

Over 50 Years of Serving Congo

Paul Carlson Sunday

Kids Activity Sheet: Make Your Own Mini Hut Out of Paper Maché

Story: How to Build a Hut in Congo

What is your house made of? Brick? Wood? Stone? What would you think about mud? In the villages, where most of the people in northwest Congo live, most of the houses have mud walls and grass thatch roofs.

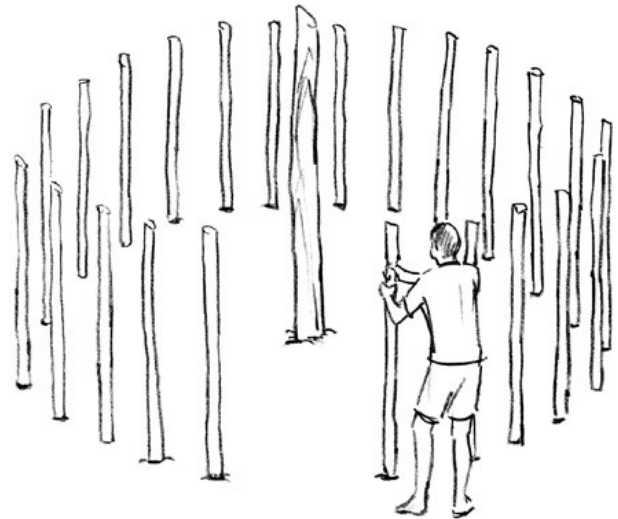
Why don't they use bricks and wood and shingles or tiles like we do? What do you think?

Most people in Congo have very little money. They have nothing to buy bricks or boards with. So they build their homes out of what they can find for free, just like people there have done for a very long time.

What would you do if you were out in a grassland by a forest and had to make yourself a place to live? Think about it. Most of us would have a pretty hard time! But the people of Congo are smart about it. Here's how they do it:

First they clear a wide area of ground. They take a tall, strong pole and dig a hole to help them stand it straight up. Then they take poles that are a little shorter and

stand them up the same way, making a wide circle around the center.

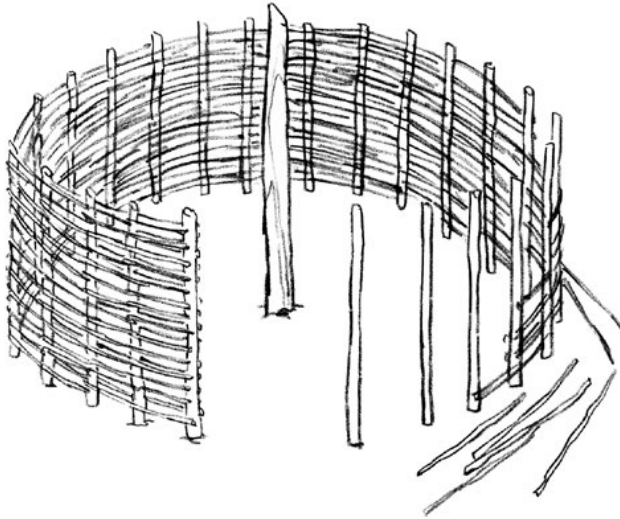


Next they use thin branches or rope or strong vines to connect one post to another all around the ring. They go around and around the circle at different levels on the posts. This keeps the posts from moving out of place and makes a framework for the mud they'll use to finish the hut.

Next, they put the roof on. They bring more long poles that will be like rafters, holding the roof up. With each roof pole, they rest one end at a spot on the round wall and tie the other end at the top of

the central pole, tying all of them together tightly.

When those are all in place, they use rope or vines or branches between them to hold them together, just as they did with the wall. They make several rings around the roof, from the lower ends to the top.



When the roof structure is ready, they bring big armfuls of the long grass, called esobe (ess oh' bee) grass, that grows out in the open grassland. They tie bunches of this grass together, then tie the bunches onto the roof, starting from the bottom, moving toward the top and around the circle. When they're done, they've got a good, thick thatched roof.

Finally, they take mud and plaster it all over the walls, filling in the web-like structure around the hut. It's a clay type of mud, so it sticks well and is strong after it's hardened. The kids in the village love it when someone is making a hut: they all get to bring mud and put it on the new wall. Imagine scooping up mud by a creek and carrying it to your neighbor's house

and slapping it on the walls! The man who is building the home puts in a door frame and a door, with the mud wall around it.

When everything is securely held together, they take out the center pole, to make more room in the hut. The mud walls dry and become hard and strong. The family makes the dirt floor hard by putting a little water on it, which gives it a thin layer of mud. As that dries, they sweep it again and again and again to



make it hard, not dusty. They keep on sweeping it every day to take care of it. They have clean dirt floors!

If people do have a little money for a house, they build the best they can afford. Some homes are made of the same clay and thatch but are square with straight walls, and with maybe one or two windows. People who have good jobs may have houses that are made more like ours, of brick or cement block. Many hospital buildings, clinics, and schools are built that way too.

Special thanks to David Westerfield for the drawings.

Activity: Make a Paper Maché Congolese Hut

Your Sunday School class can build a little Congolese hut, and read a story and show pictures about building the real thing.

Supplies

- newspaper
- your favorite paper mache (suggestion below)
- brown tempura paint (powder or liquid)
- small sticks, straw, or raffia
- both templates, “wall” and “roof”(one set per child), printed on heavy paper or cardstock
- scissors
- masking tape
- white glue
- (easy paper mache recipe)
- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp salt
- whisk together until smooth
- adjust flour or water to desired consistency

Directions

Part One: Help each child construct their paper mache form.

1. Using the Wall Template, cut along the Line D to create two equal pieces.
2. Tape the two pieces together, end to end, to form a short, wide tube. This is your outer wall!
3. Using the Roof Template, cut along the Line A to create a circle.
4. Cut along Line B to create slit that runs from the outer edge of the circle to the center.
5. Pull one edge over the other, until it lines up with Line C and tape firmly (inside and out). This is your roof!
6. From the inside, tape the roof to the walls.

Part Two: Add the paper mache.

1. Mix up your paper mache, adding either powdered or liquid brown tempura paint in place of some of the flour or water.
2. With strips of newspaper dipped in the paper mache, cover the exterior of the house. 1-2 layers should do it!

Part Three: Decorate your hut.

Use sticks and straw to decorate the house. You could put some sticks up and down around the sides and the straw on top to show the branches and grass that are common building materials in Congo!