

### A Strong Congo Through Education

## Bonn, Germany native, Professor Brigitte Schmitz, is doing it AGAIN!

In After decades of professional activity, many people are happy with a well-deserved retirement and a retreat into a life of leisure. Not Brigitte Schmitz, a professor emeritus for biochemistry who has been active in the Congo for years and does not think about stopping.

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It's 2020 and, for the second time, she is establishing a laboratory science curriculum at a Congo university. For most of us, going through this experience once would be far more demanding than we

could handle. After Schmitz instructed assistants for several years in Kinshasa – she says, "with increasingly less effort," she was satisfied the program would continue successfully. So, she moved on to the Université Evangelique en Afrique (UEA) – across the country in Bukavu – to establish their program. Finding equipment, establishing the infrastructure of the labs, conducting classes, instructing assistants, and ensuring that, once again, a program can run smoothly once she leaves – it's all part of Brigitte's routine!

Going back to the first time, in 2014 she initially ensured that Congolese medical students could complete a biochemistry

internship at Congo Protestant University (UPC) in Kinshasa. "As far as I know, this is a compulsory internship worldwide, but there wasn't one at UPC," said Schmitz. With the support of the Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Programme of the DAAD, Bread for the World,

and Education Congo financing the laboratory equipment, she was able to set up the laboratory over a period of just three months. Next, she began preparing young scientists for their task of supervising the internship and then, together with them, guide the medical students through their internships. "Most of the assistants had never even been in a laboratory before," said Schmitz. "They had to learn everything themselves first, so they could then teach the medical students."

Labs were set up, assistants were trained, and the internship worked - in principle; but it was still far from running smoothly – that required several years and much persistence. But Brigitte says, "students and assistants were enthusiastic, because they were able to learn something that they could later apply in their profession!"

At UEA Dr. Schmitz now works in collaboration with human rights activist and gynecologist Dr. Denis Mukwege who founded the PANZI Hospital and, along with Jesid Nadia Murad, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018. For over 20 years, Mukwege has been campaigning for women who have been victims of unimaginably brutal rapes, mainly widespread in eastern Congo. As Dr. Schmitz explains, "This is a terrible, sad chapter of humanity that rape is used as a weapon of war. Armed gangs, militias, and rebels - some from neighbouring countries, and also supported by governments of other countries - do this knowing they are destroying families. The men leave their victimized wives and people abandon villages. The rape perpetrators then occupy the vacated land and have access to extremely rich minerals in Eastern Congo such as coltan, gold, copper etc."



## Peace Project partnership

In 2018 Education Congo began a new partnership with UEA. One of the projects Education Congo engaged with UEA is related to the University's desire to explore the effectiveness of Protestant church efforts in addressing issues of violence and conflict resolution. The University specifically wants to explore how the churches in the Bukavu area have acted to transform conflict, reduce violence, and minister to victims of violence since 1997. Due to the high incidence of violence toward women, this project has a strong focus on gender. The ultimate goal will be to improve capacity for more effective conflict transformation.

Dr. Adrien Mutabesha (Dean, Faculty of Theology), Dr. Gustave Nachigera and Dr Aline Zihahirwa (Lecturer, Social Sciences) are

providing leadership to the project. UEA and Education Congo are both providing financial resources. The project is underway but has been temporarily held up due to the COVID-19 pandemic but should restart in September.



## School of Agricultural and Environmental Science

Thriving is not the same as surviving! Good nutrition and clean water are critical for a community to thrive. This is especially critical for developing children into healthy, productive adults. So, it is particularly exciting that the School of Agricultural and Environmental Science (SAES) at the Université Evangélique en



Afrique (UEA) is a leader in training Congolese professionals and working with farmers in the Southern Kivu Province to improve farming practices while preserving the ecology.

In addition to Agriculture and Environmental Science, UEA offers degrees in Business, Medicine, Social Sciences, and Theology. With between 3,000 and 3,500 students, UEA is led by Gustave

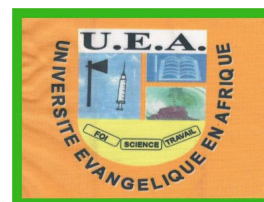
NACHIGERA, who holds a PhD in Agronomy from a Canadian university and Dr. Denis MUKWEGE, a 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner, is on the medical school faculty.

SAES offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees with curricula covering theory as well as practical application. Practical training is accomplished through field trips where students work with farmers and at the university's farm. The school is divided into two departments: animal husbandry and plant science. Faculty and students pursue research conforming to international standards. The faculty has 44 full-time lecturers, one of them a graduate whose education you helped fund through Education Congo.

In addition, SAES provides a soil testing service to assist farmers in selecting crops best suited to their soil and in how to enrich and maintain the soil in sustainable ways. So, SAES is helping people to both survive and thrive! For more information, please go to the following link. The information is in both French and English. <http://uea.ac.cd/En/faculte-des-sciences-agronomiques-et-environnement/>



[www.educationcongo.org](http://www.educationcongo.org) has more information you may find interesting. User and mobile friendly, it allows you to learn all about Education Congo, our partners - UPC & UEA, as well as our scholarship and medical projects, and other projects. It also provides an address and link for donations to one of the Named Funds.



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Vérité, Foi, Liberté

**Thank you for your investment in the people of the Congo (DRC) and Education Congo's mission to provide educational opportunities!**

