

# Emergency Medicine in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Dream and the Necessity

## By Dr. Margaret Loewen, Lamar RC

Greetings! I am an Emergency Medicine physician in Lamar, Colorado. My Rotary Club in Lamar was one of the organizations that financially supported the pilot project for Emergency Medicine Training in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2016. The video "Congo Emergency" that you just saw is a brief documentary of that project. Ken Kobre produced the film and shared it with us for publicity about this project around the world.

Dr. Samuel Mampunza, as Vice-President of Universite Protestante au Congo (UPC), has initiated planning for Emergency Medicine Training for his entire country. The dream is to bring emergency medicine skills, training and integration of emergency medicine practice into the healthcare system of the DRC. The necessity is based on a reality that is shocking. Congo is one of the poorest countries in the world with a population of 80 million, ranked 168 out of 169 on the Human Development Index. In addition, it is at the bottom of two major indices: maternal mortality is 545 per 100,000 births and infant mortality is 9.2%. Life expectancy in the DRC is 48 years.

This project will integrate emergency medicine training into both the undergraduate and postgraduate medical curricula of the UPC using educational resources developed by the African Federation of Emergency Medicine and the World Health Organization. Dr. Mampunza has obtained the support of the DRC's Ministry of Health in the development of its National Emergency Humanitarian Program, in particular the Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy for the District of Kinshasa which has a population of 11 million.



Dr. Muller Mundenga, featured in the video we saw, Emergency Medicine Specialist for HEAL Africa who lives in eastern Congo, is working with the Lamar Rotary Club to write a Global Grant to fund the next phase of the project to be implemented in 2020.

As a result of the political instability and safety concerns for foreigners travelling into the DRC, The Rotary Foundation has designated the DRC as a "no travel country" related to Global Grants. However, given the previous work of Dr. Vera Sistenich with HandUp Congo and her affiliation with the African Federation of Emergency Medicine, the work in Congo will continue **without** foreign specialists traveling into the DRC.

The Kingabwa Club of Kinshasa has already agreed to be the in-country sponsoring Rotary Club. The Global Grant we

are writing will have a total budget of no more than \$100,000. We are going to start small, gain experience with this next phase of the project, we will learn through doing, and find a way to help Dr. Mampunza make his dream of preventing unnecessary deaths in Congo, through the development of Emergency Medicine Training, a reality.

# Emergency Medicine in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Dream and the Necessity (continued) By Dr. Margaret Loewen, Lamar RC



Motorcycle ambulance in DR of Congo

(Conclusion was provided by Dr. Margaret Loewen after the presentation by Dr. Samuel Mampunza, Vice-President Universite Protestante au Congo at The Rotary Zone Institute 2018 for Zones 21B-27 In Boise, Idaho, September 7, 2018)

How can you help? We need clubs to support this project. Please contact me if you are interested in learning more about the project. We are in the process of writing the Global Grant now and need clubs to commit support before we submit the application to TRF. We are appealing for funding from your clubs to be designated for the 2019-2020 program year. My email address: [mjloewen@hotmail.com](mailto:mjloewen@hotmail.com).

You can help us make a difference by saving lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo.