

Seniors Struggling to Survive in Congo, Kenya and Haiti

HAITI

Michel's Ambulance Service for the Poor

By Pierre Barbeau
Director

When volunteer Michel Noël de Tilly recently returned from his three month assignment in Haiti, we met in Ottawa to review his successful field trip. During our meeting, he showed me this photo of Philomène, an elderly woman being driven in a wheelbarrow by her husband to see Michel, a physiotherapist with 28 years of experience. She had heard from neighbours that Help the Aged was providing free physiotherapy services in Carice, an isolated community located north-east of Haiti, near the frontier with the Dominican Republic. Philomène's husband transported her in the

(continued on page 3)



Philomène and her husband were desperate but hopeful that she could be helped by Michel. Their wheelbarrow was the only method of transportation they could afford.

CONGO AND KENYA

Stopping a Killer: Saving the Lives of Seniors Dying from Malaria



Every year, nearly half a billion people contract malaria. More than a million die, particularly children and seniors in Africa who are in poor health and have the least resistance to the parasite injected by the female Anopheles mosquito when she feeds on human blood.

As described by Michael Finkel in the July 2007 edition of National Geographic magazine, four

(continued on page 2)

Babies, children and frail elderly people are the most likely to succumb to malaria. Our projects in the Congo and Kenya provide top priority to the prevention and treatment of this disease.

Stopping a Killer ... (continued from page 1)

species of malaria parasites routinely infect humans. The most virulent is Plasmodium Falciparum which causes 95% of deaths. It is the only form of malaria that can attack the brain and it can do so with extreme speed, killing a frail elderly person within a 24 hour period. Fortunately, many seniors who are in good health have developed just enough immunity to fight these parasites. However, untreated malaria can persist for years with fevers fading in and out. When the parasite attacks the liver, it can replicate itself 40,000 times with the first week.

As the body's internal temperature rises to destroy the parasites, shivering sets in since muscle contractions generate additional warmth. This is followed by severe fever, then drenching sweat. The next step is the destruction of red blood cells to the point where there are too few left to sustain vital functions. The lungs fight for breath and the heart struggles to pump. The blood acidifies and brain cells die. The patient convulses and finally falls into a coma.

Fortunately, the solutions to this life threatening problem are inexpensive and effective: **medications such as quinine and chloroquine can kill the parasite in three days and only cost \$6 per patient. Mosquito nets to help prevent malaria in the first place are only \$10 each.** One of the important components of Help the Aged's health care projects in Congo and Kenya is malaria prevention and treatment. Thanks to your support of these projects, thousands of lives are being saved in the Matangwe region of Kenya and Equateur province in the Congo.



Happy to be alive!

\$6 is enough to save the life of someone dying from malaria

CONGO

Abandoned in a Graveyard

By Jennifer McIntosh

Sabuli Sanguma, a key member of our project staff in the Congo was recently in Ottawa to meet with our volunteers, staff and CIDA officials as well as to help with our fundraising efforts. She had many horror stories to tell about her homeland, including one about an orphaned child that was abandoned in a graveyard. We felt that you would be interested in this touching story since it reflects the harsh realities of life in a country where survival is always a struggle for young and old alike.

The little boy's mother died in childbirth and the baby's uncle took the child home for his wife to nurse since they had recently had a baby of their own but the villagers warned the woman against nursing the child and she refused her husband's request. "There are some that believe if you nurse a baby whose mother died, then



Sabuli and her new son, Precious.

your own baby will die," said Sabuli.

After his wife's refusal, the uncle took the baby to its biological father who said the baby wasn't his and turned the man away. The uncle then went to the local orphanage and tried to leave the baby there. He was told they didn't have any milk for the baby and that they wouldn't be able to take care of him. At his wits end, the uncle laid the baby in the graveyard and prayed for his deceased mother to take care of him. "Some believe that the

mother's spirit will come and take care of her baby because she is in the graveyard," said Sabuli. The baby would have died had it not been for a group of students who passed by the graveyard that night and heard his little cries. The baby was then sent to the orphanage and when Sabuli went there to visit, he only weighed six pounds.

"I was there at 11:00 at night," she said. "I picked him up from the cradle and his clothes were soaking wet." The sisters asked Sabuli to take the baby and after talking with her husband she decided she would. Now the child she named Précieux (Precious) is visiting our nation's capital and is a bouncing, happy 10-month-old.

Michel's Ambulance ... (continued from page 1)

wheelbarrow in this mountainous region for more than one hour so that she could see Michel.

Despite his many years of experience in Haiti, Michel was shocked to see this woman who was severely handicapped arriving at his clinic with feelings of despair but also hope. Carice, with a population of 18,000 has not seen a doctor or nurse for more than three years so the appearance of Michel on the scene was a big event in the community. Michel observed that many other seniors spent hours on the backs of mules to travel to our temporary clinic and he referred to the wheelbarrow and mules as the only "ambulances for the poor" in this area.

Unfortunately, Philomène will never be able to walk again because she requires extensive surgery. However, the stiffness and pain in her hips and knees can be helped through physiotherapy. **Help the Aged has provided funds on your behalf to hire three of the twenty-two local physio technicians who received basic training from Michel.**



Philomène's condition is called ankylosis and is a result of untreated osteoporosis. She was very happy to hear that physiotherapy treatments were going to be provided on a regular basis. With your support, we hope to continue providing (and expanding) these services in the years to come.

I will be travelling to Haiti in November and again in March. Michel will also be returning to Haiti in March and we will keep you informed about Philomène and the other destitute seniors who are benefiting from your generosity.

Teaching the Basics

By Pierre Barbeau

Physiotherapy is of great benefit to elderly people with restricted mobility and joint problems caused by arthritis and osteoporosis. During my field trips to developing countries, I frequently meet seniors whose arms and/or legs are bent and so stiff that they have been unable to straighten them out for months and sometimes years. Michel Noël de Tilly (near the top of the stairs in this photo) worked with Canadian Sister Biane Parisien in the Cap Haitien area to provide a 12 week basic training program to 22 young Haitian students who were interested in learning how to treat patients. Michel observed that he saw "crippled seniors living in tiny huts, unable to stand up from their beds due to weakness and muscle spasms. These people need help!" Thanks to you, three local graduate students hired by Help the Aged in northern Haiti will be able to provide a great deal of support to help the needy.



Farewell to Jocelyne

Help the Aged volunteer and Board of Directors member Jocelyne Gosselin lost a long battle with cancer recently and we all wish to extend our condolences to her husband Gilles, her children and relatives. As reflected in this photo taken in Haiti, Jocelyne had a great deal of courage and determination. In order to meet all of our sponsored grans, she did not hesitate to visit remote areas on horseback to photograph the elderly and prepare updates for their sponsors. She also knew that travelling to Haiti involved personal risk but was always eager to return to see the elderly people she loved and to assist us with our projects. She will be missed by her friends in Haiti and in Canada.



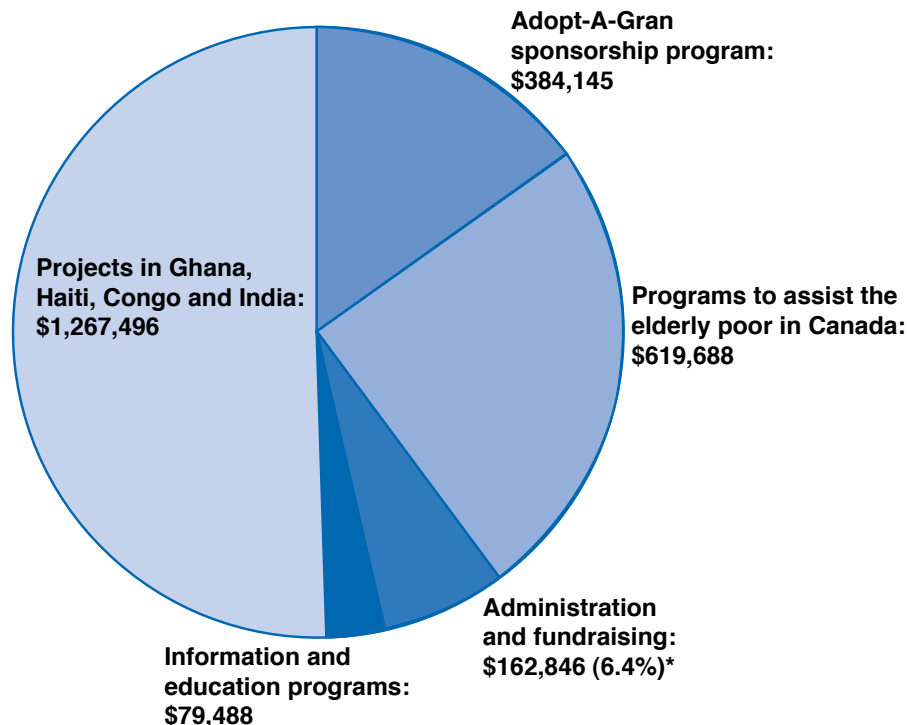
Results from our 2006-2007 audited financial statement

Total expenses during the 2006-2007 fiscal year = \$2,513,663**

* Administration costs during the 2006-2007 fiscal year represented 4.1% of total expenses. Fundraising costs were 2.3%

**This total includes \$830,718 in donations-in-kind for medical equipment and supplies, donated food, and the value of volunteer contributions to Help the Aged.

Please refer to our web site for the complete audited financial statement



All donations for our projects in developing countries are tripled through matching grants from CIDA, the Quebec Ministry of International Relations and the Alberta Wild Rose Foundation. Your precious gift will be used to support our health care program in Congo and Kenya and our projects in Haiti.

Help the Aged (Canada)

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