

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



friends of cme trust

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Dear friends,

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2019.

Ebola

Since our last newsletter, Ebola has continued to haunt the Beni/Sose area where CME operates. While it has recently hit BBC (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-47460288/ebola-in-the-dr-congo-warzone>) and American news, it has now been going on for 9 months and affected daily life in numerous ways. Schools and businesses have been shut and people have been fearful in case they come into contact with those with Ebola. Movement in and out of towns has been subject to temperature checks and washing of hands and shoes.

4 trial vaccines have been used successfully to protect CME staff. In all, nearly 100,000 people in the region have been vaccinated. The latest statistics are: 879 cases recorded; 553 deaths; 229 patients still being treated. Patients have been reluctant to go to hospital in case they have Ebola and are then put in isolation units. Some patients diagnosed with Ebola fled to avoid this, thus potentially spreading the disease.

An area needs to have no new cases of Ebola for 21 days before being declared 'safe'. Sadly, Beni has nearly reached the time period on several occasions but each time a new case has arisen at the 11th hour. Fortunately, there have been no further cases in Bunia since 10th Feb and only one in Nyankunde in late December. It appears that the virus is moving south towards the towns of Butembo and major cities of Bukavu and Goma.

Insecurity

Added to the threat of Ebola has been the continued activities of militia groups. After a prayer rally in Beni in November, arrests were made both in the area and, with the help of the CIA, in Uganda.

After this, for a few weeks the violence subsided. And even with the election result in December being hotly disputed, the region remained generally calm. However, on 5th February, a new attack in Beni resulted in 26 killed one night and residents in that area of the town fleeing. These fleeing included the daughter of our dear friend Daniel Masumbuko. She has gone with her family to Uganda – another attack was just one more too many. And then we heard that on 27th February there was an attack on an Ebola clinic. It is extremely hard to come up with any sensible explanation for such behaviour.



New Paediatric Ward at Sose

As mentioned last time, the new hospital at Sose requested our help in building a ward for children since they have been sharing with adults so far. The estimated total cost is £44,000. We've sent £9,000 to start this process and the photos below show how much has been achieved with these funds. We hope to provide ongoing funding for this important new part of the hospital, so if you can help financially we would love to hear from you.



Oicha orphans

At the last time of writing, the children were in the school holiday period and because of the insecurity, we were uncertain as to how best to support them. Just recently, the schools have re-opened in Oicha and Beni. We acknowledge the bravery of the teachers and counsellors who have put their lives at risk for these children. Costs for this new school year (which started in January and has been extended through August) are just over £19,000 for 210 children – a cost per child of £92. This provides school fees, materials, food and trauma counselling. Unfortunately, to date, many of last year's 315 children have not returned but we can only hope that Ebola will be beaten and peace will prevail so these children can return and re-join the project.

We have just over £21,000 of funds available to support these children which is thanks to you, our supporters. We will be able to help a further 20 children without need for more money.

Here are some photos of some of the the children being helped.



Solar panels

Unfortunately, we heard two weeks ago that a lightning bolt destroyed the solar panel system for electricity at Sose. We provided this system a few years back since patients were very concerned for their safety at night in the dark. We have sent the needed £2,000 to repair and replace the panels.

The darkness caused by the damage to the solar panels is sadly a metaphor for the circumstances in which our friends at CME are having to work. However, your partnership with us to CME is helping to provide some light in that darkness. Conran's book *The Heart of Darkness* is still emblematic of much of DRC but CME continues to shine out in its various good works, reflecting the love of God for all peoples and bringing eternal hope to many. Thank you so very much for your support and concern!

Yours sincerely,
On behalf of the Trustees

Chris Almond

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