

FALLING WHISTLES

Be A Whistleblower for Peace

Falling Whistles would like to update you on the growth and progress of our programs in Congo as well as our advocacy initiatives at home.

In establishing our current partnership in Congo we proceeded slowly and cautiously. Over the course of several months we communicated with multiple Congolese-led organizations and carefully considered the implications of a partnership with each. We thoroughly examined the structural and ideological components of each organization, reconciling both budgets and goals. After selecting our current partner, we proceeded with slow diligence to develop a working agreement that fulfills the goals of both organizations.

We are currently working alongside these grassroots leaders to rehabilitate 267 war-affected children in northeast Congo. The programs are Congolese envisioned, operated, and led. They are designed to help stop cycles of violence and dependency which have contributed to the conflicts in the past and present. By funding projects that reintegrate children into their communities and revitalize their social skills, we hope to help create a better future for them.

Falling Whistles advises these programs, and provides the resources and funds necessary for their implementation. In return, we receive monthly reporting that includes a detailed expense statement and analysis of the following programs: nutrition and health, expression therapy, education, vocational training, and psychosocial therapy.

- **Nutrition and Health:** A nutritionist provides the children in with a healthy meal every day before classes and before sports practice. Children also receive lessons on basic health and hygiene .
- **Expression Therapy:** Through dance, visual arts, theatre, music, photography, and sports, children are taught to express themselves and work through their trauma.
- **Education.** We help pay the tuition for children who are ready to take classes in local schools.
- **Vocational Training:** Children choose classes in one of three practical working skills: mechanics, carpentry or tailoring. The process of creating or repairing with their hands is additionally rehabilitative.
- **Psychosocial Therapy:** The children are individually looked after by two social workers, who routinely check up on their lives outside of the programs, in order to better understand what particular challenges and traumas each child is facing and incorporate this information into that child's program of rehabilitation.

With Falling Whistles investment, our partners have been able to:

- Move into a new facility that doubled their operating capacity.
- Purchase a practice engine and the appropriate tools to begin hands on learning in mechanics.
- Buy four additional sewing machines, tripling the sewing program's capacity to practically apply their lessons.
- Construct benches in the carpentry program that are being used by other children in the program.

- Respond dynamically to the needs of the children by implementing programs that focus on alphabetization, reading, and writing.
- Expand their capacity to provide psychosocial support for children outside of the classroom.

Just as the work of our partners in Congo has impressed us, so have our committed volunteers in North America. Because of their dedication, in our short existence and with very few resources we have been able to:

- Sell 5,000 whistles in over 40 states and 12 countries
- Directly educate 17,000 individuals through a national speaking tour.
- Reach hundreds of thousands online
- Build five educational installations in that expose the public to the realities of Congo and ways in which they can advocate for peace.
- Expand our retail campaign to 40 storefronts in 14 states.
- Oversee a coast-to-coast bicycle tour that educated about Congo.
- Apply for 501c3, Charitable Non-Profit, status with the IRS.
- Recruit an Advocacy Coordinator in Washington D.C. to develop a cohesive peace building advocacy strategy.
- Bring on an experienced Development Consultant to help establish stronger program partnerships.

Together we have achieved much over the last year and a half, but it has not been without its share of complications.

When Falling Whistles began, we had no professional experience in Congo and limited knowledge of common challenges faced by NGOs when building partnerships with community-based organizations. This contributed to a number of significant challenges when establishing our first partnership and created a delay in the distribution of funds to partner projects. As we began to better understand the complexities involved in the process, we took substantial steps to change our approach to one which more appropriately addresses the inherent challenges. We have apologized to all parties involved in these initial complications and are working toward reconciliation.

Moving forward there are many challenges. Given the dynamic nature of the crisis in eastern Congo and the overwhelming need in the region, we have tried to focus our resources for the highest level of impact. It has been consistently difficult to adequately supply the individual programs with all of the materials they need, and their security remains a high priority.

There have been incidences in which both the personal safety and the security of our partners property has been threatened by armed groups. Our partner organization is small in name, personnel, and reputation. As such, they remain vulnerable to violent attack and coercion by the forces present in the region.

As a result, they have requested that we keep their identity anonymous. We have consulted other, more experienced workers in the region, and many of them have confirmed the importance of these measures.

We are a young organization and have a great deal to learn. In that effort we have brought on Houston Shearon as our Development Consultant. Houston has extensive experience in Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and DR Congo, and a Masters in International Development. It will be Houston's role in the coming months to work to expand and diversify both partnerships and programs, further enhancing the ability of Falling Whistles to provide support to Congolese communities.

In 2010 we are taking the steps necessary to improve upon our strengths while addressing our weaknesses in the areas of communication, transparency, and efficacy.

- **Communication:** We are in the process of developing new systems of communication with our current partners that will provide for more thorough and frequent inter-organizational communication. We are also committed to improving communication to our supporters, members of the aid community, and other interested parties.
- **Transparency:** Despite our confidentiality agreement, Falling Whistles strives to be transparent, in both our intent and our accounting. In the future we will be publishing quarterly program updates as well as annual financial reports including detailed financial breakdowns. We are currently in the process of constructing the first of these reports.
- **Efficacy:** We have recently begun conversations with our partners to redefine the scope of and budget for each program, in order to achieve a greater level of measurable impact.

As we reach out to established organizations operating in the region, we look forward to learning from both their successes and frustrations. Through collaboration we hope to contribute to positive solutions in eastern Congo.

If you have any questions regarding Falling Whistles please do not hesitate to bring them to our attention. We welcome an open dialogue, and are happy to speak directly to anyone with an inquiry.

This document is co-signed by:

Sean Carasso, Falling Whistles CEO and founder
David Lewis, Director of Operations
Houston Shearon, Development Consultant
Capers Rumph, Development Coordinator
Monique Beadle Brumbach, Advocacy Coordinator