



April, 2010

My Dear Friend,

Six million people have died over the past dozen years in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, which has suffered from Africa's first "world war" – a conflict that has sadly gone all but unnoticed by the wider world. But AE has been working hard in this fractured place to build peace, bring healing and facilitate reconciliation, with Reconciliation Ministries Director Emmanuel Kopwe training up scores of leaders to multiply the peacemaking effect throughout Africa's "Great Lakes" region.



Emmanuel Kopwe

As Emmanuel says, "Many outside organizations and multinationals come into a post-war situation and bring in a lot of physical assistance and humanitarian aid, which is all very necessary and important. However, if we do not deal with the trauma and woundedness of the population, there cannot be sustainable development."

This has sadly been the case in eastern Congo over many years, as various peace treaties have been negotiated and signed, the United Nations has sent in more than 20,000 peacekeepers – currently its largest force in the world – and yet true peace has not come. As the prophet Jeremiah lamented, "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11).



Children in eastern Congo



The violence in eastern Congo has complex roots and has been graphically illustrated by its brutality, especially to women and children. Half of the deaths have been children under five years of age, various militias have used rape as an instrument of warfare and some 500,000 people have been driven from their homes.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide is one of the main catalysts of the wars in eastern Congo, when an army of Tutsi exiles from Uganda invaded Rwanda, seeking to bring a halt to the genocide, and drove the genocidal Hutu militias into neighbouring eastern Congo. In an effort to rid the region of the Hutu militias, the newly installed Tutsi-led Rwandan government supported Congolese rebel leader Laurent Kabila, whose insurgent movement ended up defeating the Congolese army, ultimately deposing the country's long time kleptocratic dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, in 1997. Kabila now ruled a country as large as the U.S. east of the Mississippi and whose capital, Kinshasa, is some 1,200 miles from eastern Congo.



AE is involved in peacebuilding work near Goma, north of Lake Kivu

Shortly after becoming president, however, Kabila split with his Rwandan allies, who then instigated another rebellion in eastern Congo, seeking to purge the region of a Hutu rebel group called the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, which seeks to overthrow the current Rwandan government. According to one expert, “The current fighting is among a shifting kaleidoscope of Rwandan Hutu opponents of Rwandan President Paul Kagame’s government, elements of the Congolese army, and local militias ostensibly defending their turf against all comers. In a huge territory largely outside the control of the Kinshasa government, there is also widespread criminal and warlord behaviour. Underpinning the violence often is a struggle to loot the region of its abundant natural resources.”

As labourers seeking to build Christ’s Kingdom, we in AE of course see the people of eastern Congo as its most important natural resources. And my colleague Emmanuel is uniquely equipped to cultivate the spiritual and relational health of those in eastern Congo who have suffered for too long under the tyranny of conflict.

From our past reports you may know that Emmanuel has spent nearly 15 years investing the peace of Burundi, Rwanda’s neighbour to the south, which also shares a border with eastern Congo and which has experienced violence between Hutus and Tutsis, just as Rwanda has.

Because of his experience and the effectiveness of his work, Emmanuel has received requests from local churches in eastern Congo, which are in the very center of the most horrific violence and atrocities that have occurred during the war, to conduct a series of trauma healing workshops for victims of the war, as well as training of church leaders in peace building and reconciliation initiatives. The aim of these efforts is to make a powerful Gospel contribution to the creation of real peace in the eastern Congo.



Emmanuel would lead four workshops this year assisted by his colleague **David Nkone** (left), as well as AE Congo Team Leader Leonard Kiswangi. The cost of each workshop is \$16,500, which is a very small fraction of the \$1.35 billion the U.N. is spending on its peacekeeping force.

And yet, with your prayers and generous financial assistance, we know that the power of the Gospel working through Emmanuel, David and Leonard can reach far deeper and multiply far more widely to bring the genuine peace which the people of eastern Congo so desperately need. Former rebel leader and Congolese vice president Azarias Ruberwa, along with former education minister Paul Musafiri, have encouraged these initiatives. In fact, when he was still vice president in 2004, Ruberwa took the amazing step of offering an official apology, saying, “I beg the forgiveness of Congolese women for the violence and abuse to which they were subjected during the war.”



Leonard Kiswangi

Please will you pray with us and give unsparingly to help those in Congo who have suffered so much? Thank you for your partnership in this task.



Yours for Peace in Africa,

Stephen Lungu
International Team Leader