



Sister Cities International: Changing Lives in Africa

➤ ***Falls Church, Virginia – Kokolopori, Democratic Republic of Congo***

Falls Church, Virginia is a small town of 10,000 people in the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area. In 2006, this community partnered with Kokolopori to become the first U.S. community to have a sister city in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over the past three years Falls Church business leaders, elected officials, medical personnel, educators and citizens have worked together to identify needs and create programs to directly assist the lives of Kokolopori citizens and the environment. Falls Church has quickly developed a two-way relationship and has learned many lessons through its work in Kokolopori including land ethic and community spirit. Some of their projects have already improved the quality of life in Kokolopori.

Micro-Enterprise Program - Falls Church citizens raised more than \$13,000 to provide women of Kokolopori training and seed funding to start their own small businesses. The goal of the program is to help women provide a sustained income to their families while providing some currency to the local economy. The community survives on a barter/trade system and the women must travel 300 miles to sell their items. The program has successfully provided entrepreneurial training to women, but they continue to address the serious difficulty of distance to the market. An additional project result is the inaugural use of bank accounts. Since the closest bank is so far away, the women have developed a system for protecting their money and they are becoming more financially literate.

Kokolopori Health Clinic - Due to the work of Falls Church volunteers and donors, Kokolopori now has a health clinic and resident health care providers. The clinic treats roughly 30 patients a day for a variety of ailments including malaria, broken bones, surgeries, and child birth. Amazingly, the clinic is able to provide these services without electricity and depends on flashlights when providing care at night. Falls Church has arranged for solar panels to be delivered and installed to the clinic this year. While the clinic only employs a small number of residents, the impact on the community's quality of life has been significant. Those individuals who would not be able to attend school or work because of their ailments are now able to do so following treatment.

Bonobo Conservation Initiative - Falls Church partner organization, the Bonobo Conservation Initiative, works to protect the Bonobo (the rarest of the four great ape species), and their tropical forest habitat along the Congo River. The Falls Church Sister City Program strives to work with this initiative to preserve a 1200 square mile patch of land in Kokolopori. While the main goal of this project is to preserve Bonobo habitat, a secondary result has been job creation. Most citizens do not have a reliable income. As a result of preservation program, 50 trackers are now employed and receive a steady income for their families.



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➤ *Tempe, AZ – Timbuktu, Mali*

Tempe, Arizona and Timbuktu, Mali have enjoyed a sister city partnership since 1991. Timbuktu is located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, fourteen kilometers from the northernmost loop of the Niger River. Water is a very precious commodity for survival in the area and must be carried by pails to most homes and supplied to agricultural plots by hand irrigation.

Water Resources - The Tempe-Timbuktu Committee created a water resources plan that includes developing seven wells to provide more readily accessible water for agriculture and domestic uses. To date, four wells are in place and functioning. This was seen as a top priority by the Timbuktu community members. The wells also helped to create a more independent life for many of the woman in Timbuktu. With the new water sources in place, the Committee worked with an informal community association of women to manage gardens, and they flourished. The gardens provide in additional food to feed their families, and allow the women to sell produce for additional income. This association has grown to include even more women and who have formed 11 different groups. The new groups have started micro-businesses and some have become eligible for small business loans from the Mali government.

The Tempe-Timbuktu Committee worked with the women's community associations on a variety of family issues. One woman in particular, Zalia Traore, was identified as a strong leader within the group. The Tempe-Timbuktu Committee raised funds for Zalia to study at the University of Tempe and she received a Masters degree in 2002. In 2003, Zalia went back to Timbuktu and worked with women in the city to organize workshops in the hospital to teach the dangers of female genitalia mutilation and a variety other health issues. Tempe raised additional funds to assist Zalia to return to Arizona for her PhD on Africa Woman Facing Traditions. Once she has completed her PhD, Zalia will return to Timbuktu in 2010 to start a NGO to help educate local disabled and poor children. Her efforts with the NGO will be supported by Tempe-Timbuktu committee in coordination with the new school.

Education - The Timbuktu community sees the education of its youth as a vital key to the future of the community. The schools that exist provide basic education needs for all youth, yet lack sufficient facilities, properly trained teachers, and supplies. This situation has led to some elementary classrooms holding as many as 120 children. Tempe-Timbuktu Committee has raised \$25,000 and is working with local leaders to build a new school to help address this situation.

Sustainable Environment - The Tempe-Timbuktu Committee has worked with the community to leverage the new wells as instruments to help prevent the creeping southern border of the Sahara desert. Working to help with the creation of the "Great Green Wall," these wells helped Timbuktu irrigate and plant trees around the city to slow harmful sand damage.