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Philanthropist Brings Scientology Volunteer Ministers Program to Democratic Republic of Congo

Thousands lined the streets and filled Stadium de L'Espoir (Stadium of Hope) in Kananga, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to welcome the team of Scientology Volunteer Ministers who arrived this week from Uganda, Québec and Brussels to implement Volunteer Minister training for 2,000 Congolese.

Organized by a local philanthropist Francois Muepo, the training is to provide the leaders of Kasaï-Occidental Province with tools to successfully deal with the serious social challenges the region faces: poverty, illiteracy, drug abuse, corruption and the consequences of decades-long conflict that has decimated the country.

Through the Volunteer Ministers International office, Muepo arranged for a group of experienced, French-speaking Volunteer Ministers to train a team of trainers in the technology of the *Scientology Handbook*.

On arriving in Kananga, the Volunteer Ministers met with local mayors, provincial ministers and other officials to finalize the planning for two 1,000-participant training sessions to be conducted by Canadian Volunteer Minister Alain Lefrancois on April 26.

The Volunteer Ministers then trained a core of 80 civic, community and religious leaders including state ministry staff and local mayors and their assistants who will help supervise the training of Thursday's major training sessions and will make the program available to people throughout the region.

On a trip to Belgium in 2010 to find effective programs to uplift his country, Muepo first learned of the Volunteer Ministers and other Scientology-sponsored humanitarian programs at the Brussels-based Churches of Scientology for Europe. After studying the *Scientology Handbook* and experiencing the effectiveness of the technology firsthand, he determined to bring the program to the Congo.

His reason: despite the many riches of the Congo—gold, copper, diamonds and more—71 percent live in poverty. The 1998-2003 Second Congo War and conflicts that continue to this day in the eastern provinces of the country caused the deaths of an estimated 5.4 million people by 2008, mostly from disease and starvation. Rape by combatants and other acts of violence against women was described by a UN official as “worse than anywhere else in the world.” Efforts to rectify these problems are hampered by illiteracy.

Muepo's goal in implementing the Volunteer Ministers program is to enable his people to fully benefit from the enormous natural and human resources they

possess. He says the 80 leaders selected to become trainers are inspired with the skills they have learned so far and confident for the first time that they have the tools to reverse the ravages of years of turmoil and corruption and bring to the people of the Congo the quality of life they deserve.

For more information on the Scientology Volunteer Ministers and other humanitarian programs of the Church of Scientology, visit www.Scientology.org.

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In creating the program in 1976, L. Ron Hubbard described the qualities of the Volunteer Minister: "A Volunteer Minister does not shut his eyes to the pain, evil and injustice of existence. Rather, he is trained to handle these things and help others achieve relief from them and new personal strength as well."

Scientology Volunteer Ministers have trained and partnered with more than 1,100 organizations, including the Red Cross, FEMA, National Guard, Salvation Army, Mexico's International Rescue Brigade, Boy Scouts, and hundreds of local, regional and national groups and organizations, giving freely of their skills, their care and compassion. They have provided physical and spiritual relief at more than 200 disaster sites.

Today hundreds of thousands of individuals are trained in the skills of a Volunteer Minister across 185 nations. For more information on Scientology Volunteer Ministers, visit www.volunteerministers.org.



Arriving at the Kananga Airport April 12, 2012, Scientology Volunteer Ministers were welcomed by Mr. Francois Muepo (far right) and other local leaders and dignitaries.



The police department marching band honored the arriving Volunteer Ministers with a musical salute.



A motorcade accompanied the Volunteer Ministers to Stadium de L'Espoir (Stadium of Hope).



Two Volunteer Ministers demonstrated Scientology principles at one of the workshops to train some 80 civic, community and religious leaders in technology from the *Scientology Handbook*.