

C O N G O W A R

NOVEMBER 5, 2008

CONGO HEADLINES:

- **Eastern Congo's humanitarian crisis of "catastrophic proportions" worsens in danger and instability as the war and exodus of thousands continues.**
- **CNDP is the rebel group led by Rwanda-supported General Nkunda, who claims to protect Tutsis and whose express intention is to topple the government. The Mai Mai militia has taken up arms against CNDP for the towns of Rutshuru and Kiwanja.**
- **Kenya will host a summit with Congo's neighboring leaders, facilitated by UN Chief Ban Ki-Moon, even as Rwanda denies involvement in the war.**

Gulula is 6 years old and has two brothers and two sisters. The innocent little girls were playing together in their home last week when, in a moment, their lives were altered forever. They found a grenade in their yard, and thinking it was a toy, they played with it until the grenade exploded in their faces. The two oldest have severely burned their faces and arms; Gulula's eyes were burned, and the scars on her face will change her look forever. Although the mother showed up immediately with all three girls, by the time we were able to visit them at HEAL Africa this week, only Gulula remained at the hospital. Between two hospital cots in the crowded post-operating room, she sat

shyly hugging her knees, motionless. The stiff, fluid-hardened gauze clung to her face like a cast, rendering her expressionless. Many attempts at connecting with her finally earned me her little, scarred hand, which she allowed me to hold as we talked with her mother. Annifa, the HEALing Arts manager, asked the woman where the Gulula's sisters were. The mother looked down, ashamed, and whispered in a sunken voice, "We can only afford to pay for one of our daughters to have medical treatment, so we had to send the older girls home." We asked what the rates were, at which she responded the insurmountable amount per girl, \$5 per day. Stunned, I thought about what \$5 per day meant to most of us in

the developed world and my heart was suffocated even further. I looked into Gulula's soft eyes through the blood-stained gauze and almost wept before them in the crowded, smelly room full of suffering victims. Gently, we explained to the mother that HEALing Arts had an Emergency Fund that would pay the cost for her other two girls to receive treatment for their burns immediately. I also explained that HEALing Arts has a school where her girls can continue studying as they heal, and that she can learn to sew at our Sewing and Weaving School. The mother could hardly believe all we were telling her, but her smile was big and her handshake was strong as we said good-bye.

KIBATI REFUGEE CAMP, OVER 25,000 PEOPLE'S NEW "HOME"

Only 4 miles north of Goma, there is a refugee camp that is speedily becoming a city. Already there are over 25,000 people, and more are fleeing there even today. Nkunda, who has requested peace talks with an uncooperative government, took over two more nearby towns even as he proclaims internationally that he wants security for the people. His troops overtook a couple large refugee camps and burned them to the ground after everyone fled. Their message is clear: the people are not welcome back to their home regions. These impoverished refugees have had to run yet again, this time to a small camp called Kibati, which is already overflowing with people, so much so that they are

sleeping outside, on the ground, in the rain, and with no protection. Kibati is a sanitation nightmare, and there is no food or drinking water outside of what is being trucked in. As our Samaritan Purse workers told us, "Kibati is a ticking time-bomb, and as of yet, there is no one taking responsibility for the camp's organization." They sadly commented that as they were taking notes for their projects, people ran up to them, begging to be enlisted in the name registration so that they could be reunited with their families! So many people have arrived there that 3 churches and 2 schools are already under construction.

Families displaced by North Kivu Conflict. (Photo by—Hortense, Nov08)



DONATION UPDATE

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that our friends Prince and Innocent, local Goma musicians, had been in a difficult position when their father was shot in the leg by a stray bullet. We saw them at the hospital today, and they recounted to us how they had been sitting in their house, trying to eat supper amidst the ringing gunshots, and their father leaned over to pick something up. As he stood up again, a bullet pierced through their thin plank walls and entered his leg- exactly in the place where his head had been a split second before! They thank God for his protection and all of you for your support of their family through HEALing Arts. Prince's father was walking slowly today with a cane, and his medical treatment helps him access medications. To date, we have officially received \$1,100, with promises of more to come. Thank you for your support of people like Prince's father and Gulula and her sisters. Five dollars a day sure goes a long way!

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF SECURITY IN GOMA?

We returned to Goma on Monday, happily greeting the women at the transit center and visiting the new patients at the hospital. Things feel calm overall, despite the constant presence of UN soldiers every few hundred yards, and the armed tanks that roar by. Shipments from the Red Cross and other aid organizations have started arriving in large semi-trucks. Everyone leaves work with plenty of time to be home before dark.

Things had looked more hopeful, but yesterday President Kabila rejected to participate in peace talks with rebel general Nkunda, because his CNDP armies had re-taken two towns and terrorized tens of thousands of people. For two days, CNDP has been fighting with the Mai Mai militia. We all wait to find out what will happen. We wanted to go 10 km away to visit Grounds for Hope, HEAL Africa's transit center for long-term

To donate:

Send us an email with the amount of your donation prior to mailing a check at cristina.m.edelstein@gmail.com. This allows us to approve funds for food relief and pre-approve medical procedures in a timely manner. You can send funds in one of two ways:

- 1.) Write checks out to HEAL Africa with "HEALing Arts- EMERGENCY FUND" written in the memo. Mail checks to Harper McConnell at P.O. Box 147, Monroe, WA 98272.
- 2.) Donate online at www.healafrika.org/cms/participate/donations and designate to "HEALing Arts."

fistula patients, but were warned against it. The next-door massive government's army base has spilled over with soldiers who have been stealing passing vehicles and motos (motorcycles). We are thankful that a wall was recently finished there to protect these vulnerable women. The gate was built with funds from *Upper Room* and *Souls in Stride*.

In Goma, we are thankful for the 17,000 UN troops that are keeping us safe. Thank you for continuing to fight with us through advocacy in your government!



Top picture- City of Goma

Bottom picture- Democratic Republic of Congo Map with "area of detail showing war zone"

Child at HEAL Africa Hospital. (Photo by—Hortense, Nov08)



HEAL Africa's mission is to provide holistic care for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo: training health professionals, strengthening social activists and providing physical, spiritual and social healing. HEAL Africa operates out of Goma but actively works in the warring rural areas of North Kivu and Maniema, reaching and serving hundreds of thousands of people who would otherwise have no medical care.

HEAL + AFRICA
HEALING Arts
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PROVIDING HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE TO THE PEOPLE
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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