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Hofers in Lubumbashi

April 2014

Dear friends, greetings from Lubumbashi where we serve as Global Ministries missionaries. Daria is assigned as a technical assistant for the South Congo Health Board, Roman works as a project coordinator for projects supported by the Swiss mission board, Connexio, and the two Jamaa Letu orphanages in Lubumbashi that are mainly supported by the Pacific/Northwest-Conference. We are thankful for your support which allows our mission service. In the last few months many things have happened. It's about time to let you know what we have been up to...



The children of the nutrition program in Kamina are excited about the visit

Connexio visit

In November we hosted a delegation from Connexio, the Swiss mission board. During nearly two weeks, we visited different communities and projects in the Congo. The journey went from Lubumbashi to Kolwezi over Mulungwishi and continued to Kamina and Kabongo. In all these places there are long-standing relations between

the UMC in the Congo and Connexio or communities of the Swiss UMC. These relations were revived and reinforced during the visit.

The group stayed in church guest houses and in this way could take part directly in the lives of the Congolese people, including poor internet connections, regular power cuts and partly without running water. It is surprising, however, that electricity and water in some houses just suddenly worked when the important visitors arrived...



Copper miner with a valuable find in Kolwezi

For us, however, this visit also offered a unique opportunity to visit one of the biggest copper mines in Kolwezi. The Congo is one of the most resource-rich countries of the world. Mining

In a Nutshell:

- ✓ In November we hosted a delegation from Connexio, the Swiss mission board
- ✓ Contrary to the laws of Congolese gravity Daria organized a training for the newly formed health boards
- ✓ Daria's parents visited us around Christmas and got to know the Congo with all its facets!
- ✓ We slowly see the fruits of our work and are grateful for it.
- ✓ We expect a new addition to our family and will be in Switzerland from mid-June to mid-September



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products have been major export commodities for decades and are found in power lines, in computers and mobile phones. In Katanga province huge deposits of copper, cobalt, uranium and other strategic minerals are present and are mined increasingly by foreign investors with capital-intensive methods.

We were allowed to talk to local artisanal diggers, who look for the ore by hand. These mostly young, unmarried men search abandoned mines for copper-containing stones in order to earn a modest living. They work under very dangerous conditions, as neither them nor the digging grounds are secured in any way. And often children help with in the extraction of the ore.

In addition to these valuable insights into the various Congolese worlds it did us good to once again spend time with Swiss people and to show them a part of our lives and daily work.

Health Board Training

Shortly after the Swiss delegation left, Daria plunged into the final preparations for the training of two newly formed Health Boards.

As a technical assistant to the South Congo Health Board, she was responsible for organizing the venue, accommodation, meals, transport and social program for nearly 40 people. It was a lot of fun, but also challenging. Especially when three days before the conference started the reservation of the venue was canceled with fishy explanations... With the help of her local colleagues they found a much better alternative within a few hours. Praise God!

The aim of the training was the orientation of the newly formed Health Boards of the South Congo and North Katanga Episcopal Areas on the tasks, responsibilities, and organizational structures.

Further on how to do a needs analysis and a strategic plan for all health centers and hospitals of the United Methodist Church within the dioceses. With this workshop, which was largely taught by UMCOR Headquarter staff, a great deal of capacity building of the Health Boards could be done. The goal of these trainings are to equip the local Health Boards with tools to be able to set their health priorities, to know how to communicate them to possible donors (like Imagine no Malaria or Global Fund) and to finally implement different health programs..

The atmosphere was very good during the workshop. The participants were all very motivated and committed to participate.



All participants of the Health Board training

Visit of Daria's Parents and Vacation

In mid-December Daria's parents came to visit. And the Congo showed itself from the stereotypical side: Just half of the suitcases arrived, no electricity and no water at home, so "yeah" for generator and bucket shower. Karibu sana ya Congo - Welcome to the Congo!

They handled the situation gracefully (except a little theatrical performance in the Kenya Airways

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office) and enjoyed the time in and around the house and especially with hours of playing with Jael.

On a little trip to Mulungwishi they could also see the mission station and health center. Exciting for a former doctor and nurse. But to see the difference between the Congolese and Swiss health system reality was a big chunk for them to digest...

Oh, and between Christmas and New Year you are better off staying out of the way from the road police. During this time, they are particularly eager for "small" tips...

Together, we then traveled to South Africa for holidays. Again, a very different reality. We were impressed with how everything worked, apparently without much corruption. For us it was a wonderful experience.



Grandfather with granddaughter on the beach of St. James

Where to go?

Shortly after our holiday in South Africa Jael suffered again from high fever and the malaria diagnosis was positive. We felt quite helpless because it was the 5th time in a year that Jael

seemingly had malaria. But this time, Jael did not respond to the prescribed medication. In addition, she had practically gained no weight due to the many diseases since our coming to the Congo a year ago. We felt the enormous responsibility we have for Jael and thought seriously about ending the whole Congo "adventure" prematurely.

Following discussions with Connexio and our local superior, Bishop Katembo, we opted for a short stay in Switzerland to let Jael be thoroughly checked by Medical Doctors. We just wanted to make sure we do not miss anything...



Jael enjoys spending time with her godmother in Switzerland

With the generous support of friends we were able to fly to Switzerland within a few days and do all medical investigations. The result was reassuring: the doctors did not see any negative effects of malaria infections and Jael is generally in good health. So we were very relieved. For the future, we need to continue to take malaria prophylaxis and use malaria rapid diagnostic tests to detect an infection. We will have to see how we cope with this situation in the future.



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Meanwhile, Jael stuffed herself with Swiss food and enjoyed every day that she could play in the park and with old playmates. We realized that one can move around much more freely in Switzerland; an incredible feeling...

We were also able to use the time to meet some of our family and friends. This exchange was food for the soul and gave us new strength for our work in the Congo!

Back in Congo, we were very warmly received by the people of the church, the office and friends. It was also a kind of "coming home". And our local Bishop thought we would never come back. So we surprised him positively. ☺

Mama Sarah

Just recently, Jael has received a new nanny. Mama Sarah is our new household help. She has a lot of experience, as she has previously worked with German missionaries of the Lutheran Church. She takes a lot of time to play, sing and paint with Jael. We noticed that Jael is doing better. She seems happier and also developing well.



Mama Sarah with Jael

Project Work

Our work is slowly bearing fruit. We are glad that in the coming years Connexio will support the renovation of the solar panel system at Kabongo hospital as well as the sale and distribution of Bibles in the Kiluba language. Both are new projects in the strongly crisis-ridden Diocese of North Katanga.



The hospital in Kabongo gets new solar panels

At the two Jamaa Letu Orphanages the two directors are successfully creating awareness in the local community and church and start raising funds locally. The boys have finally received all their furniture that was prioritized: 30 chairs, 5 tables for the dining room, 8 wardrobes for the dorms and 2 shelves for the kitchen. But there is still more to buy on their list... In both orphanages we have worked out good solutions to improve the fresh water supply. New systems are in place and being improved right now since the rainy season is ending soon.

Now also the first positive effects of repeated discussions and trainings can be seen in the improved quality of annual reports, which arrive in the office. We are grateful that it is now slowly



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moving forward after a year of our commissioning.

Work with the Health Board still has potential. It is sometimes frustrating that cooperation is hampered by seemingly small things like lack of communication. Like this, a funding application for 100,000 USD for the fight against malaria has not been submitted on time because the internet connection in Kapanga, where one of the coordinators of the Health Board works, was down for several weeks (and still is).

But there are also positive experiences regarding the work of the Health Board: In the coming months a container with highly needed medical equipment, such as ultrasound devices and surgical instruments should arrive from the United States. In the coming weeks, a meeting of the South Congo Health Board should take place to finalize the strategic plan of the Episcopal Area as well as the finalization of the bylaws. And then there are small bright lights such as the facilitation of a meeting between a Methodist doctor and the coordinator of the national malaria control program at the provincial level to discuss a possible cooperation in the research of the applicability of malaria rapid diagnostic tests.

Family Expansion

In mid-July, we expect a new addition to the family. That's why we will be travelling to Switzerland for the birth. We also want to use the time for church visits, where we can talk about our work and our lives in the Congo. So it will be another two years before we come to the United States to itinerate.

We wish you a blessed and happy Easter! Thank you for your support.

Daria, Roman and ...um... Jael with her beloved cat Peter ☺



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Projects: #3021071 Jamaa Letu Girls Orphanage, #3021034 Jamaa Letu Boys Orphanage, #3021036 Child Action Initiative, #00596A Samuteb Memorial Hospital in Kapanga, #14433A Katanga Methodist University