

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



friends of cme trust

charity number: 1104119

website: www.friendsofcme.org

email: info@friendsofcme.org

postal address: 295 Hillgrounds Road Kempston BEDFORD MK42 8TH

trustees: chris almond_justin burdon_chris heard_hannah morrell_remy toko

October 2024

Dear friends,

We are writing to update you on the work of the charity over the course of the last year, including information about the medical and children's work that we have supported. We are also excited to tell you about a new initiative to enable some of the orphans to progress to university.

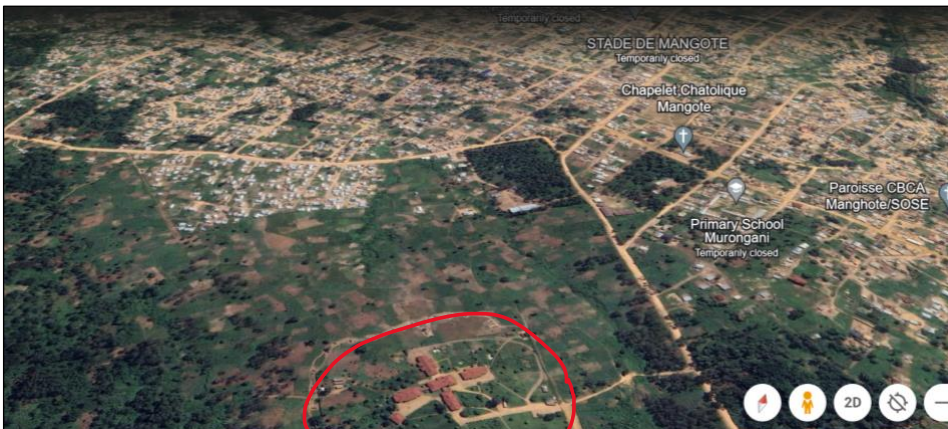
Medical Work

CME hospitals continued to function from 3 sites in Nyankunde, Beni/Sose and Bunia which together provide 410 beds and employ 336 staff, including 29 doctors of whom 6 are specialists. Despite the region's continued insecurity, in 2023: 31,000 patients were consulted, 11,000 were hospitalised, there were 2,100 births and 2,700 surgical operations. In addition, CME ran university-level medical courses at its ISTM in Bunia and nursing school IEM at Nyankunde for nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians and dentists.

The insecurity around Nyankunde and Beni has seen a reduction in patients. This has impacted the amount of money available to pay staff salaries. CME does not want to turn patients away and so has a fund available to help the very poorest. Friends of CME Trust provided \$20,000 to support this fund, which enabled 342 patients to be treated (161 female and 181 male) of which 226 were children. Here are some recent photos from Nyankunde hospital.



Sadly, the new hospital we helped build at Sose outside Beni has remained virtually unused because of the terrorist attacks in the region. The photo below from Google earth shows how vulnerable the hospital is to attack. It shows the edge of Beni town with the cross-shaped Sose hospital near the bottom, centre. In recent months, the terrorists have targeted medical facilities. As a result, CME is in the process of building new facilities in Beni town where it is safer.



CME's medical mission is to care holistically for its patients. As part of this, staff seek to show Jesus' love to patients. During the last year, there were over 6,000 requests for prayer, 323 people became followers of Jesus, and 1,104 started following Him again. The Chaplaincy team at CME is a critical part of the ethos of CME and provides a variety and support for patients at the hospitals and after-care at home where requested.

Work with Children

For many years, since families returned to Nyankunde after the 2002 massacre, we have supported children in various ways through their schooling. In recent years, this has been helping families who look after orphans to pay for their primary and secondary exam fees. We receive letters from the Chief of the area thanking us for this invaluable support. At the end of the 2024 school year, we had paid \$3,000 for the exams fees of 145 orphans at Nyankunde. Some of them sent us videos thanking us and talking about their hopes for the future. Here's a group of secondary school students from one of the schools (*photo right*).



In addition, in Beni and nearby town Oicha, we supported another 280 children who had lost one or more parents. This program pays their school fees, provides school uniforms and textbooks, food for them and their families, and trauma counselling. Please take a look at the 5-minute videos on our YouTube channel, of some of the children talking about the impact of the program:

<https://youtu.be/NC9S7wn4qyE?si=pB81XNctEEggWREo>

https://youtu.be/qom7iNHH8xA?si=7ku2QMjwRBQPcu_o

We hope you will be encouraged by the changes in these children's lives as a result of our support. Thank you very much to all of you who give to enable this work.

Some testimonies from various children interviewed:

How has your life changed since being in school?

"At school I am happy when I write, count, read and play." "What has changed is my behaviour, reputation and character." "I know how to write, express myself and break the cycle of ignorance." "School has taken me off the streets." "School has helped me distinguish what is good and what is bad."

How would school fees have been paid without the help of Friends of CME?

"I don't know how I would be paying. I would not be in school. Relatives always tell me if there is no support, I would stop going to school. When they pay my school fees, I feel at peace."

How have the counselling sessions helped you and your family?

"I do not spend my time walking around. I have stopped stealing. I am no longer disobedient." "They teach us about the healing of inner wounds through the cross of Jesus." "Today I am no longer a stubborn girl. I no longer freeze or cry as I used to. Even if someone provokes me, I do not keep my anger for long." "I wondered if God was a loving God why he allowed my father to go missing. After 4 months of teaching, I understood that God loves us indeed."

As we approach the start of a new school year, we are pleased to say that we believe we will have sufficient funds to continue all our work with children at Nyankunde and Beni/Oicha for another year. We won't know for a few more weeks how many children will be in the school programs. For those of you who pray, please commit these vulnerable ones to God's care. They live with almost constant fear of further militia attacks. Last year, there was an attack in Oicha where 26 people were killed one night. It resulted in 9 children from our program disappearing – we don't know if they were killed, captured or ran away. Pray that many more of the children will find hope, peace and forgiveness like those in these videos.

New Project for University Studies

It has been 8 years since we started the schools program in Beni and Oicha. This year, for the first time, some of the children took their final secondary school exams. We have been very encouraged that some of the children have expressed a desire and hope to go onto further education at university. As Trustees, we have been in discussion with a Christian University in Beni (*pictured below*) about whether we can help some of them (and/or their family members) to attend courses there. The University's values and goals are 'to train well-equipped Christians, men and women, for the transformation of their respective communities and the DR Congo nation.'



We have established criteria for the students, in collaboration with the University – academic, moral and spiritual – and have offered places to three students to start this month. We will pay the fees, accommodation, food, and necessary equipment for them to study and furnish their accommodation (beds, tables, and solar panel to provide electricity for their computers). The average cost is about £1,200 a year – nearly £5,000 for the four-year course.

The University has agreed to keep a close pastoral eye on the students

since it will be a big transition for them. This is a really exciting project, not just for the young people themselves but also for the future of DRC. If it works out, we hope and pray that it will develop skilled, well grounded, mature, wise, and God-fearing women and men who will take on leadership roles in DRC. *(Photo right: two of the students we are supporting)*

You can find out more about the students in this 12-minute video. Unfortunately, some of the students did not pass their exams but from the three who did we are supporting are Aphia, Justin and Kambale:



<https://youtu.be/OWq3PaDZdVY?si=MW2YNQBjQXXuhU9q>

If you would like more information about this, please let us know. We hope to support more students in future years and will need financial support to do this.

Website Update

We have recently updated our website to try to make it more informative and with regular news updates. Please check it out: www.friendsofcme.org. You will see our latest accounts and information on our major projects outlined above.

Thank you as always for your interest and support,

Chris, Justin, Remy, Hannah and Chris
The Trustees