per month, many of them can no longer get by. As a result, the number of beggars as well as street crime and social unrest has increased.

Most people in Bel Air II work(ed) in one of the mining companies, in the big shops in the centre of the city, or as municipal workers. The people who were employed in the mining companies earned a relatively good salary (an ordinary labourer earns about 300 USD per month), but due the crisis many workers have been fired without obtaining a compensation. The others have a very modest pay of about 50-75 USD per month. As social security is an unknown concept in Congo, people have to be inventive to survive. (Some people go to villages outside the city to buy local products in order to sell them in front of their homes or on the street. Others set up a small phone booth at their homes to offer telephone services. Again others run a small kiosk, where they sell products like soda drinks, candy, sardines and soap.)

## *ii) Education in Bel-Air*

Educational opportunities in Lubumbashi are totally insufficient. There are far too few schools. In the district of Bel Air II, there is no single kindergarten (not even private), nor any public or semi-public primary or secondary schools (semi-public schools are those set up by church authorities in agreement with the government). There are two private schools: one primary and one secondary school. However, these schools exist only to make a profit without interest in the quality of education. While the monthly school fee is used to pay the staff, most of the money flows to the owners without them investing in the premises. The schools survive thanks to occasional help from NGOs or from the provincial government, which last year distributed school banks. These private schools consist of few small classrooms and have poor supervision. Furthermore they suffer from heavy corruption: diplomas can be bought and inspectors are bribed.

The people in Bel-Air who have the financial ability send their children to a kindergarten in one of the surrounding neighbourhoods or in the centre of the city. However, the large majority of the population cannot afford this as they lack the means to pay for transportation. Sending the children on foot would be too dangerous because of unsafe roads. Consequently, many children start school only from 7-8 years onwards, accompanied by an older brother or sister.

Incidentally, all schools that have been set up in Congo in the past years were built by religious congregations, private persons or through an organization that supports a local NGO. The government took no initiative, despite the great need. At times a governor or a councillor donated a sum for the repair or putting in place of a school, but this happened on private initiative as part of a political campaign.

The educational situation in Congo has worsened in the past years, as a result of which the intellectual level of the children continues to go down. (We note this, for example, with our own candidates. Even the best we recruit need a preparatory year before we can allow them to enter novitiate.) To counter the decreasing intellectual level, we are convinced that its cause has to be tackled from an early stage onwards: that is, from kindergarten. Kindergartens learn social skills and become familiar with language and practical skills. In this way, kindergarten teachers prepare the children for primary education. Children skipping kindergarten start primary school with a huge disadvantage.

### ***iii) Starting Capital and Financially Autonomous Exploitation***

Given the difficult socio-economic situation in Congo, unfortunately we are unable to construct the kindergarten on our own with help from the local population. Therefore we ask your organization for financial aid.

However, we can guarantee that the school will function autonomously in the future. Even though the Congolese government will not pay the teachers and other staff, the entire school must be financially independent.

Salvatorian schools usually function as follows. At the start of the school year we ask a fee of 15 to 20 USD per child. This money is used for the mandatory contribution to the educational inspection as well as to pay the insurance, the children's uniforms, chalk, exercise books, pens and calendars. Thereafter the parents pay per child a monthly fee, whereby the fee for the nursery school (8-10 USD) is higher than the fee for the primary school (5-8 USD) because fewer children can be allowed per classroom. In total, the school fee amounts to c. 110-120 USD per year.

The expenses are usually divided according to the following scale:

▪ Salvatorians:	10%
▪ Administration of school:	6%
▪ Repair and maintenance:	16%
▪ Salaries:	50%
▪ Learning materials:	10%
▪ Health care	6%
▪ Electricity and water:	2%

Our Congregation pays great attention to the poor; we want to be very inclusive towards the less well-to-do. Our aim is to reserve about half of the available places to children from disadvantaged families. However, this does not mean that they do not have to pay. Our experience has taught that we need to require a small contribution also from them, because it correctly gives them the feeling that they are committed to the education of their children. Moreover, in a parent meeting or other activities they will not feel inferior to richer parents. Thanks to the small businesses people set up to survive, they can and want to pay a reduced tuition.

We can keep the school financially viable despite a lower fee of half of the children thanks to the contributions of the more wealthy parents. Besides, they often give a little more than they have to, especially when they see that their own children play and learn in an excellent setting.

We already have furnishings for the classrooms. The teaching staff of a large technical school in Maaseik (Belgian province of Limburg) collected a dozen blackboards and about 50 desks and chairs for the kindergarten. Moreover, the Salvatorians in Congo have established their own small school fund to help out if needed.

***iv) High Quality Salvatorian Education***

In Sandoa, Kapanga, Randu and Kolwezi (other places in the province of Katanga), we are known for our high quality education in the schools we run. This quality is guaranteed by the local, national and international organization of our Congregation. This multilayered structure with checks and balances assures that the projects never are purely individual undertakings, but rather carried by an entire community.

From this experience we are confident that we can do the same in Bel-Air. Salvatorians will lead the new school and the staff will be carefully recruited to ensure that the necessary qualifications will be available. For a proper functioning of the kindergarten we need a staff of 10 people: a director, 6 kindergarten teachers, 2 health assistants and a maintenance person. For the primary school we will need a staff of 23 persons: a director, an assistant director, a secretary, 18 teachers (including some Salvatorians) and 2 maintenance persons. Thanks to the proper salary we will be able to offer them (150 to 250 USD per month, even during the holiday months), we will be able to keep them motivated.

The teaching program of the school is the one established by the National Ministry of Education in agreement with the coordinating agency of the Catholic education sector. Hence the school will be a so-called *école conventionnée*. For that matter, the mayor of Kampemba has pledged her full support, as her letter shows.

***v) The Salvatorians in Congo***

Our Society, founded in Rome in 1881, arrived in the Katanga province in 1955. We have been in Lubumbashi since 1993; in the district of Bel-Air since 1998. From the beginning we have concentrated on parish work and education (schools and boarding schools). Currently we have 124 members (priests, brothers and students) engaged in pastoral and social work in Congo (Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, Sandoa, Randu, Kalamba and Kapanga). In all our apostolates we fight against corruption and injustice.

## 7. Justification of the Kindergarten Project

### *i) Capacity Creation with Emphasis on the Poor to Reduce the Street Children Phenomenon*

On the basis of the official statistics, there are 27,982 children between 0-14 years old in Bel-Air II, of which about 8,000 are aged 3-6 – our target group. Once the kindergarten is in place, we can immediately allow 250-300 children. As the demand will grow quickly, we will be obliged to start classes in the afternoons as well. Even though the needs in the district are much more than what we can satisfy, our initiative will be a substantial improvement.

Whereas we want to offer high quality education to the children of the district, special attention will be given to socio-economically disadvantaged families – a fast-growing category. By opening the school to children of both well-off and poorer parents, we also counter the phenomenon of street children.

### *ii) Millennium Development Goal 2*

The right to education is a human right, recognised by the United Nations. Moreover, in 2000 the UN Millennium Summit decided to include universal primary education in the eight Millennium Development Goals that should be achieved by 2015 to make poverty history. We strongly support this idea, and we are convinced that education is the way forward to improve human development in a sustainable way and to tackle other fundamental problems the inhabitants of developing regions have to cope with, including poverty, unemployment and the lack of opportunities in society.

We note with regret that the Congolese state, despite all efforts in this area by the international community, fails to respond to the call of the UN. Therefore we see it as our duty to make a significant contribution to start a kindergarten as preparation for primary education.

### *iii) Salvatorian Engagement with the Poor*

We, the Salvatorian Fathers and Brothers, happily answer the call of the local population to provide decent education in Bel-Air II. In all our activities, we prefer to join the poor in challenging obstacles that frustrate a fully human life (particularly social injustice, poverty and violence in all their forms). We are convinced that providing high quality education is an effective way to change the situation for the better.

## 8. Phases and Duration of the Works

- Phase 1: Kindergarten I
  - 2009
  - 6 classrooms and bathroom facilities
  - Duration: 9 months
  
- Phase 2: Kindergarten II
  - 2010
  - Administration building and play area
  - Duration: 9 months
  
- Phase 3: Primary School I
  - 2011
  - 8 classrooms and bathroom facilities
  - Duration: 9 months
  
- Phase 4: Primary School II
  - 2012
  - 8 classrooms and administration building
  - Duration: 9 months
  
- Phase 5: Primary School III
  - 2013
  - Multipurpose hall, covered playground and bathroom facilities
  - Duration: 9 months

## 9. Budget of the Kindergarten

- Phase 1
  - Preparation of the land: 3,590 € (see budget nr. 1)
  - Construction of 6 classrooms: 90,020 € (see budget nr. 2)
  - Bathroom facilities: 27,260 € (see budget nr. 4)
  
- Phase 2
  - Administration building and play area: € 61,970 (see budget nr. 3)

## 10. Funding of Phase 1

- Total cost: 120,870 €
  
- Own contribution:
  - Administration of the project
  - Preparation of the land (3,590 €)
  - Bathroom facilities (27,260 €)
  - Furnishings
  
- Aid requested from two organizations: 6 classrooms (90,020 €)

**11. Documentation (upon request)**

- Original French version of the project description
- Recommendation letter from the mayor
- Recommendation letter from the provincial superior
- Recommendation letter from the Salvatorian project committee in Congo
- Budget of the kindergarten
- Plan of the architect
- General implementation plan
- Cadastral map of the plot
- Population statistics for the municipality of Kampemba
- Population statistics for the Bel-Air II district
- Pictures

**12. Bank Details**

Beneficiary: Casa Generalizia della Società del Divin Salvatore

Bank address: Pax-Bank, Von-Werth-Strasse 25-27, D-50670 KÖLN

Account: 56150013

IBAN: DE 87370601930056150013

BIC/SWIFT: GENODED1PAX

“Lubumbashi School Project”