

CONGO REPORT

An update on news from the Democratic Republic of Congo, WEC Congo and from its related church, CECCA 16. Address: wicongo@pastornet.net.au

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Women and Children Suffer Most in Kivu Chaos

Reports from North Kivu indicate that incidents of rape have escalated and children are being recruited as soldiers in increasing numbers.

UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has told the Security Council that both the Congo government and rebel soldiers have carried out arbitrary executions, mass killings, rape and torture.

Women

Even before the current conflict, Congo's rape problem was considered the worst in the world.

An article from the IRIN (a UN news service) included in this *Congo Report* on page 2, says that there were 5000 cases reported in the first 6 months of this year in North Kivu, before the current rebellion broke out. Reports indicate this rate has increased sharply since the recent conflict. The IRIN report is notable for the fact that it mentions the work of HEAL Africa which is led by Dr Jo Lusi and his wife Lyn, who are well known to Congo Weccers and CECCA 16.

Children

Infants are succumbing to illness, as they and their mothers shelter under tarpaulins, and are often without adequate nutrition.

Most schools in Rutshuru territory, north of Goma, have been forced to close due to the conflict, leaving an estimated 150,000 children out of class. Mid November IRIN reported that since violence intensified at the beginning of the month, 85 percent of the 310 schools in the territory had suspended classes, while school buildings had been occupied by displaced civilians and the Congolese army.



Children play on a wall in a camp for displaced people while they wait for food aid. Photo from BBC website

Increase in Numbers of Child Soldiers

IRIN report of 11 November (IRIN):

“As fighting continues in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), child recruitment by rebels in the combat zones has been reported, UN and human rights activists have said.

“Thirty-seven children were recruited in Rutshuru [north of Goma] two weeks ago,” Jaya Murthy, spokesman for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), told IRIN.

Children separated from their families were more at risk, he said. The boys were forced to fight while the girls became "wives" to the soldiers.

"There has been an upsurge in the number of children being recruited since the latest violence began," Ishbel Matheson, spokeswoman for Save the Children, said. The NGO was taking care of several children who had escaped recently from the armed groups.

An estimated 3,000 children were being held by the armed groups before the recent violence broke out, she said, but numbers were expected to soar.

The BBC reported on 12 November:

Forced recruitment of child soldiers is nothing new in DR Congo, but Save the Children's Beverley Roberts believes the armed militia groups are now targeting entire schools or groups of students.

"We know that they're being used as porters; that's very clear. We have reports of children having to transport arms right now. That's very disturbing," she says.

"Unfortunately also you'll have the children sexually abused in these groups. Those are clearly some of the worst cases and then yes they are used as fighters, they might be trained as fighters - all sorts of uses. I mean you can only imagine."

UN News Service Reports on Christian Ministry to Rape Victims

NAIROBI, 19 November (IRIN) - Soaring insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has raised fears of a new wave of sexual violence in a region termed "the worst place in the world to be a woman" by aid workers.

During the first six months of 2008, there were more than 5,000 reported rape cases in the flashpoint province of North Kivu, according to data collected by doctors at health centres. The true figure is likely to be far higher, as women are too traumatised or afraid of stigma to seek help.

One hospital specialising in sexual violence in Goma capital of North Kivu, [HEAL Africa], admits on average four women a day - making more than 18,000 since it opened in 2003.

In neighbouring South Kivu, the UN reported 27,000 sexual assaults in 2006. It is impossible to say how many cases there have been across the country but based on anecdotal evidence, doctors say numbers are rising.

With the recent surge in fighting between the government army and rebels led by renegade general Laurent Nkunda, many more women - and some men - will likely have fallen victim to Congo's notorious reputation for the use of rape as a weapon of war.

"Common pattern"

"They came after it was dark when we were hiding in the house; they forced open windows and shone torches inside," one 45-year-old woman told IRIN in Rutshuru, 90km north of Goma, as she lay recovering from being raped by a man she said was a rebel soldier.

"They told us to open the door or they would break it down and kill everyone inside. What could I do?"

She was forced to the ground by two soldiers. Her husband, 52, was dragged to the floor and the muzzle of a rifle pressed to his head.

"They said they wanted money. I took one of them into the bedroom and gave them US\$50, which we had borrowed from a friend so that we could run away from the fighting.

"He took that and then he raped me. He stopped halfway and went outside to tell my husband that he would be shot if he moved."

The woman, who refused to be identified for fear of reprisals, said doctors had told her she would recover. When she spoke to IRIN, two days after her attack on 30 October, she could barely move.

"This is not going to be an isolated case," said Joseph Ciza, who helps to run the HEAL Africa hospital for victims of sexual violence in Goma.

"Whenever there is fighting, there are attacks on women. Those attacks reduce when the armies are actually in battle, but once that stops and they settle into their new positions, the rapes will start. It is a common pattern."

Women have reported a surge of sexual violence in the past fortnight in Kibati, the village 12km north of Goma that lies just south of the frontline

but which has been swamped by displaced people fleeing fighting.

"There are two women living in the shelter next to me who were taken as they looked for bananas in the fields," said Angelique Bendanduka, 32, in Kibati. "They are not the only ones. Many women are being attacked here by the government soldiers. The soldiers also steal food we have been given by aid workers."

Education is key

There is almost no safety for such women in the midst of conflict. Judicial systems are weak even in peace-time. Police officers can be bribed by those accused of carrying out rapes, and women fear being stigmatised.

"This has to one of the worst places in the world to be a woman," said Martin Hartberg, protection adviser in Goma for Oxfam.

"We have heard reports from every single woman in some villages that they have suffered some kind of sexual abuse in the last five years. It is as if rape has become ingrained into the culture of these armed groups, and it is very difficult to turn that tide without overall security reform in this country."

A new constitution adopted in 2006 clarified definitions of rape and sexual attacks, and introduced a 20-year minimum sentence for those found guilty.

But few women have the money to prosecute, and the judicial system is too riddled with corruption to effectively stamp out the culture of impunity. "Getting rid of the men roaming the countryside with guns is the only way to stop it," Hartberg said.

Ciza is more optimistic, however. "It is simple what has to be done - everyone must be taught that women have value and human rights," he said.

"If that happens, then militia commanders can teach it to their recruits, children will grow up knowing that rape is bad, things can change. But it will take a long time. We have already come so far in the wrong direction."

WEC missionaries in Bunia Drs Philip and Nancy Wood, have written: "Please pray for our friends Dr Jo and Lyn Lusi whose hospital Heal



As the crisis developed the work of HEAL was also featured in a report by France Television.

Africa is in the middle of Goma and at last count had their usual 180 patients and 127 wounded, mostly raped."

You can follow the situation in and around Goma and the work of HEAL at <http://healafrika.org/cms/news/heal-africa-staff-journals> . Donations can be made to Heal Africa via their website. Many women need fistula operations and many are infected by HIV as a result of rape.

If you have a good connection speed the photo documentary *The Rape of a Nation*, by Marcus Bleasdale on <http://www.mediastorm.org> is excellent.

Concern About Rebels in Southern CECCA Area

Maud Kells has been very busy since her return to Mulita with lots of construction work, church work and Bible School.

She says there here was a bit of trouble in the main nearby town of Punia, when the UN troops were stoned and chased out of town but all is quiet now. [Elsewhere Congolese have been unhappy with UN troops who were not intervening to protect them].

She also reports that they have been asked to put blockages on the airstrip to prevent 'enemy planes' landing. They were removed for the MAF flight early in November, which brought the rest of her luggage and cement.

She asks prayer for the troubles in the Goma area and that it will not spread east to the CECCA area. Mulita is about 300 km west of Goma.

Update on Ibambi Bible School

Pastor Kokyakake reported on Ibambi Bible School on November 22:

There are currently 52 couples, one single and 197 children.

Projects accomplished since September 2008:

- Construction of 10 mud walled, leaf roofed houses for student accommodation and six leaf roofs repaired.
- Rearing of 52 chickens with the hope of having 150 in July 2009
- Stones, sand and gravel provided by the students as the local contribution for the foundations of two classrooms and office for the school
- The foundation of two classrooms and one office was completed. The construction of the walls will begin in one week's time.
- Courses are given each day except Saturday and Sunday. The students do Christian Service each Sunday in local churches.

Matters of Prayer

- There are many cases of sickness among the students and their children because of inadequate nutrition. This brings considerable debts for medical treatment.
- The daily basic needs of the students
- The majority of the students' children do not go to school because of inability to pay school fees.
- The need of machetes, hoes, axes, spades and metal files to encourage and facilitate the agricultural work, so as to fight against malnutrition.
- The urgent need for a lighting system for study and evening meetings. (Battery and accessories, electric cord. \$US350)
- Need of seed: different varieties of beans (\$US100)

'Bwana Devi' Goes to Heaven



David Davies, former missionary with WEC Congo for 27 years and known on the field as 'Bwana Devi' passed away on Sunday 16 November. He was 98. His wife Annie passed away in February this year at the age of 97.

Nephew and former International Director of WEC, Evan Davies, wrote this tribute to him:

DAVID DAVIES - SAINT, SOLDIER, PREACHER, SCHOLAR, AUTHOR AND INTERCESSOR

There was something special about David Davies. His love for Jesus invaded all of his life. He was not the flamboyant type who threw his Christianity at you but there was an aura of saintliness about him. He just loved to talk about his Lord. To stay in his humble home was a privilege. Every day started and finished with time in the Word even when his eyes were failing. He loved getting news of what God was doing and fed his soul on the triumphs of the crucified Jesus. It was a normal life full of fun and on the wavelength of young people but infected with what Jesus could do in anybody's life.

God laid hold of him as a young man and after time in Bible College and helping to build WEC's Hostel in London, it was off to the Congo in the years after C. T. Studd's death. God gave him real fluency in languages and he soon started preaching and teaching and seeing people coming to faith in Jesus and grow in grace. He became a powerful preacher almost to

the end of his life with a lovely ability to expound God's word in ways that blessed many. In later years students and staff at the Bible College of Wales were touched by his gentle life and scholarly teaching.

the world for family, friends, missionary colleagues, Congo Christians and people he had just heard of. For my wife and me it was a lovely learning experience in the school of prayer.

He was a man of many gifts and his building skills enable him to oversee the construction of a grand church building at Wamba. But as well as having tradesman's skills he showed aptitude for writing and became the author of various books in Congo languages including a version of

Pilgrim's Progress which influenced the lives of many Christians. Because of his language skills he translated various booklets and made them available to Congolese believers. The events surrounding Congo's independence and their involvement pushed him into writing for a wider audience the stories of the suffering believers and fellow missionary Winnie Davies.

The Congo Revival in 1953-54 touched his life deeply. The story of his experience was shared with audiences in many places and left a trail of blessing. It was so very real to him and he loved remembering the events as he told them in chapter four in *The Spirit of Revival* (formerly *This is That*). As he said 'It is impossible to record everything. We could fill pages with testimonies.'

He and his dear wife loved praying. Every day ended with prayer. Not for them was the pessimism often seen in older Christian workers who kept yearning for 'the good old days'. David and Anne were up to date in what God was doing today and with vibrant faith they prayed for God's work. Even though David complained of losing his memory in later years, yet when he prayed he remembered everything and everybody and for 20 minutes he would pray around



Congo missionaries returning to the UK in 1964. David Davies (centre) and Annie (far right) were rescued by mercenaries who had to fight Simba rebels to get to them. Their son Glyn is between them.

We will miss him but he is at home now with Jesus and Annie.

For him the words are true 'I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.'



On the banks of the Nile, 1937

News of Retired Congo Weccers

David and Margaret Waller celebrated their Golden wedding anniversary on 26th November

Celia Pullen is feeling back to good health but has been told that the arteries around the heart are narrowing and she therefore needs her blood pressure and cholesterol to be lower.

Yes We Can!

From time to time in Congo Report we like to present a church project to which readers might like to contribute. There are many needs in CECCA and most of us would not have the ability to meet any of them individually. Also many small gifts going to many large projects may not produce much result. So, under the heading of 'Can We Help?' we have presented a few projects and we have seen the Lord help us work together to accomplish them. Since the hopeful response of 'Yes, we can!' has caught on recently in the United States, I thought I would present this one under that heading!

The project of the Gamba hospital is coming to another stage. The German Christian agency Hilf fur Bruder (HfB) has again generously given \$US9,500 for the 'finishing' of the building – the final aspects of completing the construction.

Dr Omelabati, who is in charge of the project, has written about it:

"You might be wondering why we have the project of the construction of Gamba hospital. Our CECCA medical department was created by WEC missionaries to reach sick people and those around them with the gospel through medical care.

"Of all our CECCA 16 medical buildings in three provinces of Congo only Gamba is in an urban area. All the rest are in rural locations. We are aware that CECCA 16 has not done urban evangelism well. This is where we find certain segments of the population like soldiers, political figures, students and others.

"This was why, in 2004, we came up with the idea of increasing our capacity. Our existing facilities meant that men, women and children were cared for together, with problems of modesty, comfort and quality of care. As well as this the State had decided that our hospital would

become a Secondary Hospital [an upgrade from Primary].

"So from a situation of having no resources and starting with some gifts from missionary friends in England and France who gave me \$550, and our small local contribution, we began – despite the total cost we were facing being \$36,465. 'The just will live by faith' and faith is what we had when we began this project without means of our own but for the spread of the gospel and the glory of God.

"It is true that we have had a lot of difficulties in the progress of the project because of lack of funds. It was planned to take 12 months but here we are 24 months down the track and it is still not concluded. But we have not lost our faith.

"The project has 3 phases

1. Construction of the building
2. Equipping the building
3. Toilets to the level required by the State."

With the latest gift from HfB the first phase will be completed. They are now be entering Phase 2.

The Project: Beds

We are presenting the project of the 28 beds needed in Phase 2. They cost \$US75 (about £50 sterling or \$A115) each. This could vary with exchange rate changes and price changes in Congo. Donors might like to give one or more beds, or even part of a bed.

Gifts may be sent to WEC International in any sending base country. Write if you need an address.



Sick Congolese in a hospital. Dr Omelebatu wants to provide adequate care in the new Gamba hospital.