



Comaps-music is a Hackney-based charity working to promote, manage and develop Central African music culture in the UK. It was established in 1998 by Aimé Aziza, a Congolese session musician studying commercial music at the University of Westminster.

Aimé, 39, has seen his community-based organisation flourish in recent years. Notable achievements include bringing together local London-based musicians with established Congolese performers, and staging a Central African music and fashion festival at a music venue in Hackney in October 2004. Successful projects such as these, says Aimé, have only been possible thanks to the support his charity has received from CIDA.

"We have been involved (with CIDA) for two years and every year our activities are growing," he says. "They have helped us to achieve a lot of what we are doing today."

Aimé first heard about CIDA through the community support group Hackney Voluntary Action. "They told me CIDA were helping local organisations in Hackney – generating funding and developing small businesses. At that time, we needed help with funding.

"We have received one-to-one advice sessions, access to finance support, and used CIDA as a referee on quite a lot of successful applications for funding," he adds. "I'm sure that this has helped us a lot."

Increased revenue streams have seen Comaps-music improve the range, quality and marketing of its music, and increase awareness of Central African music culture among a wider audience.

"There is no doubt we have made a lot of progress," smiles Aimé. "We are currently the biggest organisation providing services and support to Central African musicians in the UK."

The charity, which last year posted turnover approaching £20,000, generates some of its own income through tours, merchandising and sponsorship. With a sounder financial structure now in



place, Aimé sees many new opportunities for growth.

"So far my relationship (with CIDA) has mainly focused on funding guidance, but I also receive information about organisational development and legal issues. This will be very useful for the future."

The next stage, he says, will be to help Comaps-music find new premises, and implement a volunteering network. He also recognises the potential benefits of a successful London 2012 Olympic bid.

"The Olympic Games will be a great way to promote a diverse range of cultural activities in London to people from all over the world," he says. "Comaps-music will be one of those organisations willing to work hard for that celebration."

CIDA, he recognises, will be an integral partner every step of the way:

"As Comaps-music grows, so will our relationship with CIDA," he says. "There will be a lot more we need in the coming months and years."