

Congo: The most casualties of any war since World War II

Four Million Lives

by Sheldon Gilmer

Help the Aged Project Manager

For those of you who keep an ear to the ground on past and current events around the world, when you hear the word Congo (or its former name-Zaire) the next word you might think of is crisis. This country has been in an almost constant state of crisis since its independence in 1960, with the most recent civil war claiming four million lives – the most of any war since the second world war. More than once, UN peacekeepers have intervened to spare lives and bring peace. As one of the richest countries in the world in terms of natural resources, its people live in some of the most abject poverty of any country. How can this be?

The Democratic Republic of Congo has finally chosen its first democratically elected President – Joseph Kabila, and while unrest remains, there is great hope that finally peace may ensue and its people can take advantage of the country's rich bounty.

While peace seems closer, there remains great dangers. In June 2007, a driver who worked for our partner in Congo was killed by who many believe was the police. The victim was robbed. The following day, a large number of local residents protested at the police station and tragically, police shot and killed two more persons. The provincial Governor stepped in and restored peace. The officers who killed the last two victims were arrested and are awaiting trial but the perpetrators of the original killing are still on the loose. This is a reminder of the constant danger to project staff and the general population from an often unpaid, undisciplined military and police.

Since 2004, 41,000 Congolese have benefitted from your support

Help the Aged has been very active in the Congo since 1996 because it is one of the poorest and neediest countries in the world. Since 2004, we have been supporting the work of a local charitable organization and its four hospitals and 80 community health clinics. The goal is to restore health care to remote communities devastated during the civil war.

In many communities there is no health care. If you are sick, you walk up to 20 or 30 kilometers to the nearest community health clinic or hospital. Not surprisingly, many die needless deaths. Children from measles,



Some of the mobile medical team members sponsored by Help the Aged who travel to remote communities to deliver health care. Our local partner organization is a large faith based community which provides health care, education and development services to over 500,000 people in North Western Congo.



Help The Aged is helping to build and repair community health clinics. Here, community volunteers participate to help mud the walls of a new clinic.

mothers from childbirth, the elderly from hypertension or diabetes and of course everyone, especially the very young and old are affected by malaria. Often the cure would cost less than one dollar! That is why Help the Aged is working with our local partner organization to take health care into remote communities and to ensure there are functional

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This is part of the 135 bed Karawa Hospital one of four hospitals serving North

Western Congo. There are only 10 doctors to serve this huge population.

Encouraging News for 2008 & Beyond!

by Pierre Barbeau/Director

As 2008 approaches, I am very encouraged to see the substantial amount of publicity on television, magazines and newspapers concerning the issue of poverty in developing countries. The media is helping to raise public awareness and interest in this area which should lead to greater support for charitable organizations like Help the Aged. There are also promising new developments in important areas such as malaria vaccinations. A very potent vaccine discovered in 1992 is now approaching final trials before being officially approved for worldwide distribution. This development alone could save hundreds of thousands of lives since more than one million people (primarily very young children and frail seniors) die every year from this disease.

Thanks to world-wide communications and the media, our planet is increasingly accessible to all of us. The knowledge we acquire will hopefully lead to more and more people like you accepting responsibility to help the poorest of the poor.

Thank you for caring and best wishes for 2008!



The Canadian flag flies proudly on our project vehicle which delivers health care and represents the good will of so many of you who support our work in Congo. Canadians are held in very high esteem by the Congolese.

Since 2004 ... *(continued)*

community health clinics within the reach of all – it’s a daunting task!

Our teams also seek out and visit the elderly who have no way of getting to a community clinic or hospital. They train local medical staff and community leaders in general how to identify and support those elders with special needs. Medications are also provided free of charge.

In the last three years, with your support and CIDA funding, we have provided approximately 41,000 destitute community members with much needed health care as well as many more with training in nutrition, sanitation, agriculture best practices and HIV/AIDS awareness.



Members of the HTA medical teams work with women to teach them better agricultural practices, nutrition and sanitation.



The circled area is where four mobile medical teams supported by Help the Aged provide health care to rural communities.

Polluted drinking water in the Congo is the cause of many illnesses.

** Partner organization of Help the Aged in the Congo: Communauté Evangélique de l’Ubangi-Mongala (CEUM)*

Reaching the Unreached

Our mobile health teams seek to identify people who do not have access to health care. The Congo is one of the biggest countries in Africa and has one of the world’s largest rain forests. Groups like the Pygmies live deep in the forest and have no access to health care and education.



A motorized dugout canoe takes one of our teams to remote Pygmy villages which have no access to health care.

Our Wasolo mobile medical team travels to these remote areas to deliver health care. To reach the Pygmy communities, they must travel many hours in dugout canoes and then trek through the dense forest on foot.

Our local partner had tried for many years to encourage them to send at least some of their children to the outside

communities to attend school but with no success. However there was one exception this year. A female nurse was in charge of our health care program and a Pygmy teenage girl was so amazed that a woman could be in her words “a doctor” that she immediately said good bye to her family and returned with the team. She too wants to be a “doctor” and she is now living with a CEUM* family attending school. This young women has a long road ahead of her but she will bring healing to her community.

Grueling Day to Day Life

For the most part, the transportation system in the North Western region of the Congo has fallen apart. Very few vehicles have survived the war and the horrendous road conditions. Instead, one see’s thousands of people pushing bicycles loaded with several hundred pounds of farm produce or market goods. These men often push their loads for up to a hundred kilometers or more to large markets. If they are fortunate, they will receive a fair price, however in many cases they are forced to sell their produce for a pittance. This is grueling work and people recount stories of how some of these men died from exertion.

