



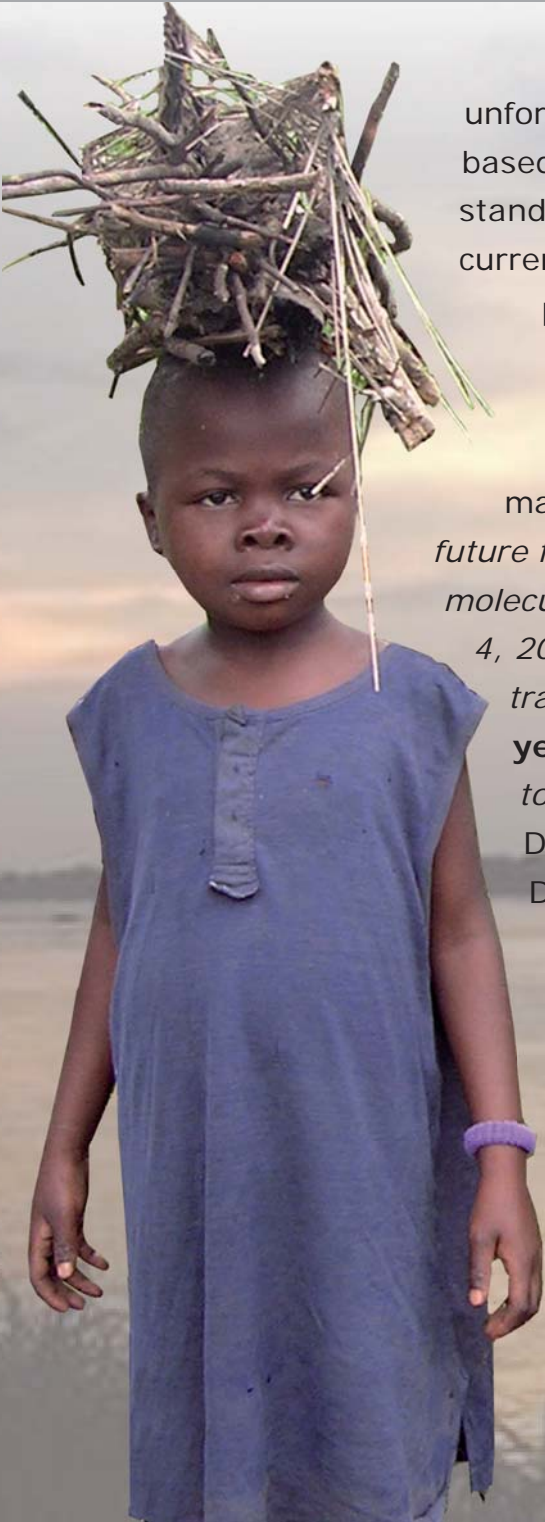
Dreaming in Congo

THE DREAM PROJECT IS IN AFRICA TO TREAT - NOT JUST PREVENT - AIDS

Mbandaka, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a city surrounded by a dramatic and fascinating landscape in the middle of the rainforest, hidden between the bends of the Congo river. Congo has known nothing but war for ten years now, its mineral resources richness being also its greatest curse, the precipitating cause of a civil war extended to a large number of surrounding countries, reaching the dimension of a "first African world war". The area today is inhabited by 700,000 people, thus becoming the centre of a constant health emergency. For this very reason, the Congolese Ministry of Public Health has warmly welcomed a pilot programme for diagnosing and treating **HIV** in this area. Here, the percentage of HIV-positive people is at least two points higher than the 3% average rate in the rest of Congo.

Dream is the acronym for *Drug Resource Enhancement against Aids and Malnutrition*, a **global programme to treat Aids in Africa** launched in February 2002 by the Italian Community of Sant'Egidio. For many years, the fight against HIV-Aids in Africa has been almost exclusively focused on prevention but this,





unfortunately, has not helped defeat the emergency. This project introduces a new approach based on **treatment** as well as prevention, adopting what the western world calls a golden standard: the evaluation of the viral load and the **HAART** (*Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy*), currently being considered as a model of excellence in the fight against HIV-Aids. Dream project provides it **free of charge** in its 31 operational centres spread out over 10 sub-Saharan countries.

*"No western world company is present in Congo, not only from a business point of view but also in support of charitable initiatives – says **Lodovico Floriani**, deputy general manager of Generali – yet, development in Africa passes through trust and hope in a better future for its children. What happened with Dream is just this: thanks to Generali's contribution, a molecular biology laboratory and a medical centre were built in Mbandaka – opened on February 4, 2009 – and a similar centre will be built in Kinshasa. In particular, these centres will provide training and information to the local population and working staff. Generali developed a **three-year plan**. In the future, however, our commitment will most likely concentrate on medicines, to make sure that the programme continues."*

Doctor Gianni Guidotti, **coordinator of the Dream project**, has underlined that the Dream's challenge is to make the best of western treatments available to the African people, without asking for anything.

Afro-pessimism is fought against by good-willed people working together.

For further information:

<http://dream.santegidio.org/homep.asp?Curlang=EN>

