

BENI SCHOOL PROJECT



November 5, 2020

PRINCE OF PEACE SCHOOL COMPLEX BENI UPDATE NOVEMBER 2020

«It is not enough to teach. One must lift students up; education is a much more difficult task than simply teaching.» Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, Spiritual Writings



The Prince of Peace School Complex remains focused on its motto: « Discipline, Peace and Excellence ». This motto which goes hand in hand with Fr. d'Alzon's ideal of education (cited above) is the rudder that guides our educational activity at the School Complex. This is what distinguishes us from other schools and is the source of our pride in this region of the country, where armed conflict has not spoken its last word. We accompany our students not just intellectually but also humanly, spiritually and psychologically. We aim to touch the whole person.



The Administrative Center



The beginning of the 2020-2021 school-year

Education at Prince of Peace is an undertaking that cannot be limited to lessons given in the classroom. It reaches beyond the classroom to extra-curricular activities and even to the home. Teachers, parents, priests, brothers and sisters, we all see ourselves as partners in this work of education and together we believe that we will give the best of ourselves to assure the future of our children. We base this on the confidence and collaboration that exists between parents and students on the one hand and students and teachers on the other.



Third-grade class during exams before the lockdown

Let us remind you that Prince of Peace operates on three levels:

- Pre-school (3 to 5 year olds)
- Elementary (6 to 12 year olds)
- Secondary (12 to 18 year olds)

To this, one must add **remedial classes** for young people of different ages who have not benefited from any regular academic instruction. Such classes take place in the afternoons.

« The spirit of the founder impels us to embrace the great causes of God and of man, and to go wherever God is threatened in man and man threatened as the image of God. (Assumptionist Rule of Life #4)

1. On the Impact of the School-closing since March

Since March of this year, we have been forced to close our doors in conformity with the measures taken by the government in the wake of the Coronavirus outbreak. All the schools in the country did the same.

We had hoped for a speedy re-opening of classes, but, alas, that did not happen. It took 7 months before classes began again. This situation had a serious impact on the growth both of students and teachers. It was an unprecedented situation, one never seen in our lifetime. The repercussions of this sudden rupture of classes are incalculable. As we re-open, we realize that we will certainly have to triple our efforts in order to get our students back to speed. Students but teachers alike were affected. Consumed by other preoccupations teachers were unable to maintain their professional formation. All in all, our work is cut out for us this year.

2. The Re-opening of School

After seven months of closure, the government decided to allow the re-opening of schools throughout the country. But one major difficulty presented itself from the start --- we had to bring to closure the 2019-2020 school year that was abruptly suspended in March (editor's note: needless to say, there is absolutely no possibility for online classes in Beni!). Since students returned, the government has required all schools to assess the current intellectual status of students after the March shutdown with regard to their progress during the 2019-2020 school-year. That began immediately upon their return.

Today we feel confident that the new year is ready to be launched successfully (2020-2021). We will do our best to get them back to their grade-level and push them toward excellence. And all of this must be accomplished in the context of the insecurity that still reigns in the region.

As you can imagine, parents gave a sigh of relief when they heard of the government's decision to re-open the schools. They had lived for 7 months not knowing what to do with their children. Now we hope that we can proceed normally without any teachers' strikes or further lockdowns.

3. With regard to the Ongoing Insecurity in the Region

Since 2014 the region of Beni has experienced widespread massacres without the government being able to put a stop to them. One of the main culprits is the ADF (Allied Democratic Forces, a group of Ugandan rebels that has taken refuge in the eastern Congo and caused wide devastation). Even certain parts of the large metropolitan area of the city of Beni remain inaccessible and dangerous. Mass killings continue and no investigations take place. Government forces seem helpless to address the situation. How strange! This is the background to the educational efforts we continue to make here at Prince of Peace. Our motto is and will remain our goal for everyone involved: « Discipline-Peace-Excellence. »

So it is that we are called to continue to work with impoverished families and traumatized children in order to put into place the foundations for a Congo of better tomorrows. All of families' resources either have been destroyed or remain inaccessible. That's why parents are no longer capable of finding the money for the tuition of their children. These are major challenges.

4. With regard to the Construction of the Additional four Classrooms



We will not let go of our determination to educate our children, notwithstanding all of the challenges we face. That is why we are moving forward with the improvement of our institutional infrastructure. In the last newsletter we spoke of the ongoing construction of four new junior high school classrooms. We're happy to announce that we have completed that project.....all of this thanks to generous gifts from benefactors in the United States. May each of them know how extremely grateful we are. They are the real heroes of the story being written here at the Prince of Peace School Complex.

In fact, the opening of the new school year has coincided with the inauguration of the new classrooms. Parents and students alike are delighted to see this progress. Onward and upward!

CONCLUSION

Well, dear readers and benefactors, here is what your gifts have been able to accomplish. The train has left the station and it will not be stopped! Thanks to each and every one of you for your commitment to this population that has experienced so much suffering....a commitment that will bear the fruit of Peace, the transformation of the society of tomorrow, not only here in the Congo but throughout the world. Education is and will remain an apostolic activity dear to the Augustinians of the Assumption, proud heirs of our founder, Venerable Father Emmanuel d'Alzon.

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If you would like to make a donation, please make out your check to:

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