

New Sight / Samoutou News July 2012: Guinness' Edition

Welcome to the Guinness' Edition of our newsletter where we attempt to break the world's record to fit the largest amount of **great news** in one letter! **It is time to celebrate! Bring on the Party!**

- The **Commencement of our Eye Service**: As our supplies and equipment have yet to arrive, we did not announce the start of our service. Still on the first day, more than 20 patients came. **The need for eye care here is truly desperate!** We receive rewards such as pineapples and live chickens from grateful patients, but nothing compares to the **joy and privilege of looking after the priceless gift of sight!** We are desperate for our tools and medication to arrive so that we can help more people.
- After months of hard work and truth be told, frustration with inefficiencies, bureaucracy and corruption, **6 of our 8 shipments from 5 countries are in our warehouse in the capital!** Yes, they took months but they were actually **accomplished at record speed previously unheard of in Congo!** **None of this would have been possible without the help of some local superheroes – all of whom have never heard of us until we came in April.** It was by a series of 'coincidences' that they heard about us, were touched by our cause and volunteered to help. We thank God daily for them!
- Our donated super-bulky super-fragile super-expensive operating microscope that is essential to sight-restoring surgery has made it all the way from Hong Kong to Brazzaville the capital! The **challenge now lies in safely transporting this 400kg baby along with slit lamps and all our other shipments from the capital to our hospital.** The plane we hoped to commission is big enough but its door is too small. It took **27 days to get just our family's suitcases from the capital and to think that we now need to get hundreds of boxes here!** Watch this space to see God **making a way where there seems to be no way** (There literally are no roads, not even dirt roads, from Brazzaville to here).
- We had the joy of visiting a **Pygmy village** an hour away. Henri was invited to share at the church. We took the opportunity to do some **eye screening and community eye health.** Visiting the village was a humbling reminder of just how poor people are – **54% of Congolese live below the UN's definition of absolute poverty i.e. less than USD1 a day.** **Cherissa 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. Joyce was starting to become impatient as our 3 kids were growing tired and hungry. Henri asked Joyce if our family could pay for their medical, food and travel expenses. **Joyce said, '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. **We will not be able to help everybody but on that day, we resolved to help the one in front of us.**



Man with the leg infection (left) and his family



Pygmy Village Eye screening and Community eye health



Henri teaching his assistant Ghislain

- It is unbelievably difficult to find **nursing staff** in our region as life here, in short, is not easy. Most professionals understandably prefer being in the capital where the standard of living and education for their children are better. **We are delighted to find Ghislain, a young gentle nursing assistant.** Henri has been training him during and after work. He is very keen to learn; compassionate and not unimportantly very good at soccer (Henri says that shows co-ordination promise for him to teach him eye surgery in the future)! Henri and he each scored 3 of the 6 winning goals at the hospital's first football match (yes, Henri wasted no time in starting a team)! Please keep praying for us to **find great people-loving staff as our shipments arrive and we start surgery.**
- We now have the **first construction draft for our eye centre!** Although we have this on paper, it all seems but a very distant dream due to the gigantic problems logistically and financially. Please pray that we will **not be overwhelmed by the enormity of the task** and be able to enjoy **seeing the dream fulfilled step by step by the grace of God with your help and support.**
- There are already **many amazing stories of our patients.** Here is one of our favourites: *One day, Henri was running when he saw an old papa pushing his wife in a wheelbarrow. He decided to stop to help him push her to their destination even though it was completely opposite to where he was going. This was how they found out about our eye centre and came the following week. Mama Hélène turned out to be blind from cataracts and was dependent on Papa Jerome. We also diagnosed glaucoma and gave her treatment. We are so glad we got her in time to stop her glaucoma causing irreversible damage so that when we operate on her cataracts, she will see again!* This was a powerful lesson for us to **remember to stop to care even when we are busy.**



Mama Hélène & Papa Jerome



Cherissa's 7th and Karis' 2nd joint birthday party



The Samoutou Farm & Food Distribution Team

- The Samoutou **Homeschool has started!** **Cherissa** enjoys **learning how to grow vegetables** in our garden and loves **sharing our harvest with patients and families** who are often away from their livelihood and plantations. **Ezra** loves **eating game meat and crocodile** but informed a baby antelope that he would rather pet it than eat it. He **adapted to the heat** the best. During his naps when it is 33°C and there is no fan, he covers himself with a blanket head to toe. **Karis** is often heard **singing happy birthday when there is 'leeLECTicity' cut** and is the fastest **Lingala learner** in our family.
- **We all love our beautiful 2-bedroom house,** which we think is the most luxurious house in town as it is tiled! **We are learning** how to anticipate **water and power cuts,** battle with **termites, spiders, snakes and mosquitoes,** understand the **local culture and dialect,** get on with **ants on our bodies** and bugs on the laptop screens, **cook with limited food supplies on camping stoves** and have fire blankets ready, sieve flour several times to **get rid of bugs to make bread** and treat those that escaped as extra protein in our diet, get used to the **dim lighting** and the **rusty smell in our shower** from the rusty water pipes. **Joyce** wrote in her journal: *<<There may be 1000 reasons why we should not be here, but there*

is only 1 reason why we are here and that is all that matters. >> We are **so thankful** for we truly have been blessed with so much. **What a joy and privilege it is to serve these precious people in Congo!**

- Outside of our work through New Sight, **Henri** has started preaching at the local church and **sharing about God's love with people**. We cannot describe how we felt when blind patients came with their families and we had to sadly tell them that their blindness were amongst the small 20% that were incurable, but then they said yes to Jesus and went away filled with joy and peace! Our family has seen first hand God providing for us every time. The river that our community depended on was drying up and so boats carrying essential supplies could not reach us. **We prayed, it rained and the river rose**. We did not think we could continue our family's Fathers' Day tradition of coca-cola treasure hunt. **We prayed and found 18 cans of coke in the market!** We badly wanted to bake a birthday cake for Cherissa and Karis when the whole town was out of fuel and eggs. **We prayed and had enough fuel to bake a gorgeous eggless cake!** We do not have internet at home but **someone blessed us with a blackberry that has email and Facebook capacity!** Ezra injured his 3 front teeth. **A visiting dentist arrived from the States the same day!** Joyce was very sick. **We prayed, she recovered and had a life-transforming experience which she wrote about in www.newsightcongo.com/rwt-blog-35879**. If you follow us on Facebook (New Sight Congo) or the news feed on our web (www.newsightcongo.com), or better still come visit us, you will **see for yourself how AMAZING this all is!** We are continually amazed by God's overwhelming grace, marvel that He would use us of all people, so thankful for your love, and humbled by your support that mean **EVERYTHING** to us.
- We cannot end this letter without putting in a **CLASSIFIED AD** for help. **We desperately need help with construction, maintenance, logistics, administration, finance, clinical work, child care, education, IT and just an extra pair of hands!** Our hospital is very short of staff. We need all the help that we can get. If you have children, please bring them along. Not only will it be the most wonderful experience for them, it will greatly aid our family's sanity! We thank God for our vet friend Gillian Norbert-Tikun who was our first visitor. She said this about her time with us, *'Every morning I woke up with a great purpose and anticipation of another fruitful day. Every night I went to bed with gratefulness and humility that in Christ there would always be enough... It feels like heaven, with the daily sacrifice of praise orchestrated from the constant rejoicing, thanksgiving, children's laughter and singing'*. **Please don't just think about coming - come! If there is no red or amber light, then it is GREEN LIGHT ALL THE WAY! We'd love you to come!**
- Here are some of our **photo** albums. You do NOT need a facebook account to open them:
 - Album 1 First day in Congo part 1: Brazzaville the capital**
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150803019347554.393525.616262553&type=3&l=ce55c65c79>
 - Album 2 First day in Congo part 2: Impfondo our new home**
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150803062152554.393527.616262553&type=3&l=eb664f97d9>
 - Album 3 Fathers' Day and the Girls' Birthday**
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150874732922554.400692.616262553&type=3&l=c2bfc626ac>
 - Album 4 Aka Pygmy Village, Eye Screening and Community Eye Health**
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150878249167554.401013.616262553&type=3&l=8b63276e7e>

Finally, we must say the biggest **THANK YOU** for your love, care, prayers and support. We long to meet face to face, but for now we will hold you in our prayers as we thank God for you!

Lots of love, Joyce, Henri, Cherissa, Ezra and Karis