

Central African Republic Village Education Project

The Village Education Project (VEP) that was begun in the CAR by the Lutheran Church in 2000 has witnessed great success in the past five years! Despite the difficult situation in the CAR, the schools have remained open and enrollment is soaring.

- **Schools**
In the '04-'05 school year there were 15 schools operating and 27 teachers. There were 1673 total students! In one school alone there were 337 first-year students. Each year a new grade is added in each school, so this year the oldest students started fifth grade. The schools will only go up to grade six. Five new schools were slated to open fall 2005.
- **Students**
Student fees are \$3 for the entire year. Some assistance is available through the church. The children come from a wide variety of faiths, not only Lutheran, but also Catholic, Baptist, Brethren and Islam.
- **Teachers**
The VEP trains its own teachers. The candidates, usually high school graduates, go through an initial three-month training course, and then go back for additional training three times a year and two weeks every summer. The teachers receive about \$30 per month and are provided room and board by the parents. In the past, the teachers have always been men. This year the first woman applied.
- **Philosophy**
The goal of the VEP is to assist communities in creating and sustaining elementary schools by encouraging active parent involvement. The goal is for the community to eventually support the school on its own. However, currently ELCA partners still contribute 95% of the funds and the parents contribute 5%.
- **Results**
The students have to take a final exam each year in order to continue to the next grade; and in 2004, there was an 81% pass rate.
- **Future**
Besides opening new schools, the VEP plans to construct permanent concrete structures in place of the thatched roof shelters where the schools currently hold classes. The thatched roofs leak and ruin blackboards and materials. They hope to build the first five structures during the '05-'06 school year.

Without schools established by the church, these children would have almost no way of attending school. Thank you for your support.

Donations should be sent to the Synod Office (1703 32nd Ave. S., Fargo, ND 58103) and clearly be marked CAR Village Education Project

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Central African Republic Girls' High School Scholarships

One of the most urgent problems today in the CAR is the educational crisis. The government of the CAR has been unable to pay its teachers regularly for many years, leading to a breakdown in the public school system. The women's organization of the CAR Lutheran Church saw a need for educated leaders for the future and in 1995 began setting up a scholarship program for teenage girls to attend high school.

The program began with the 1997-98 school year. Four girls received scholarships to attend the Protestant High School in Ngaoundere, Cameroon (a Lutheran school) and two were sent to the Technical Girls' School of Maigaro (a Catholic school). The scholarships for these first six were funded by the church-wide WELCA organization. Since then the program has continued to grow.

In 1998, nine 14-year-olds were selected to begin studies at the Technical Girl's school, and two were chosen to go to the Protestant High School. In the '02-03 school year, 17 girls studied at Maigaro, four in Ngaoundere, and one in Yaoundé. In '03-'04, the program continued to expand with 25 girls studying at four different schools. In '04-'05, there were 23 girls studying in three different schools, including Bangui, the nations' capitol. One girl had graduated and was continuing her education in Benin.

You can support a girl for a year! The costs break down like this:

TECHNICAL GIRL'S SCHOOL OF MAIGARO	\$250 per student per year
BANGUI HIGH SCHOOL	\$600 per student per year

Giving to the scholarship fund will help families with little means to provide their daughters with a quality education and will keep Central African girls in school. Girls who can't go to school run a greater risk of early marriage, unwanted pregnancy, or AIDS. We are also helping to invest in the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the CAR by training tomorrow's church leaders and by encouraging the development of Central African society through education.

Please consider supporting this important work.

Donations should be sent to the Synod Office (1703 32nd Ave. S., Fargo, ND 58103) and clearly be marked CAR Girls Scholarships.

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Central African Republic Church Roof Project

History

The Church Roof Project began about 35 years ago when the ELCA predecessor church, the ALC, offered to provide a roof for any church building constructed by congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic (EELRCA). Even though the CAR is a financially impoverished country, Lutheran congregations there began to erect church walls with a zeal that is reminiscent of the Lutheran settlers in North Dakota a century ago. When the ALC became part of the ELCA, the church roof commitment was passed on to us. And when the EELRCA became the Eastern North Dakota Synod's companion synod, we voluntarily took upon the task of fulfilling this promise.

Successes

The EELRCA has kept building churches and parsonages despite the truly daunting obstacles that have been thrown in its way, such as bad or nonexistent roads, difficulty in obtaining materials, and the recent civil war. Over the years, 84 church roofs have been constructed with donations from the ELCA. From 2000-'04 alone five parsonages received roofs and 15 church roofs were built.

Present Situation

There are currently **29 churches** waiting for roofs and several parsonages as well. Some roofless church structures have suffered serious damage since they have been exposed to the elements for up to five years. Several even have plants growing on their walls! The church members are discouraged because they have worked to rebuild the church walls two or three times already. Two church walls have even collapsed. No new churches have been built since 2004 due to this crisis. Can you help? A donation of any size will help further this cause. A new church roof costs approximately \$5000.

Synod Education

Several people from our synod have visited the CAR and several missionary families are now living in the Fargo area. They are willing to come and speak to your congregation to share first-hand experiences of life in the CAR. To schedule a speaker, please contact the synod office (232-3381). The synod resource center also has videos and other information about the CAR, which are available free of charge.

We can rejoice that the church in the CAR is growing at such a swift pace! We ask your help to fulfill this commitment to our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Central Africa.

Donations should be sent to the Synod Office (1703 32nd Ave. S., Fargo, ND 58103) and be clearly marked CAR Church Roof Project.