



Extracts from Joyce's journal in Republic of Congo:

17 June 2012

Henri was invited to preach at the Pygmy church an hour away. We used that opportunity to do some eye screening and community health testing while we were there. Visiting that village was a humbling reminder of just how poor some people are – 54% of Congolese live below the United Nation's



Photo 1: Eye screening in the village

definition of absolute poverty, i.e. less than USD1 a day. Cherissa (our 7-year-old daughter) came back and prayed: 'Dear God, I am so sad for the people who have no shoes, no food, no clothes, no toys & books. Please help them to live'. In the village, Henri met a man with a horribly infected foot wrapped in the dirtiest of rags. We had a hard time persuading him and his family to come back with us to the hospital for treatment. I was

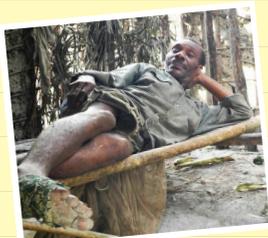


Photo 2 :
Man with the infected foot wrapped in rags

starting to become impatient as our children were growing tired and hungry. Henri asked if our family could pay for their medical, food and travel expenses. I replied, 'What if everybody starts expecting and asking us to help?' Henri answered, 'I don't know but we are going to help this one'. The man came with us for treatment; he got better and went home a few days later. We will not be able to help everybody but on that day, we resolved to help the one in front of us.

26 June 2012

Henri was out running when he saw an old papa pushing his wife in a wheel barrow. He decided to stop to help him push her even though they were heading completely opposite to the direction Henri was going. This was how the couple found out about our eye centre and led to their visit today. Mama Hélène turned out to be blind from cataracts and was dependent on Papa Jerome. We also diagnosed glaucoma and gave her a corresponding treatment. We are so glad we caught her glaucoma in time to avoid it from causing irreversible damage. When we operate on her cataracts, she will be able to see again! This was a powerful lesson for us to remember to stop to care even when we are busy. (NB. 4 in 5 people who are blind are needlessly blind because we can actually do something about it. Most of them can see again through a cataract operation costing as little as #KD625)



Photo 3 :
Papa Jerome pushing Mama Hélène in the wheel barrow



Photo 4 :
Henri treating Mama Hélène in the eye centre

18 July 2012

Insect bites caused me to suffer from a nasty soft tissue infection. For four days, I was bedridden with fever, pain, vomiting and low blood pressure. I would cry for 90 minutes three times a day as I endured the most excruciating injections. This was mostly because we did not have the resources to dilute the antibiotics in the proper way. Some people thought that I was brave. The reality was that I was a chicken. I asked poor Henri to stop the injections even though I knew full well as a doctor that that was the only logical way for me to get better. I asked him to take me back home to England. I was trying to hold onto God's promises, but I would have given up in a flash if it had not been for this.

Some would call it a vision, some a dream, or maybe even a hallucination in my septicaemia. Whatever it was, I saw it. As I received the agonising infusion, I saw one by one, hundreds of our friends, family and partners in our vision to help the blind see in Congo. One smiled, another nodded in affirmation. One cheered, the other one gave me the warmest hug. I realised that my church family was laying hands on me as they lifted me in prayer. Suddenly the continents that separated us no longer existed and we were together. I cannot describe it. It was as if they were only a foot away from me. I found myself carried by a force that I had never known before. Suddenly, my strength returned as Samson's strength returned. I was ready to fight again.

I got better very quickly, at a speed that surprised us. Through this, I learnt to treasure our amazing supporters, life and health, in a way that I have never done before. I am sure that it also made me a better doctor. Above all, this is no longer a theory: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.' (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Thank you for your love and support!

Joyce and her family are pioneering an eye centre in the Republic of Congo. They are passionate about helping people see both physically and spiritually.

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