



WELCOME TO IDJWI ISLAND

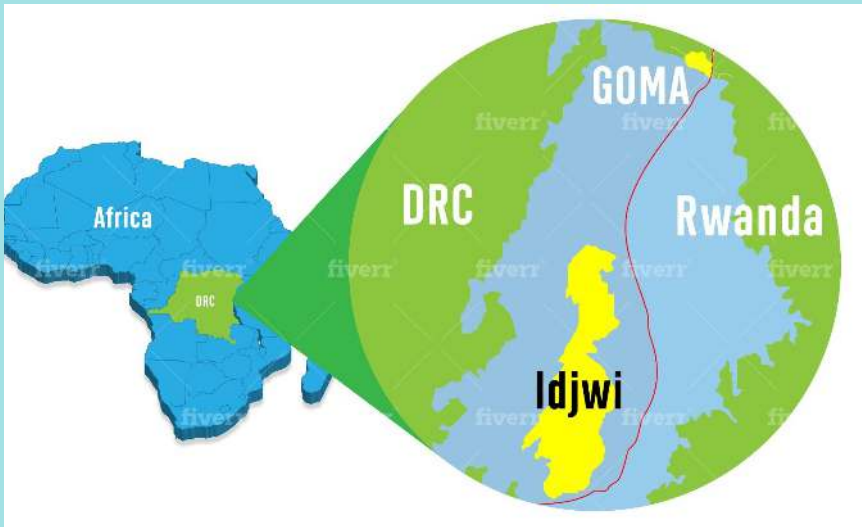
Democratic Republic of Congo

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**If you would like to purchase any photos, please contact Lee Simms,
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All proceeds will go to VMC and the projects on Idjwi.





Where is Idjwi?

Idjwi lies about 55 kilometres from Goma in Lake Kivu, South Kivu Province, roughly equidistant from DRC and Rwanda.

The lake is the second largest inland lake in Africa, and the tenth largest in the world.

Getting there

To reach Idjwi from Goma you can take a commercial boat (around 3-4 hours), a fishing boat (around 7 hours) or a speedboat (around 1 hour, 30 minutes). The vast majority of islanders can only afford the cheaper fishing boats, which are frequently overcrowded and sometimes overturn in rough weather, causing the loss of lives.





Some facts about Idjwi

- Population: 300,000, of whom approximately 23,000 are Bantou and 7,000 are Pygmy/Barhwa
- 46,000 Rwandan refugees fled to the island during and after the Rwanda genocide in 1994, mostly women and children
- The population has doubled in the past 25 years, and Idjwi is now the most densely populated region of DRC
- Size: 70 km in length and 16 km at maximum width, with an area of 340 square kilometres.
- It is often called 'the forgotten island' because it lies outside government concern and is largely overlooked by development agencies
- It has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world
- It has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world (25 years according to Amani Global Works)
- It has one of the highest fertility rates in the world
- The majority of people live on less than \$1 per day, less than in the rest of DRC
- Most people live on subsistence farming, with no source of cash income
- Over half the population often do not have enough to eat
- Idjwi is one of the poorest places in the world, and the poverty here is greater than that in the rest of DRC
- Two of the greatest problems are deforestation and overpopulation
- Overpopulation has led to food insecurity and widespread environmental degradation
- Health and economic conditions are worse than in the rest of DRC
- 92% of the population have suffered from malaria

Yet, despite all these hardships, Idjwi is a place of spectacular natural beauty, with its high mountains and deep bays, and the people are hardworking and resourceful.





Kizungu Luanda Hubert **Director of our projects on Idjwi**

Kizungu was born on Idjwi, and lived there until he was 12. He attended High School in Nyabiondo, North Kivu and graduated top of his class. He obtained a degree in Economics at the University of Lulumbashi. On his return to Goma, shocked by the devastation that years of armed conflict had brought to the people, he made a commitment to help those most in need. He became Director of the Tchukudu Kids' Home (TKH) for orphans in Goma in 2008, and gradually expanded his work to include other vulnerable people, both in Goma and on his native island, Idjwi. In 2012, he founded the NGO, Volunteers in Mission for Children Care (VMC), to fulfil his dream of being able to help *“the orphaned and vulnerable children, widows and child-mothers, victims of sexual violence, and the vulnerable populations who live in misery.”*

Lucienne Fazili **Official photographer**

Lucienne was one of the original orphans in the Tchukudu Kids' Home. She came to the orphanage when she was 5 years old with her mother and her younger sister. Her father had died when trying to escape from a group of armed men, and her mother had subsequently been rejected by the family.

Lucienne grew up in the orphanage and graduated from High School in 2020. She is now 18 years old and is passionate about photography. She is currently working for VMC as a photographer and reporter, providing valuable information and documentation on the lives and situations of the vulnerable communities. Many of the photographs in this book were taken by Lucienne.

“My biggest dream is to work to help orphans.”



Lucienne now



Lucienne, on the right, in 2010

The Fondazione Cariello Corbino team



Helen Pope

Helen Pope has a Ph.D. in Latin from Monash University, Melbourne. Her love of Classics led her to make her home in Italy, where she has lived since 1981, teaching Classics at both University and High School levels. While volunteering at a school in Rwanda in 2009, she made a chance visit across to the border to Goma where she met Kizungu Hubert, and visited his small orphanage which then had 16 children. It was a life-changing experience. She determined from that first meeting to find ways to help Kizungu in his efforts to improve the lives of the orphaned children and vulnerable communities both in Goma and on his native island of Idjwi.

She has visited the Tchukudu Family in Goma every year, witnessed the wonderful progress made, and fallen in love with Idjwi Island and its people.

Lee David Simms

Lee's passion for helping people in small forgotten communities round the world began with a trip to Virunga National Park in the DRC in 2015. What started as a trip to visit the gorillas and learn about conservation, ended with a chance meeting with Helen Pope at Virunga. This meeting led to Lee's enthusiastic and active commitment to supporting the vulnerable communities in eastern DRC. Lee is the General Director of the Fondazione Cariello Corbino, and is its UK representative. In 2019, together with Helen and Alberto, Lee visited the Tchukudu Kids' Home in Goma and the island of Idjwi, and is now fully involved in working with Kizungu to develop economic empowerment projects for the local people on Idjwi.



Alberto Corbino

Alberto graduated in Political Science from the University of Federico II in Naples and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Padua.

For many years he has devoted his time and efforts to humanitarian projects, both in Naples and further afield. In 2017, he established a charitable foundation in honour of his mother: the Fondazione Cariello Corbino, of which he is the President.

Since his first visit to DRC in 2009, when he visited Kizungu's orphanage on the outskirts of Goma, Alberto has made significant contributions through his Foundation to various projects for the Tchukudu extended family, and is also one of the principal benefactors of another Congolese orphanage, Les Gazelles de Silvana, in Rumangabo, North Kivu, in Virunga National Park.



Our projects on Idjwi

All our projects are carried out under the management of Volunteers in Mission for Children care (VMC), a registered Congolese non-profit charitable organisation, created in 2012 by Kizungu Hubert, with the following mission:

- Offer care to orphans and unprotected children, providing them with harmonious growth and education.
- Provide economic, health, and social support to vulnerable populations.
- Empower women.
- Promote gender equality.
- Fight against ignorance, illiteracy, and malnutrition and starvation.
- Train and prepare young people for a profession through apprenticeships.
- Support victims in the event of an epidemic, an accident, or some other disaster.

Since 2009 Helen Pope has worked closely with Kizungu to develop and support projects aimed at improving the lives of these vulnerable populations. Alberto Corbino and Lee Simms of the Fondazione Cariello Corbino have enthusiastically joined her in these endeavours.

In 2012 Heather Haynes, a Canadian artist, met Kizungu and began working with him. She has been joined in her projects for VMC by her friends and co-nationals Cathy Cleary and Vicky English Pearson.

- **Poultry for eggs and protein (Fondazione Cariello Corbino)**
- **Beekeeping (Fondazione Cariello Corbino)**
- **Land for food for pygmies (Fondazione Cariello Corbino)**
- **TKH Boat (individual donor)**
- **Permaculture (Heather Haynes, Worlds Collide)**
- **Primary school (Vicky English Pearson, Routes Adventures)**
- **Tchukudu Women- Goma & Idjwi (Cathy Cleary, Bridging Post)**

Local Participation Day

The local people are very grateful for these projects and want to be involved in them and to contribute actively to them. So they came up with the idea of offering their services one day every week, helping out in any way they could.

"This is the idea from the people. They know they must do something to support the projects, but because they have no money, they give their time and effort. Here the young girls and boys pack the coffee waste and transport it to the fish boat, and from the fish boat to the poultry farm. It is good feed for the chickens."

Kizungu



The Poultry Project

The poultry project began with a simple idea – to buy a few chickens for the orphanage in Goma in order to supplement the rather monotonous diet of rice and beans that the children then had. But Kizungu saw the potential: we could establish a poultry farm on his native island of Idjwi, where there was more land available, the area was safer, and we could improve the diet and health not only of the Tchukudu Kids in Goma but also of those on Idjwi who suffered from acute protein deficiency.

And so land was bought, a chicken house built with the help of the local community, chickens and guinea fowl purchased, and a reed fence erected to enclose and protect the area. A veterinarian has worked closely with the project from the beginning, teaching the local chicken-keeper how best to look after the poultry, and advising on food, medicines and heating for hatching.

The local people love this project, and they are fascinated by the guinea fowl. Many of them have already benefitted greatly from it. Fresh eggs are given free to pregnant women, to sick children, and to those most affected by protein deficiency and malnourishment.

In the future, poor local families will be given chickens and taught how to raise them. Chickens and eggs will continue to be distributed free to those who need them, and they will also sold on Idjwi and in Goma to generate an income.



Alberto talking with Kizungu and the engineer inside the poultry house



The local people are delighted by the chickens.



Feeding time.



Lake view.



Building the reed fence



Hatching the eggs



The baby chicks



Little Beatrice is one of the minority, marginalized and disadvantaged Pygmy population on Idjwi. Her mother came to the Poultry farm to ask for eggs, since Beatrice was suffering from severe malnutrition and malaria.

“My child, Beatrice was at death’s door, but since she began to eat eggs from the Chickens of Muzungu, and to use eggs as medicine, my child is increasing weight and is healed. We are very grateful to all who are buying chickens to lay eggs to help the pygmy community”.



Some years ago Kakuze was a victim of gang rape by 6 armed men in North Kivu. She lost her hand during the attack. Now she suffers from diabetes, anemia and protein deficiency. *“Thank you to all our Sponsors who support the Poultry Farm on Idjwi. Since I receive eggs from Idjwi, I am recovering my health step by step. The eggs prevent my health from progressing to severe disease and death”.*



The Bee Project

Enjuki bw'Obuki

There is no honey without bees



Setting out from the village with new beehives

Beekeeping has long been practised on Idjwi island, and honey was a vital source of nutrition and medicine, but a dramatic increase in population, especially after the Rwanda genocide brought thousands of refugees to the island, plus devastating deforestation, and expulsion of the indigenous pygmies from the forests, has had a detrimental effect on the production of honey and other bee by-products. Our beekeeping project aims to restore the traditional skills and practice of beekeeping, to improve the well-being of the people, and to contribute to the ecosystem and biodiversity of the area.

Currently there are 57 beehives and a tree planting programme is well under way. Projected for the near future is a 2 week intensive training course, both practical and theoretical, on Idjwi, to be given by a Congolese bee expert, the head of PLAAC (Plate-Forme des Associations des Apiculteurs des Cataractes), the nation's beekeeping NGO.

The course will bring together Bantou and Pygmy men and women, who will train side by side on an equal footing. They will learn about the biology of bees and their colonies, how to identify the best plants for honey, how to protect the environment, and how to produce a high quality product, for local consumption and for sale in DRC and abroad.



Taking the hives to their new homes in the trees



Breaking the Circle Land for food project for Pygmies



The pygmies are living within a vicious circle . With little or no income, they cannot afford the necessary agricultural tools and equipment. Without tools and with poor soil, they cannot produce the food they need. Without sufficient food and clean water they get diseases and therefore cannot work to get the income they need."

The Pygmies of the Great Lakes, C.Bideri & H.P.Hergum

The Pygmies, also known as Bambuti, Batwa or Barhwa, are the indigenous people of the Lake Kivu Basin. Once they lived on Idjwi island in the forests; they hunted, fished, kept beehives, then the Havu people arrived and, like many indigenous peoples, they were pushed aside, oppressed, denied their rights. Today there are only 7000 pygmies left on Idjwi, just over 2% of the total population. They are not permitted to own land, to fish or to hunt. They earn 1/10th of the income of the Havu households.

For generations, they have been treated as inferiors. They live in crude makeshift shelters, since they are often forced to move. The majority often do not have enough to eat, and according to a Canadian study carried out in 2016: *"They have virtually no food and often only eat three times per week. Their children are malnourished, and we saw evidence of kwashiorkor, a life-threatening form of protein deficiency, and marasmus, a form of severe malnutrition ... Their housing is inadequate, they have no access to health care, and the children do not go to school because of poverty and hunger."* *The Plight of the Pygmies of Idjwi*, Amgad Zaky

Our plan is to buy several acres of good, fertile land on Idjwi specifically for the use of the pygmies, and to provide them with agricultural training and seeds so that they may grow their own food. With this project we aim to support a minority group which has suffered cruel discrimination and injustice, alleviate their desperate hunger and malnutrition, increase their ability to work, enable their children to go to school (they often do not attend school because they are too weak from hunger to walk the distance), break down barriers between the Pygmies and the majority Bantou with whom they will work, restore their dignity, provide food security, and help the environment and climate change through promoting green farming and reforestation.

Shenge Pygmy Village

(All photos of the pygmy community are by Lucienne)

Shenge village is near to the various projects of VMC on Idjwi island - the poultry project, the permaculture project, and the new primary school.

There are 52 families living in the village for a total population of 374 people.

Kabango Fomi, pictured here, is the chief.

He says: *"Thank you for the agriculture hoes, for the eggs and for the bee training. Thank you to all who are supporting our community."*

Pygmy children rarely have the opportunity to go to school - prevented by cost, and even by hunger. 21 children from the village have been enrolled in the new school, which is free for all children.



Making pottery A traditional pygmy craft



Life in the village



Outside their huts



Kitchen area



Bedroom corner



The spades arrive!



The kids



The Tchukudu Kids' Boat



Kizungu, Claude (boat builder), and Captain Mayele



The locals express their gratitude



A generous donation from a friend made possible Kizungu's dream of having our own boat for use between Goma and Idjwi. Claude, a boat builder of Idjwi, has been commissioned to build a boat meeting specific requirements for service to VMC. Kizungu has also appointed a captain, who is renowned for his nautical abilities. The boat will be designed for maximum safety and will carry life jackets for all on board. The boat will be used for a multitude of purposes – safe transport for all involved in VMC, transport of building materials, food products and other items, and emergency medical services.

Idjwi Island Leadership Academy for Girls & Boys (IILA)

formerly Routes Academy School



“The name reflects a sense of place, inclusiveness, and a goal to inspire student leaders to create a culture of ownership, collaboration and community in the classroom, home, and beyond.”

Vicky English Pearson, Founder of IILA

Educational opportunities on Idjwi are extremely limited and where schools do exist, they typically consist of one-room classrooms, often dark and overcrowded, and accommodating up to 60-90 children in a single class. Most children, especially girls, have never attended school, because families cannot afford the tuition of \$30, which equates to roughly half the average yearly income of a family.

To help support Idjwi’s growing population, we set out to build a school in the north island to provide free primary education and a nutrition program for the surrounding communities. The idea to build a new community school arose from a conversation between Heather Haynes, founder of the The Art of Courage & Worlds Collide, and Victoria English-Pearson who wanted to find a more sustainable alternative to sponsoring public school fees for Congolese youth. The vision was simple – find a way to provide quality education for every child, with the goal of empowering communities as a whole.

Construction of the new school began in 2018 and modest temporary outdoor classrooms (“hangars”) were assembled with the help of the community, so students could start school right away. Teachers were hired and basic school supplies were purchased for 195 students in grades 1-3. Today, there are 425 students (49% girls/51% boys), enrolled in grades 1-5 and a 6th grade will be added in the fall of 2021 when the new school opens. In keeping with the education sector strategy 2015-2025, developed by Global Partnership in Education (GPE) and the Ministry of Education, we are endeavoring to provide IILA students with quality primary education (through smaller class size, qualified trained teachers and engaged learning) and lower-secondary education (grade 7-10 - proposed for 2023-24).





In addition to educating young girls and boys, the school complex will provide a space where adults can gather and learn. A WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) project will begin in the summer of 2021 to bring clean water to the school and to Kishenyi village (approximately 6,000 people). A multi-unit latrine for the school will also be constructed in time for the opening of IILA. Only 23% of rural households in DRC have access to clean drinking water. After malaria, diseases related to drinking unclean water are the biggest health problems on Idjwi, affecting over 90% of the population and contributing to wide-spread malnutrition. Access to clean drinking water and a proper handwashing station will be installed for the students along with essential WASH training for the students and community by qualified field experts.

The name for the school was carefully chosen to reflect the potential that exists within each child. IILA represents so much more than a new school. We have been advised by individuals on Idjwi, including parents, community leaders and the Mwami, that the Academy represents opportunity for their population as a whole and carries with it a sense of hope and excitement for the children and families. We are motivated now more than ever before to turn an ambitious vision into an inspiring place of learning.





The hangar



The new school



Permaculture

In February, 2019 Kizungu Hubert successfully completed an intensive permaculture course in Tanzania. This course is designed to teach the importance of permaculture, and the methods required to use it as an effective way to provide and sustain high crop yields for human sustenance.

Several hectares of land are owned by VMC (Volunteers in Mission for Children care) on Idjwi Island, in Lake Kivu. The land is used to grow crops - cabbages, onions, carrots and soya - to provide food for the children in the TKH, with a share going to farm workers. Excess crops can be sold in order to purchase seeds for subsequent years.



Goma and Idjwi women working together on the agricultural project



Goma and Idjwi women together; Lucienne on the left

Tchukudu Women

Clarisse, the coordinator for the Tchukudu Women's Training Centre in Goma, and a graduate of the seamstress training programme, often accompanies Kizungu to Idjwi and meets with the women there who want a training centre in order to learn income generating skills and activities. This is an ongoing conversation with hope for a future project. Clarisse also checks in with the women on the agricultural projects where food is being grown and shipped to the TWTC for sharing by the women and their families. Currently a proposal is being submitted for the Tchukudu women to sew clothing for the children in the Pygmy village which would provide the women with an income and the pygmy children with clothing.

**Koko Bwenene
Thank You**



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And all those generous individuals who have contributed
to improving the lives of the people on Idjwi.

We are very, very grateful to you all.

Links

www.tchukudukids.org
www.fondazionecariellocorbino.org
www.theartofcourage.ca
www.bridgingpost.com

**Please consider making a donation to support the people of Idjwi.
100% of all donations go directly to the projects.
See how you can donate by going to this link
www.supportingidjwiisland.com**

*"If you think you are too small to make a difference,
try sleeping with a mosquito." Dalai Lama*

This book was compiled by Helen Pope, April 2021



