**INCONTRO FRA I POPOLI**

**(JOINING  PEOPLE TOGETHER)**

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## Joined shadows

*Arsène François*

*age 22*

After my thirty-five day residence in the Congo with partners from Joining People together I mostly keep in mind a picture of contradictions, even of paradoxes. Sure, they have not got electric energy but the matches of the Football World Championship are followed in the smallest villane thanks to car-batteries and other  makeshift means. The social indicators of poverty are alarming but you often meet people owningtwo or three mobile phones (one for each operator). The UNO-delegation Monusco is shut up  in covered roof-terraces behind wire-fences just opposite the colourful crowded market-places. But what makes the deepest impression on newcomers like me is the absence of the State, that is the lack of facilities and public services. There is no rubbish collection, no public system of illumination, no keeping up of roads, no postal service.  There are only the permanent road blocks where you have to pay  “the road-tax”(toll), road-blocks which isolate the territory  and remind of the existence of the Congolese state. An the few existing facilities rapidly deterioratefor want of keeping up. This sensation of recession is more terribile than the total poverty of the country..

In opposition to this unsuccessful State, there are foreign and local ONGs everywhere. Each village we came through was surrounded by series of boards showing complicated acronyms,

each rejoicing at the carrying-out of some facility. The school-building in Shabunda is the apogee showing a different ONG-acronym on each of the four toilettes. In a way you observe the same situation regarding the presence of all kinds of religious confessions and sects with their places of worship sprung up frenetically and untidily. So the Congolese people live amidst a vast market of international help,  and of souls.

These people have come out of years of war and of instability which have destroyed social dynamics. The prevailing community management (water–sources, agricultural problems) has been replaced by welfarism based on foreign help. Nowadays a sort of stability has been found again and the effect of hope is strong. But it is impossible to generalize: several spontaneous collective movements try to improve the socio-economic situation of their area.

 Therefore it’s the target of Joining People Together  to discover in the immense territory of the RD Congo those tiny sparks of social dynamism helping them grow. This asks for a relationship of reliance, a relationship based on equality, but it also requires the production of reports about reliable activities and reliable accounts. This remains a problem as long as the groups say: *“Our reports are our cultivated field; come and check them yourselves!”*

The target of guiding and supporting has taken us to this territory in order to examine the effect of the “great organizers”

formed by Joining People Together and the  Comité Anti Bwaki in Bukavu.on groups of breeders and farmers.

I have had the opportunity to make a great tour in the Maniema, a region which was not hit by the war but has suffered the consequences. It has been neglected by the State and by international organizations as well. The towns are isolated and get the essential staple commodities by plane:  therefore prices are very high. Yet in the nearby rural areas farmers suffer from overproduction because they are not able to transport their products to the towns.

And to reach the sites where the groups of farmers live and work – here I am,  riding a motorbike deeper and deeper into the forest while night comes on. A serious damage of the engine keeps us on the track while our surroundings become magic: we can no longer see the villages we cross through but only imagine the shadows grouped round the braziers. Over the track the sky opens up between the hanging branches – behind us there is total darkness and the oppressing sensation that  the vegetation is swallowing us up. And in front of us the tiny light of our head lamp making the shadows even deeper.

Evidence and projects

**It’s me, the great organizer**

*Lutula  Sunbulanga Eugène*

I took part in  three training courses offered by Joining People Together: **the on-line course in fish-breeding 2008/2009, the intensive course for twelve great organizers in Bucavo in 2010 which lasted a fortnight and dealt with agriculture, fish-breeding, environment, farming and breeding, management of a rural cooperative, planning, implement and evaluation of  projects**, as well as promotion techniques for rural areas; and the  itinerant three week training course in 2011 at Kindu, Kalima,  Mungembe, Kampene, Kasongo, Kibombo.

Thanks to these training courses I have changed  my system of organization.

Nowadays I follow 46 OBCs(Organizations on Community Basis) and I am pleased to see lots of fine news there:

* The system of itinerant cultivation (requiring constant deforestation) is little by little replaced by the rotation system;
* Fish-breeders progressively replace damming ponds by smaller and safer derivation ponds;
* Most OBCs  master the management indicators of the cooperative organization quite well.
* Two OBCs have been legally recognized by means of  an notarial act.
* Seven OBCs have started their own small internal  savings and credit bank;
* And we, the twelve great organizers, talk and discuss together.

**We are fish-breeders**

*Jambo sana!*

*I am  Mapendo, in charge of a Congolese OBC (cooperative on community base). We live and work in Kindu, a large town in the Maniema  region in the Congo.*

*Our cooperative mostly attends to pisciculture. There are thirty of us running six ponds, but this year we have already built three more soon to be made use of.*

*Thanks to the on-line course offered by Joining People Together  we have improved our fish-breeding technique. We have got derivation ponds – so there are fewer sudden changes of temperature which would damage the growing of alevin. I think in Europe fish-breeders as a rule feed their fish, but here most breeders let their animals catch their own food. Now we have realized  we must feed them, and we do so regularly giving them rice bran,  cassava- and cockscomb- leaves.*

*Thanks to the on-line course we have come to know of the usefulness of integrated production; so we grow our own cassavas and cockscombs ( using the three year rotation system) and we breed guinea-fowl to get the compost we strew into the ponds for the nourishment of the plankton the fish eat.*

*The haul of fish is divided in three parts: the first  part as food for our families, the second  part to pay for the school-fees of the  children of the families, and the profit from the sale of the  third part which is used for the upkeep of the cooperative.*

*Notwithstanding our commitment we have difficulty in enlarging our activity because of the considerable cost of tools*

*(machetes, hoes…) which must be delivered into this isolated area by plane.*

*There are unquestionable difficulties but also tangible advantages: our  OBC enables us to feed many families and to send their children to school. This is a very important result, and  also your help has contributed towards the improvement of the quality of  our lives.*

***Perhaps somebody else would like to help us: even Euro 100 would enable us to buy boots, shovels and machetes needed for the keeping up of our ponds.***

Testimony and projects

**Kinshasa and Mboko**

What about the projects **“ A Veterinary pharmacy in  Kinshasa”** and  **“Young farmers ask for help”**? What about the outcome of the two appeals published by our magazine over a year ago, the chief protagonists of which were six groups of young people at the antipodes of the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

The twenty-four Italian families who- giving  3.146 € - chose to help four hundred unknown, dark-skinned young men and women can be satisfied with the result.

**The veterinary pharmacy is working well.** *“The sale of veterinary products and animal food integration products was immediately seen by the community as a step towards the improvement of our domestic breeding activities. Moreover, the profit from the first year of activity has enabled us to build shop premises of our own which are larger than the former ones. In August 2014  we will move to the new premises, saving the monthly   100 $- rent..  The profit also paid for the purchase of two mother-sows which already bore piglets.”* - says with enthusiasm Pierre Shako, vice-president of the local ‘AEJDD’ association and “Joining People Together” referent in  Kinshasa for the support at a distance for 22  children and teenagers who are orphaned  or in particularly difficult situations. And behind the counter of the pharmacy………the smile of Christelle, a young woman supported at school through IfP by another Italian family who is happy about her school leaving certificate,  awarded after five years of Liceo Scientifico, and her job  at the pharmacy. Her great wish is to attend university.

One thousand five hundred kilometres to the east, in the small town of  Mboko, on Lake Tanganyika, the **young farmers** proudly show their tomato and aubergine plantations  In 2013 the association ‘Charité pour Tous’, thanks to the support of several Italian people of good will (1.031 euro) was able to pay for the agronomical and managerial training, and for the purchase of tools (hoes, shovels, wheel-barrows, machetes), seeds and breeding stock, for groups of farmers and breeders Tumika, Grape, Umoja, ACS.  And there is some satisfaction too for the  P.a.r.i.s group managing a small restaurant, who after the purchase of a freezer can at last offer well-timed, high quality service, without having to chase the chicken whenever a customer arrives.

**PEOPLE WHO LOOK ON**

People who look on  far beyond their own existence.

People who are able  to reconcile the needs of their own families, and the wish to achieve something important beyond their own lives.

It’ s an act everybody can carry out, it’s not the privilege of those who own huge patrimonies.

**A TESTAMENTARY LEGACY**:

small or large sums of money, shares, bonds can be assigned to charitable associations, such as **Joining People Together**.

Testamentary legacies are tax-free.

Testamentary legacies do not damage  legal heirs because the Law establishes a legal share for them. Your will(testament) is the only means to obtain that your wishes are respected, it can be modified or annulled at any moment. It can be public, that is drawn up by a notary with two witnesses, or holographic, that is hand-written by the testator in two copies, dated and signed (one copy must given to your notary).

**New members**

*Now that I am retired I ask to become a member of Joining People Together. I learned about this association when I was still a teacher thanks to the activity “ Education to worldwide cooperation” which my pupils and  I really appraised. As I have lived all my life aiming at encountering people and at the gratuitous solidarity among people, “Joining People Together” gives me the opportunity of doing so..*

*Brasilina Brustolin*

*I joined “Joining People Together” as a trainee one year ago. I was welcomed as in a real family, and they enabled me to live wonderful experiences guiding me along the path of personal ripening. I want  it to continue because I share the philosophy and the actions of this association.*

*Giorgia Barbi*

Testimony and projects

**Shabunda**

**The women’s liberation**

The mission seventeen women and seventeen men who are partners in life have devoted themselves to – founding the association’**ACADISHA**’(**Concrete Action for the Development of** **the Shabunda Territory),** is to promote  an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable combination of agriculture, breeding and pisciculture in the geographically and culturally most isolated territory  in Southern Kivu in the RD of the Congo.

They are obstinate people who do not like to hold out their hands for help – not without soiling them  by working the fields and realizing they have not got enough means to face up to the considerable hardships of the situation they live in.

 On tip-toe, ‘ACADISHA’, informs Joining People Together of the awkward conditions of life of 55 vulnerable women who were physically and psychologically wounded  by **Raiya Mutomboki, May May and FDLR** **mercenaries**, most of them widows  and often seropositive, but still eager to overcome their difficulties, above all because they are mothers..

The proposal ofi Acadisha is to favour the liberation of those women through their own commitment in activities which warrant  their families  more than just food autonomy..

The extreme economic and material poverty of the territory took root during the invasion - following the genocide in 1994 - of the evacuated Ruandians who doubled up the population. “School desks were used as fire-wood for cooking” – said a former teacher last July during the visit of a delegation of Joining People Together”..

Then  two terrible conflicts happened  between 1996 and 2003, the violent  repercussions of which still exist. There were at least 8 million victims, twenty-five nations were fighting because of their interest in gaining the enormous mineral  and forest  riches ..

The effect of the  insecurity and instability  is the flight from the country-side and the mass- exodus to the towns. Therefore food insecurity affects 73 % of the population in the Shabunda territory; 13 % of children under five suffer severe malnutrition.

Acadisha has professionally decided  to share their own  agricultural experience, offering the women training courses, encouraging and supporting in town the cultivation of fenced-in vegetable gardens protected against roaming animals (beginning with the distribution of seeds and tools) giving the 55 women and mothers activities which enable them to feed their own families, and even to sell something earning money  for other expenses such as school-fees and health-treatments.

This action will certainly provide incentives for the remaining part of the population who can see   pilot experiences  in self-promotion which are sustainable, have seeds at disposal,  and respect  the forest.

More advantages for the community will derive from the reduction of the exorbitant prices of food stuffs due to the isolation of towns.

**Estimated costs of the project? 4.000 euros,  1500 E of which** ACADISHA! will  pay

***Who will help us to support  these women and mothers fighting for liberation and make a contribution towards the remaining sum of 2500 euros?***

The women of Shabunda are grateful to Fabio Luraschi for the gift of 270 euros in memory of his mother , Mrs. Sara Gheller, who with serenity has gone to eternal life .

Finance balance sheet 2013 of Joining People Together ONG onlus

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Income                               €   700.556**  Contribution in cash       €  189.051  Benevolent contribution     €   511.505 | **Cash income                  €  189.051**  Public money               €  106.926  Private money             €    69.028  ONG-activities                €    13.097 |
| **Expenditure                            €   167.216**  Cooperation among peoples    €    91.009  Sensitation                                  €    44.456  Management and administration €    31.751 | **Sent abroad                      €  86.573**  Camerun     €   50.000             Nepal           € 1.979  Ciad        €     3.573             Rumania     €  3.078  Congo RD    €    27.943 |

Evidence and projects

**R.D. CONGO**

**Inventive  Young People**

All over the world there are at least 250 million children and teens , between 5 and 14 years of age, who work. About half of them are busy all day long. And there are also those who are subject to sexual exploitation ( over 2 million), those who fight in wars, those who are  part of organised crime....

That’s a phenomenon which seems to have less gloomy aspects on the outskirts of Uvira, a town  in the eastern part of the RD of the Congo. In the suburbs of this town on the banks of Lake Tanganyika, lots of children, teens and young people from poor or inexistent families have tucked up their sleeves discovering a job to earn a living by forming crafts- groups.

Eleven of these groups – totalling 246  members – have formed the **AEJT (Association of children and young workers)**, which is a jewel of socio-economic innovation.

The young members are helped by an organizer placed at their disposal by the Sisters of Saint Gemma who also  let the muse their premises for meetings. As their manager they have elected 24 year old  Florentin  who is clever, dynamic, inventive and exuberant. He is a real leader who works for nothing doing his best, visiting and encouraging each  associated group within a range of over 10 kilometres – riding “Saint Francis’s horse” that is going on foot everywhere.

The Uvira AEJT is one of the many knots in a large African association network , the seat of which is at  Dakar, in Senegal.

Each member of the AEJT weekly pays a share of his/her own earnings into the association fund, thus building up a community fund for the keeping up and purchasing of tools and other necessities, and to help out members in case of emergency. Many members are student-workers, others are only workers, some cannot attend school because they have no money. **Joined together in mutual aid groups they obtain power, motivation, and protection** against violence  and abuse, and help in the case of disease or accidents. Associating enables them to speak up in front of administrative authorities and dealers.

Joining Peple Together wants to help these 46 children/teens/young people (7 – 25 years of age).

* the groups of  **carriers who transport sand** from the beaches of the lake to building yards ( there are no lorries);
* the groups of **makers of metal braziers,**  commonly used in the houses for cooking, and made using waste matter.
* the groups of **small traders** who sell soap and the like alongside the roads, having as shops poky little wood stalls much alike  wardrobes they close at night.
* the groups of **good layer hen breeders** **;**
* the groups of **producers and vendors of pomegranate syrup** in market-places and in stadiums;
* the groups of **young tailors** who can do their jobbecause they were able to pay for a training course.
* *30 €: six shovels for the sand-carriers*
* *50 €: 10 boxes of soap for the street vendors*
* *80 €: forty layer hens for the breeders*
* *100 €: ten  iron hammers for the makers of braziers*
* *150 €: one sewing machine for the tailors*
* *300 €: a small freezer for the vendors of pomegranate syrup.*

***Who wants to march alongside these young people dynamically trying to improve their lives?***

World Citizenship/ cultural exchanges

## Forgotten Italian Youths

*Leopoldo Rebellato*

* **Socialization and professionalization**

Our young people, especially our adolescents, lack in opportunities to acquire socializing, professional and professionalizing  experiences. Our society does not offer  them, does not provide for them, or produces small palliatives . The priority agency, that is school, which provides their formation, invents       occasionally and spontaneously some extracurricular activity, or  it  improves its methodologies and its teaching methods regarding those criteria thanks to the professional activity of teachers.

Our 14 – 19 year old spend half of their time in classrooms or behind books. It’ s their attempt to  make this “compulsory” lapse of time socializing. Yet, with the rare exceptions of positive connivance of teachers, their attempt  is restrained by strict didactic and discipline rules. The small  opportunities  of  free socialization are often brought about by their youthful exuberance, promptly checked and restored according to the established rules -  sometimes quite regardless of their immaturity. Our school is still seen more as a place of training for future adult lives than as a place of realization of present youth.

As regards, on the other hand, professionalization, the cognitive and qualifying knowledge  offered by schools is very far from  being  perceived by the adolescents  as preparatory to the professions they are going to practise in the future. Nowadays everything has become “school-teaching” ( only visual and auditory learning,  no manipulation) . Laboratories and technical researches are an end in themselves, they are not even a shadow of the pedagogic-didactic ideal proposed by Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire which provides the alternation of school and job, and is, moreover, codified by the regulations of the Ministry of Education.

Entrapped and forced to inactivity, our adolescents grow up being demotivated and spineless. A small number of them is spared where there are also many children of migrant people who have absorbed in their families and in their environment of origin the importance of the value of self-realization of their future lives and of the deriving  sense of fulfilment ...It is a serious mistake of our society having codified the character forming course  of our new generations, excluding “the work of minors”, perceived as  an unavoidable way of growing, reserving it only –as an opportunity - for the adolescents who have left school in advance. For example, why don’t they take the opportunity of replacing military call up by compulsory civil service for both men and women?

* **People and Citizens**

The ancient Greek  had established three subjects (disciplines) for their young: gymnastics, music, law. Discovering and developing the physical potential of the body, discovering and developing  the sensitivity of the “soul” ( the invisible part present in each person), knowing the laws and the structure of the “polis”, of society , entering it, and becoming informed, active citizens.

How many of these mainstays are still existent in our formative system? The first two, “gymnastics” and “music” have become mere accessories of  the formative training,  and the third  one, the law …… In South Africa civics (knowledge appropriation  of the social rules) is a basic school subject and establishes  compulsory periods of work of public utility. Here in Italy : those are the conclusions of enlightened teachers  who have an optimistic faith in the future, perhaps ending with the Town Major handing the Constitution to 14 or 18 year old adolescents..

But the number of adolescents called “neet” is still more worrying, self-excluded from school and work  because our society has not offered them neither the opportunity to discover themselves as a person nor it has provided living –space for all its new citizens, living- space that includes the infinite  human variety they represent..

Also the levelling off of excellence is troubling. We seldom find someone who makes the adolescents aware of their, who sets their abilities off, gratifying them and giving them an opportunity to “bloom”. General rules  suffocating subjectivity and creative energy are prevailing.

So we must not complain about the sheeplike attitude of our young people.. The youthful harmonic exuberance kills when it is overwhelmed, it explodes when it is repressed, and in the lack of proposals, without standards of comparison it causes Vandalic loitering, autonomously managed parties based on alcoholics and drugs,  bullying and cyber-bullying, hierarchization of the pack (gang), as well as reification and commercialization of sex.

* **School and Society**

Public institutions have different priorities even when school can do little, and when it acts,  it results little incisive because it is only a small  part.of the entire system.

Society intended as profit and non profit,(voluntary service included)

does not feel involved, does not consider it as its task..

Families are powerless, the adolescent  children are not theirs any more, as  family homes don’t exist any more..

Only synergy can develop new ideas and rules.

Whose task is it to start the flywheel?

World Citizenship and cultural exchanges

***Live intensely***

*We are the pupils of the second form of the Professional School “Bernardi” in Padua. We have taken part  in the project of “Joining People Together”. This expression is particularly suitable for our class where we put it into practice every day: in our class besides Italian boys there are, boys of African and Chinese origin…. One of my classmates is from Morocco, my father is from Russia, my mother Moldavian. .*

*We have listened to the story of Leopoldo and Maria’s son, Stefano Amadu, who died of leukaemia at the age of twenty-four. Stefano was born in Africa where his parents did voluntary work. He got his degree in Italy, he fell in love, he loved mountaineering. He was a young man full of life,  full of willpower, with the will to help other people; a young man who had decided to share his parents’ choice working as a volunteer in a humanitarian association in Bolivia He was a young man who did not deserve what happened to him: a hopeless disease..*

*What has made such a deep impression on us is the love his parents still have for him telling his story to us. They are proud of their  son because during his life he did what he wanted to do most, and has died without regrets.*

*His story has moved us deeply but, above all, it has made us think. The considerations on his story by one of our classmates, Sergiu, who, gives voice to what we all feel..*

*Stefano’s parents have spoken about their son’s life who died at the age of twenty-four, about all the things he has done, things most of us will never do. Stefano’s life was short – and I am really sorry about it. Yet in his short life he has lived much more intensely than many others at the same age.*

*At the age of nineteen Stefano had already been to Africa and to the mountains many times : at the age of nineteen I have not accomplished anything good yet..*

*Nowadays lots of adolescents lead lives you cannot speak about because there is nothing to tell; they have only been to the pub or at the sea-side. And they  smoke and drink so much. I am sorry when I watch people of my age group wasting their time? What will their future be like? What will their children be like?*

*Stefano liked going to the mountains, and making  himself available for other people, young and old alike.*

*I, Sergiu, lead a grey (colourless) life. I never go to the mountains, and I help nobody. I hope I will be able to change because I want to help other people too. I want to be like Stefano because his life has inspired me. I, too, want to die without regrets.*

***The  12 most requested  activities of ECM durino the school year 2013-14***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The big world banquetIl grande | **54** | Right to have wateriritto water (infant school) | **20** |
| Denied rights | **39** | Right to play (inf.sch.)’infanzia) | **18** |
| The long journey of chocolateeto | **29** | Cork and uncork | **17** |
| Fairy tales from the worldFavole | **27** | Discovering the worldAlla scoperta | **15** |
| The journey of jeans | **27** | Multicolouredness | **15** |
| I bet on peace | **20** | A European in the Sahel Europeo l | **12** |

**“Eduction to World Citizenship”**

**“Joining People Together”** at school during the school year2013-2014: Involved 6 animators, carried out 454 meetings, completed 848 hours of animation, involved 9.423 children - teens – young people, visited 84 schools (5 infant schools, 22 primary schools, 44 secondary schools junior level, 12 secondary schools senior level, 1 university). Thanks to hundreds of teachers and headmasters who helped to realize these events requesting our presence.

*We offer courses and meetings of* ***“Education to world Citizenship*** *to infant –schools, primary schools, secondary schools (junior and senior level), to youth and adult groups.. The booklet containing all our proposals is read and will be sent to you. You can also consult it on our site* [*www.incontrofraipopoli.it*](http://www.incontrofraipopoli.it/)

The Dolomites for the Young

*A night spent in tents before the tour of the  Gran Sasso Lungo*

Rumania

*Week for young people  2 Rumania: age groups 19/25 from Joining People Together and young people from the  Caritas in Oradea*

*Between Italy and Slovenia: the eight young people, aged 17/18coming back form Young People’sWeek in  Rumania*

***Meetings***

* *Saturday/SundaySeptember 20-21 , 2014: Dolomites for the Young (Passo Giau – Croda da Lago)*
* *Sunday, October 19, 2014:* ***March for Peace Perugina -Assisi*** *(departure h 5.30 from Cittadella, h 6.00 from Padova)*
* *Saturday, December 13,  2014:* ***Solidarity Dinner*** *(h 19.30 at Cittadella)*
* *Friday/Tuesday January 2-6, 2015:* ***Young People’s Week in******Umbria*** *(for ages  15/25)*