

'...helping to bring hope to the people of the democratic republic of congo.'



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Dear friends,

Firstly, sincere apologies that it has been so long since you heard from us. The last year has been one of great uncertainty for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. You are probably aware of the elections that took place last November and the re-election of President Kabila. Thankfully, the elections passed off relatively peacefully and were generally considered to be a fair result. You have also probably heard of the ongoing search for Joseph Kony, the LRA leader, responsible for so much violence in DRC and other countries, and who was recently the subject of a *You-Tube* clip that created worldwide interest in the DRC. The DRC has also hit the headlines in the first International Criminal Court verdict, which found one of the war lords, Thomas Lubanga, guilty of forcing children to be soldiers.



The BBC summarizes DRC as follows:

A vast country with immense economic resources, the DRC has been at the centre of what could be termed Africa's world war. This has left it in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. The five-year conflict pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda.

Left: Women voting. Right: A baby born at CME's new hospital – what is its future?

The IRIN, a United Nations news service, reported on the plight of children in the DRC as follows:

'17 February 2012 - The DRC boasts sufficient arable land and water sources to produce food well beyond its own needs, yet it has the world's highest rates of malnutrition, as the following data illustrate: **80m:** hectares of arable land. **90%:** Proportion of arable land not cultivated, largely due to insecurity preventing access to fields and markets. **69%:** Prevalence of under-nutrition in the DRC; up from 26% in 1990-92. **61.1%:** Proportion of preschool-age children suffering from a subclinical deficiency of Vitamin A. **50%:** Proportion of the population suffering deficiency in nutrients such as vitamins B12 riboflavin, iron, Vitamin E, folate and zinc. **48%:** Cases of infant mortality due to malnutrition. **45.8%:** Children of low height for their age.'

For CME itself, there has been added uncertainty, all of which led to us delaying this newsletter until various issues about how we support CME became more clear.

Nyankunde Schools Work

At the beginning of the school year there was good news that the DRC government both raised teachers' salaries to about \$55 a month and began to pay more of them. Unfortunately, the school year still began with just under half the teachers receiving no salary. The number of children wanting to attend school rose further to about 7,000. Of these, about 1,800 were orphans. We did not have enough funds to support all the un-salaried teachers. So, after a lot of thought and prayer both by us, CME and the teachers and parents, it was agreed that parents would start to pay monthly school fees but that the orphans would go free. We send CME £800 a month which, together with the government salaries and the fees paid by parents for the non-orphans, is then shared between all the teachers.

We have sufficient funds to sustain this to the end of the school year for which we are really grateful.

New Hospital at Sosé near Beni

The new site at Sosé is now functioning as an operating ward and maternity. However, not all operations have been transferred from the old sites in Beni town centre for the following reasons: 1) Not enough metal beds – the old wooden ones are now insect ridden and so are not being taken to the new site for fear the insects will make a new home there! 2) The need to transport staff and patients the 4km from the city centre of Beni. 3) Limited water supply and not enough toilets and sanitation at Sosé. These pictures (right) show the entrance to Sosé hospital, the existing toilets and construction of a safe water supply. More toilets and completion of the water supply is imminent thanks to £3,000 we received from Den Tailor's marathon bike ride from Land's End to John O'Groats.



Physiotherapy at Nyankunde

We are pleased to report that Chris Phillips has been at Nyankunde since the summer. She writes: 'All my life I have longed to be here - and it's everything I had hoped for! I am doing a job I love and teaching it to others. I am living in my own home with warm friends close by. I have been accepted by the community. Nyankunde is beautiful, green and lush even in the dry season.' Chris tells the story of Benoit: 'He can hardly see. He had fallen at home and been admitted with cuts and bruises. Benoit moved to Bunia after the war in 2002, but now Nyankunde is settled again, he returned to the place which has been his home for most of his 82 years. He first came to CME with Leprosy as a young man. Sadly he had an amputation below his knee but he has ably tended his garden using a trusty pair of crutches and a below-knee prosthesis. Some of Benoit's injuries didn't look as if they had been the result of a simple fall. "What happened to your little finger?" I asked. "A rat ate it in the night", he replied. I could almost see the teeth marks! Benoit has no feeling in his hands due to leprosy. "Do you have a cat?", I asked. "Not any more", he replied.' After fixing his prosthesis, Chris sent Benoit home with a new cat! Read more of Benoit and see photos in Chris's latest newsletter, on our website in 'Projects we Support' > 'Physiotherapy' > 'Chris Phillips' Chronicles'. Or follow link: http://www.friendsofcme.org/pdfs/chris_chronicles_20_spring12.pdf

Can you help fill and fund a container?

Chris Phillips has been in touch with the UK Charity *PhysioNet* which has offered a container-full of equipment for her work. They specialise in physio equipment but will also transport to Chris anything we donate. They can collect from everywhere in UK and take and store things at their base in Yorkshire. *PhysioNet* will ship the container to Mombasa then overland to Uganda and on to DRC. That will probably be in September 2012. If you can help fill this container with medical equipment and/or fund the estimated £10,000 shipping cost, Chris would love to hear from you - email: chr15phlps@gmail.com

Peace and reconciliation work of Daniel Masumbuko

199 post-conflict reconciliation seminars were run in the last year, with a total participation (including rallies) of 35,975 people. In particular, Nyankunde had its first seminar since the attack in 2002. Fantastic progress was made, as Daniel reports: 'About 10,000 attended. 620 people responded to the call for receiving Jesus as their personal Saviour in the five days. It was the first time that ex-combatants who themselves fought and destroyed Nyankunde came in and confessed publicly, giving detailed accounts of what they did in Nyankunde and in the surrounding villages. They were kneeling down at the front, repenting and asking for forgiveness.' Read the full story and see photos in Masumbuko's report in the 'Latest news' section on the homepage on our website, or at this direct link: http://www.friendsofcme.org/pdfs/oel_news_2011-12.pdf

We are so grateful for your interest in, and support of, CME and the people of eastern DRC.

Chris Almond
(On behalf of the Trustees)