

COMMUNIQUÉ

“A Strong Congo Through Education”

November 2017



Research Collaboration on HIV

Research and teaching are at the heart of any university. Hence building research capacity at the Congo Protestant University (UPC) is a key part of Education Congo's (EC) mission. Developing infectious disease research capacity at the University's Medical School began in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University. We have now received funding to extend the malaria research over several years to come.



Logistics for transporting blood samples in Kinshasa can be challenging

Research project #2 is now underway! In partnership with the University of Missouri-Kansas City, UPC is spearheading a project to explore viral strain diversity in Kinshasa, DRC. What does that mean? Viruses are major causes of disease. HIV is an example of a virus that creates an enormous health burden around the world. Twenty health centers have been identified around Kinshasa where blood is being collected daily for analysis. The goal is to collect HIV positive and negative samples.



UPC Med School graduate, Dr. François Tshibaka supervises blood collection



HIV Research Team

The formidable Congo team on this project is made up of five recently-graduated doctors, four of whom are from UPC - Drs. François Tshibaka, Gaetan Bondo, Yves Tshangala, Jonathan Fumunguya and Médard Omayoy; and lab technician, Jeansy Mavinga. The challenges are immense: from power outages to roads in disrepair to lack of supplies at the health centers. The team's commitment to the project is exceptional and we anticipate great success in their work.

Welcome to Communiqué – Education Congo's rebranded newsletter!

Our name change is complete. But we remain committed to A Strong Congo Through Education! Our mission to increase access to and the quality of higher education through scholarships and institutional support includes the Congo Protestant University. Educating Congo's next generation of leaders is accompanied by the obligation to prepare them as socially-responsible citizens whose decisions will have social, political and economic impact on the sustainable development of their country. You are the hope for these young Congolese as they transform their nation for tomorrow.

Our final rebranded newsletter is the result of a partnership between two educational institutions in Congo - UPC and TASOK, the American School of Kinshasa. Since its beginning over 50 years ago, TASOK has been providing possibilities and partnerships. Because the alumni's hearts are still in Congo, many of them are committed members of Education Congo. So, it will come as no surprise that as Education Congo expanded the scope of its work, it asked current TASOK students to help design a new look for our newsletter. The students in the Publications class eagerly plunged right in and shared their talent! TASOK students who contributed to the effort include: Anaya, Anne, Anta, Ingrid, Julio, Malikia, Malkhia, Ruth, Sandy, Sayhaan, Shurui, and Sierra. Merci mingi!



Help us save on postage, send us your email address!

Funding Opportunities

On a visit to Congo in March, Ernie Ross (EC Board Chair) and Phil Kliewer (EC Secretary) were struck by the extent



Ms. Laetitia Bilonda and Ms. Scott Kasongo, interns at Vanga

to which the role of universities in Congolese society has grown. Not only are there more students, but also a broader range of study areas and more graduate programs. For example, faculty at UPC are now working with Johns Hopkins and the University of Missouri on malaria and HIV research. UPC has also

established an MBA program in cooperation with the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management.

These are exciting times which present many new opportunities for the DRC, Education Congo and those of you who have generously supported our work there. When EC was established nearly 20 years ago, its sole purpose was to provide North Americans a means of providing scholarships for UPC students. However, with the expanding role of universities and the developments in Congo, our board has broadened EC's scope beyond scholarships.

Currently, our support of past special projects include UPC associated training hospitals and sustaining the laboratories at the medical school. We are pleased to report that EC is working with the US Embassy in Kinshasa to refurbish the dormitories for interns at the Vanga Hospital that are in desperate need of renovation.

We at Education Congo pledge to identify worthy higher education projects to pursue. We are exploring expanded relationships with North American universities, research and development grants, establishing visiting professor programs and, most importantly, expanding our donor base. Thank you for your attention and generosity.

Rural Hospital Partnership

Founded in 1912, Vanga Evangelical Hospital is located about 10 hours east of Kinshasa in the Kwilu province. Vanga Hospital is committed to building a healthy community by providing high quality medical care. Its medical team

understands that increasing the number of qualified physicians in Congo and improving and modernizing the level of education for the medical students are of the utmost importance.

Training physicians who are committed to devoting their time to the Congolese population in the interior of the country where their skills are needed is an integral part of the Vanga mission. The techniques that the students learn during their training give them the ability to improve and provide more accurate diagnoses. Learning these skills in a context and with limited resources similar to other hospitals in the interior helps them prepare for providing quality care in these hospitals. This school year (2017-2018) Vanga will have 52 medical students doing their final year of medical school training at the Hospital.

One sequence of events is a perfect example of the hands-on training, rural hospitals such as Vanga provide: Born on March 18, 2017 in Vanga, DRC, two little girls and a little boy appeared – all at the same time.

These triplets were ever so tiny. And without an incubator to keep them warm, they were wrapped in blankets and placed between hot water



Triplets born at the Hospital

bottles to keep their body temperature warm. Sadly, the little boy was the smallest of the triplets weighing in at 2.2 lbs and died after only a few days. The two little girls went home after spending a month in the pediatrics ward. Shortly thereafter, one of the baby girls died from malnutrition as the mother did not have enough milk for both of her daughters.

Being exposed to the realities of life in the interior of Congo can be heart-wrenching as in the case of the triplets. But, understanding that those realities exist and having to deal with them helps to create a desire to return and serve

the needs of Congo and her people. The hands-on experience the interns receive in the rural setting is priceless.

Education Congo saw an opportunity to partner with Vanga Hospital and the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa to rehabilitate the housing for these young physicians in-training. Together these



Rehab project - sewer system

(Continued next page)

What Draws Us Back?

by Phil Kliewer

Why do we go back to where we grew up? Perhaps to see what has changed, to see what remains, or to bridge the years, somehow.

I went “back” to Congo recently, and indeed found such bridging of the years as I visited friends, TASOK (my alma mater), Simms’ Chapel, the reinstalled statue of Stanley and



Education Congo Secretary Phil Kliewer at the entrance to TASOK.

other familiar sites from childhood. There were numerous memories after all these years - the gate we passed through at the old lower school to the waiting Combi bus along the road bordering Chanic ship company; hibiscus flowers that Joanie wore in her hair as she padded barefoot across the playing field; Azim’s unreturnable and utterly devastating slam in ping pong; Jim’s python and crocodile in 9th grade biology, at once intriguing and terrifying. So many personal bridges.

But I went back not only for the memories but to check on my investments. I have invested in Education Congo and the TASOK Alumni Scholarship fund to help young Congolese attend university and make a difference. In Vanga I met UPC medical students who have excelled in their theoretical studies, but now demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to improving health in Congo. In Bukavu, I saw students researching ethics in governance and presenting authorities with their findings. I saw students in a lab, testing their own DNA for sickle cell anemia as a way of learning to curb that disease. I saw theology students focused on Peace and Development for healing in a country torn by brutality; social science students learning how to moderate conflict and bring healing; an agricultural program that not only raises pigs and squash, but addresses pollution; and hospitals where medical students learn not only how to perform fistula surgeries for victims of sexual violence but the bedside manners for holistic healing.

Yes, the memories help to bridge the years. But more importantly, my observations of students addressing the pressing issues of Congo overwhelmed me. Since 2014, as a TASOK alumnus committed to Congo, I have participated

in the effort by EC to build the TASOK Alumni Scholarship Fund. My recent trip to the Congo reaffirmed my decision to continue investing in the fund.

To help more young Congolese benefit from a university education, visit EC’s website www.educationcongo.org; click on “Donate”; Under “Gift Information” look for “Named Fund” and select “TASOK Alumni”.

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Rural Hospital Partnership from page 2

partners are committed to provide adequate housing facilities for the female and male medical students with a modicum of safety, hygiene, and comfort to allow them to focus on their patients and their studies.

TASOK Class of 1967 Donation

The American School of Kinshasa (TASOK) graduating class of 1967 held their 50th reunion in July 2017. Class member Roxanne Stixrud Rule is a master quilter and decided to use her talents to honor the memory of three classmates who have passed away: Paul Olson, Richard Tillery, and Mary Jane Hancock. Since Paul was a member of the Board for Education Congo and was instrumental in establishing the TASOK Alumni Scholarship Named Fund for UPC, it seemed like a very logical and heartfelt way to appreciate our friends. Roxanne made a beautiful quilt for a raffle that raised \$1,000 for the TASOK Named Fund. Margie Olson, Paul's wife, pulled the winning name for the quilt that was presented to TASOK alumna Sondra Decker Fruzzetti.



Margie Olson and Roxanne Rule

UPC Changes Lives

UPC shapes people. Its mission is to bring out the best in its students and to transform inchoate personal ambitions



into lives of public service. Testimony to its success in this mission comes not only from Congolese students but also from the few Americans who have attended the university. One of these is former Education Congo Board member Paul Olson who attended in 1969-1970. Paul, son of medical missionaries to the Congo, grew up in the Ubangi and Kinshasa where he graduated from TASOK, the American School of Kinshasa.

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Paul felt drawn back to the Congo during his college years through a desire to understand the country better and to perhaps match his own future work life to the needs of a developing country. By attending UPC classes in anthropology, ethnography and African history, Paul gained an appreciation of the complexities and nuances of Congo's diverse cultures and of Congo's history before and during colonization. Paul also developed a love for Congolese music and would often join local bands in playing his guitar both informally and on stage. Papa Garcia and his Rock'em Band was a particular favorite of his. Hanging out with musicians also helped him learn KiSwahili and perfect his Lingala. Congolese were heard to remark that he spoke Lingala like one of them!

Paul explicitly credits his year at UPC with shaping his decision to become a teacher and administrator in International Schools. This became his life's career as, partnered with his adventuresome wife, Margie, he served at International Schools in Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Senegal, and even his alma mater of TASOK back in his beloved Congo. Among other accomplishments, Paul's skill and patience in successfully evacuating International School staff in one of the last truck convoys out of Kigali during the 1994 Rwandan genocide was recognized by his professional peers. He was awarded the 1994 National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Paul recently passed on but his life of service in international education is a quiet testimony to the power of the kind of public service mission that UPC strives to shape in Congolese and in others. Peace to his memory.

"Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission."

- Henri Nouwen

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