

MISSION REPORT OF VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO / BRAZZAVILLE AND DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO / KINSHASA BY RIDA LIOBO LOOTE REPRESENTATIVE OF AREA 6 (French speaking Africa)

PREAMBLE

The primary purpose of Subud and of all the members of the World Council is to promote the possibility of receiving the Subud latihan kedjiwaan in the best possible conditions (latihan rooms, access to Subud literature, and support to members in their Subud life accompanied by visits from within and without the group).

Given my physical absence during the meetings of the last World Subud Council in Great Malvern, due to official consular restrictions despite the intervention of the WSA Executive, I felt it a priority during the two months of my leave, to visit different groups in my area, to feel for myself their true current situation; Consequently I aimed to start with Angola (which is undergoing a particularly difficult period), then Congo / Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The authorization and the means were finally given to me for the visit of the last two countries mentioned above; the visit to Angola was deferred, pending consultations between WSA Executive and the International Helpers of our Area. Thus the journey to Congo / Brazzaville was accomplished with Frederique (used to be Angelique) NLANDU, former International Helper.

I. - REPUBLIC OF CONGO / BRAZZAVILLE

A) Brazzaville Group

Departure from Kinshasa on Friday, 10/09/2010, at 10:10 by boat, to Brazzaville. We left with 15 minutes late. It took one hour and several telephone calls on arrival before someone (an envoy) appeared. He drove us to his house and then showed us to our bedrooms.

In the evening we met seven local members at Betty's (Roberto) house. We then told them the main purpose of our mission, something we did with each group we subsequently visited:

- 1 - Provide information on the reason for the split of the Zones 5 and 6 in two (English and French speaking) with a representative for each zone and the approval of this split by the new team within WSA;
- 2 - Create useful activities among the countries of the zone by improving inter-zonal communication and encouraging commercial South-South cooperation;
- 3 - Assist the Zone representatives to develop and organize Subud in their respective countries;
- 4 - Complement and support the functions of the International Helpers and National Committees of the zone so they become truly involved in the development of the Zone;
- 5 - Record the concerns of each country;
- 6 - For the particular case of Congo / Brazzaville, evaluate its activities since the last national congress.

The debate around this last point was suspended because of the absence of the President National, Alexandre Nsimba. He has been away for a long time now, due to his work, about 500 km from Brazzaville, There was no representative either from his Committee.

A decision was taken to meet in the afternoon of the Saturday, 11/09/2010 at the Beangongo's house, which used to be the national centre for Subud. This place was chosen in the hope that more Subud members would come. We telephoned many members to let them know of this meeting.

About 10 local members were there on Saturday 11/09/2010. The major concerns can be summarised as follows:

1 - Since the 1st National Congress and the departure abroad of Celine Beangongo, a full vacuum took place within Subud Brazzaville (no more latihan, no more meetings, no more communication, no report), all this, due to the lack of an appropriate framework and especially to the prolonged absence of the elected President;

2 - 4,000,000 FCFA (\$ 7,547), which represented the amount from the missed travel tickets, destined to the Youth at the 2005 World Congress, were used to purchase a property in Brazzaville. This property was then sold, on the recommendation of WSA Executive at the time. The amount was then kept in a bank account, pending the outcome of representations to the MSF for the acquisition of another property more suitable;

3 - On the 28/10/2009, Subud Brazzaville decided to buy a piece of land, measuring 1600 m², with some of the money (2,800,000 FCFA or \$ 5,283) at Kintele, a village situated at about 2 km north of Brazzaville. Unfortunately, this land is being confiscated by the Congolese government, who wants to build 1,000 prefabricated apartments on it as well as an extension of the national university;

4 - Four of the seven members of the Group d'Ossele moved to Brazzaville. Two of them live permanently there now, due to health reasons: one of them, Group Chairman, Pierre Itoua, was shot at, when he was mistaken for prey by a game hunter. He received two gun shot pellets, one of which is still lodged in a sensitive area of his left thigh. The needs of the group were also mentioned;

5 - The four members of the group of Pointe-Noire could not receive us, since two of them are living and working away from the city;

6 - The Subud brother Ngomo Moukoko of Mouyondzi, contacted us by telephone, insisting that a group of people, followed and supervised by him this last year, be opened in order to form a new group;

7 - The Subud sister, Celine Beangongo and her son Don were contacted by phone (**they live in Canada**): They accepted the occupation of their living room on Mondays and Thursdays for latihan, while waiting to rent Don's house, which is still occupied by a third person at present but which would become the future national Subud centre,;

8 - Alexander Nsimba was contacted by phone but said he was unavailable to perform his duties. He proposed that Betty Roberto, man helper at present, acts in his place for the time being. This proposal was welcomed by all participants. He added that there is about 264,000 FCFA (\$ 498) in the account.

In view of the above the following was agreed and accepted by mutual agreement:

1 - That Betty **Roberto** quickly form a new interim management team to reinvigorate the Brazzaville group and the other groups inland, and proceed immediately with the handover of duties, (Alexander Nsimba has promised to come to Brazzaville soon, to facilitate the interim handover);

2 - That a small operating budget project be prepared which would include the needs of the Brazzaville group and those of the other local groups as well as a program of activities.

3 - Provisionally do latihans every Monday and Thursday in Celine Beangongo's lounge, pending the availability of Don's house (**Don and his family lived in a separate house in the same courtyard but both he and Celine, his mother, left for Canada. His house is at present being let to non-Subud people**).

Very touched by the misfortune of Pierre Itoua from the Ossele Group and by the challenges of the new team of Subud / Brazza requiring urgent solution, the Zone 6 President has lent the Interim Chairman Betty, \$ 319.81, against receipt, divided as follows:

- 3 months' payment to guarantee rental of Don's house (1 room and 2 bedrooms) to house the future national centre of the association: (\$ 200);
- Purchase of medicine (Sifloxacin), pending surgery costs to be born by IAG Office (Almoners of Subud International): (\$ 100);
- Purchase of equipment for a cellular telephone, for the group (\$ 19.81).

The visits to the groups of Ossele and Pointe-Noire being no longer appropriate, were canceled and replaced by that of Mouyondzi, on Tuesday, 14/09/2010; inspection of the land at Kintele being programmed for Sunday 12/09/2010.

Sunday, 12/09/2010

Visit of the land at Kintele with four local members.

On site, the information of the requisition of the land by the Congolese government was confirmed. While Subud is waiting for compensation by the state, we recommended to the members they use this land for agricultural purposes and more importantly to go there regularly and do special latihans.

The same evening, after our return to Brazzaville, we did a first latihan at the Beangongo's house.

Monday, 13/09/2010

Second latihan and summary of the visit at Kintele. We also announce the visit to Mouyondzi on Tuesday 14/09/2010, accompanied by Kimpembe Joseph, the new Congolese kedjiwaan councilor.

Tuesday 14/09/2010

Having arrived at 5.30am at the station, we only departed at 10:30am from Brazza by an extremely crowded train. We spent the whole journey standing in the train corridor, whilst the train stopped constantly because of broken rails, or for crew changes right up until we reached

Bouenza at 21:30. From there, we continued our journey by road and finally arrived in the District of Mouyondzi at 22h.30. After a meal taken with Ngomo, we went to our rooms.

Mouyondzi is an agricultural district of Eastern Bouenza, 240 km south-east of Brazzaville, the smallest and yet the most populated of the Congo with its 200,000 inhabitants. The city of Pointe-Noire is at 510 km from Brazzaville.

On Wednesday, 15/09/2010

Guided and supported by Ngomo Moukoko after his opening in October Brazza 2009, six persons, including a woman, were opened. The latihan is practiced in his living room. Another larger room is also available for rental. Both rooms need re-painting and the overall cost for 2 pots/vats? comes to 45,000 FCFA (\$ 85). In addition, they need:

- * 1 ream of duplicating paper
- * 20 plastic chairs: 12,000 FCFA (\$ 23)
- * Fee (Tax) for permission to practice activities: 15,000 FCFA (\$ 28)
- * Subud Literature in French.

Thus, a group was born with a committee of apparently very strong and enthusiastic adults, believers once again, and for the most part, unemployed merchants and farmers.

It was 7pm when we left for Brazzaville by train, with the same adventures as on the way there. We finally arrived back in Brazza on Thursday, 16/09/2010 at 16h.45.

Thursday 16/09/2010 It is with a small group of members that we do a farewell latihan that evening at the usual venue. We leave giving them encouraging words.

Friday 17/09/2010

Return by boat to Kinshasa at 12h30

II. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A) BAS-CONGO GROUP

1. Moanda

Departure from Kinshasa by bus on Tuesday 21/09/2010 at 9am. Arrival at Moanda at 23h10 after a few stops.

On Wednesday, 22/09/2010

Presentation at Kiti's house, the main Subud hall of the group, which consists of 7 members all from Kiti's family. In the same plot, Kiti owns a school that has been opened for several years now. The school benefits from some SDIA subsidies. The group has a room for latihan which is

not used at present and a committee. Without work, newly opened members soon disappear to search for jobs in Angola where the working conditions are more appealing.

The difficulties of the group are:

- Lack of Subud literature in French
- The continued lack of Subud visitors from outside
- Constant worry about the material side of the running of the school within the Plot.

2. Boma

Departure from Moanda on Thursday, 23/09/2010 at 8:35 am, arrive at Boma after two hours by Road.

We spend all the afternoon in a meeting with the helper Matundu Pula. This meeting can be summarized as follows:

- The group consists of 6 active members including one woman Helper.
- The average age is about 50 years
- The latihans are no longer practiced as before when members were meeting in the living-room of Veronique Tamba who is now with her daughter in the maternity wing of the hospital in Kinshasa
- Lack of Subud literature in French and of a copy of the legality of Subud DRC.
- The exodus of members to Angola in search of better paid jobs.

Following these difficulties, the President of Zone 6 has promised them \$ 80 which would cover 4 month's rent, so that the latihans can resume. He also encouraged the creation of revenue-generating activities for the basic needs of the members and of the association.

However, in order to be able to do this, the members would like to ask for support first.

Friday, 24/09/2010

The meeting went on where it was pointed out to the local members that they ought to look after themselves rather than always look towards the outside for help because "*the Hand that receives is always below the one that gives*". Taking into account the promise of the President of Zone 6, they agreed to meet twice a week to exchange ideas. An interim committee was formed.

3. Matadi

Departure from Boma by road, Saturday, 25/09/2010. Arrived at Matadi at 12:20 welcomed by the Group chair, Médard Lema. Evening meeting in the local Subud hall with only 3 local members, despite the prior announcement of my visit. There are only 7 members still active. The main cause is the same exodus to Angola in search of better paid jobs. The new Subud House is in the same state as when it was purchased. The remaining \$300 left after its purchase has been

used to buy a table and some wooden chairs, to pay the water and electricity bills, to finalize the property transfer registration Certificate. Members' donations are virtually zero.

The essential need is: Subud literature in French.

Although the group is now very small, they were advised to remain steadfast in the practice of latihan.

Sunday, 26/09/2010

Since I had to be back at work on Monday 27/09/2010, I left Matadi for Kinshasa without visiting the other Bas-Congo groups which I had been scheduled to visit: Inkisi, Kimvumu and Kimpemba. I shall visit them next time.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At this stage:

- 1) Initiate a major campaign of prihatins and spiritual vigils for the fight against poverty and unemployment that is plaguing the world, particularly in the so-called under-developed countries.
- 2) Provide Subud literature in French.
- 3) Encourage the annual visits of Subud foreign officials.
- 4) Encourage the creation of paid employment by searching the Provisional directory of Active Members (attached), which also allows members to exchange of ideas and experiences.
- 5) Meanwhile, initiate as quickly as possible for the groups of countries mentioned above, the creation of small income-generating activities to essentially support the costs of the rent for their latihan rooms.
- 6) Encourage the WSA Executive and MSF to continue its funding policy for the Construction/acquisition of Subud national centres in impoverished countries.
- 7) Resurrect the policy of granting scholarships for Subud youth in impoverished countries.
- 8) Especially for those traveling to the Group Mouyondzi of Congo / Brazza, use of the plane (Brazza-Nkayi: 35,000 FCFA (\$ 66), then the road (Nkayi-Mouyondzi: 5,000 FCFA (\$ 9) that is a total of 40,000 FCFA (\$ 75).

Kinshasa, on 07/10/2010.

RIDA LIOBO LOOTE, President of Zone 6
Translated by Heloise Jackson,
former International Helper

PS: please note the words in green are my own addition for clarification purposes (Heloise)