

Jim Walker's Congo Recap.2

Cedarbrook is part of the Congo Clinic Initiative (CCI), which is a fifteen year program to improve the 108 clinics which comprise the healthcare system overseen by the Congolese Covenant Church. As a church, we committed to give \$10,000 per year for five years, and have completed three years. Supporting this effort continues to be one of our choices with our Advent Conspiracy offerings each December.

These clinics are run by a nurse practitioner and several helpers. They meet the day to day healthcare needs of their village, but they also do short-term hospitalizations, deliver babies, and even do C-section births. Our support helps cover the cost of medications and supplies and the salaries of the workers. One important project of the CCI is installation of solar lights and solar refrigerators, now nearing completion. Imagine the difference delivering a baby in the middle of the night with a solar light rather than a gas lantern. Your contributions have made this possible.

When Cedarbrook joined the CCI, I asked if we could support the clinic of Phillipe, a nurse who was in my class three years ago. When we were asked to support a different clinic, I was disappointed. But God has a way. Before I left for Congo in September, Remy wanted to know exactly which clinic we are supporting. It is called Takaya.

Because our goal is to train the Congolese doctors and nurses to train the other providers, I asked that the best students from three years ago be included in this years training. I asked for Phillippe, and he, along with four others were part of this training. They again proved to be excellent. And I learned that two years ago Phillippe had been transferred to a new clinic...Takaya. I can assure you that the clinic we support is staffed by a great nurse.

Four years ago, Cedarbrookers were given the opportunity to support a Congolese child through Covenant Kids Congo, a joint effort of the Covenant Church and World Vision International. About fifty Cedarbrook families have been supporting children. In total, 12,500 children are supported in Gemena, the city we flew into in Congo. The program has provided clean water, schools, and medical care for these families.

Three years ago, and again on our recent trip, our daughter Julie and I were able to visit the children our families sponsor, a great privilege. And what we saw this trip can be an encouragement to other Cedarbrookers who have a sponsored child.

Julie's family sponsors Hope, who is now thirteen. World Vision does a great job preparing you to meet your child. Last time they said the kids would probably be shy, but physical contact and hugs were okay. Hope literally ran to Julie and jumped into her arms, fairly emotional for the photographer (me). At this visit, I asked Hope, what her plans for the future were. She said she was planning to be an engineer and work on the Congolese telecommunication system. The head of World Vision said that they are seeing more and more Congolese girls develop this kind of positive view for their future.

Patti and I sponsor Venas, a boy who is now six. He is one of seven children. At our last visit, his father told us that he had to travel 50 miles into the jungle to get food for the family. Bushmeat (monkey) is often how Ebola (disease) starts. Since then, Covenant Kids Congo has provided the family with a pig and currently, a very pregnant goat. Julie and I agreed that Venas' father's countenance was very different than our previous trip.

He seemed much more confident about being able to provide for his family. Covenant Kids Congo is making a difference for your sponsored children.