



Project Muinda Pour la Paix

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Teenagers in Kinshasa Choose Peace

While visiting Project Muinda in Kinshasa, D. R. Congo, in February 2011, Gianne Broughton, staff of Canadian Friends Service Committee, heard a heartening story. It began in 2003 when members of the Peace Cell in Lemba neighbourhood noticed that teenagers who lived on one side of the main road were afraid of those living on the other side, and vice versa. A culture of violent intimidation was building up, and the Peace Cell members were concerned that it could degenerate into armed banditry, locally known as “kuluna”. They realized that they could turn this trend around. The five of them met together and discussed what they could do. They

(photo has been temporarily removed)

Members of the Lemba Peace Cell recall how they helped teenagers in their neighbourhood turn away from violence.

Photo: G. Broughton

decided to visit the parents of the teenagers and listen to their concerns and suggestions. They also conversed with the young people when they met them here and there. They met and listened and counseled people informally for several weeks. The young people began to think about how they could enjoy friendly activities. Then, when they knew that people would come, the Peace Cell members invited the families from both sides to a party. Everybody came, all ages, men and women, boys and girls. There were refreshments, music and dancing. There was also an open floor for speakers. People from each side recognized the same difficulties of life in Kinshasa, and

realized that they could still enjoy it better in friendship than in hostility. To this day, the former hostility has not come back, and people join together from time to time to do constructive things, like cleaning up the litter and filling in potholes.