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QUÉ PASA

What's Happening

A Publication of International Children's Care
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Patmos Children's Village Update

Your ongoing support is having a tremendous impact on "His Kids!"

March 1, 2020

Dear Friend of the Children,

As promised in last month's *Que Pasa* newsletter, I wanted to continue sharing an update from the Patmos Children's Village in the DR Congo. There are many things I could tell you about other ICC Children's villages, and I plan to do that in the near future. But, since our visit to Patmos was such an impactful experience, I want you to join me in recognizing God's blessing and providential leading at Patmos.

I continue to praise the Lord for the generosity of ICC family members like you who make it possible for Patmos, and other children's villages, to exist. **You are helping to provide for children whose lives have been torn apart through violence and other tragedies that are common in the DR Congo.**

There is still much work ahead of us as this project has several critical needs which I'll be sharing with you throughout this update. And I do have good news! I've observed firsthand the skilled and dedicated workers we have at Patmos. I can assure you that they are carefully using the resources you supply – and with great effect!

New Year – New Faces

The New Year's holiday is an especially joyful occasion for the children and staff at Patmos. We arranged our visit so we could join in the celebration. It was a real treat for us! The children and staff put on a program that included singing, traditional dancing and feats of physical strength and balance. All the children participated with great enthusiasm, even the smaller ones who haven't been with us very long.



Because of your support, many children experienced their first New Year's Eve celebration within the ICC family, complete with homemade party hats and traditional dance.

You may recall that last year we took in dozens of new children all at one time. Adventist churches in a distant region had contacted Désiré, our director, with an urgent appeal. In the aftermath of rebel insurgent activities in their area and other tragedies, church members had found or taken in around 60 orphans. They housed the children in the church, but that was no longer suitable for their care. They were suffering from disease and malnutrition, and their condition was bleak. This was a crisis. Something had to be done!

Désiré responded. And YOU responded! Your support provided immediate, urgent assistance. And now, these children are living at the Patmos Children's Village. This was their first New Year's celebration within the ICC family, maybe their first one ever.

I paid close attention to them and could see that they were enjoying themselves; smiling, singing, and participating in the motions of the songs. However, as I looked closer, I could tell that they are not 100% recovered. Many still have issues with their skin and show the effects of malnutrition. However, Désiré is a trained nurse. He is making sure that these children receive the medical care and special nutrition they need to fully recover because of your love and support. I am encouraged by what I saw. Day-by-day these children's lives are being mended back together. And with the new year comes the dawning of new hope for these children who have suffered so much. **And you are playing a big part in this!**

The stories of the newly-arrived children, while often quite similar, are all uniquely personal in their own ways.

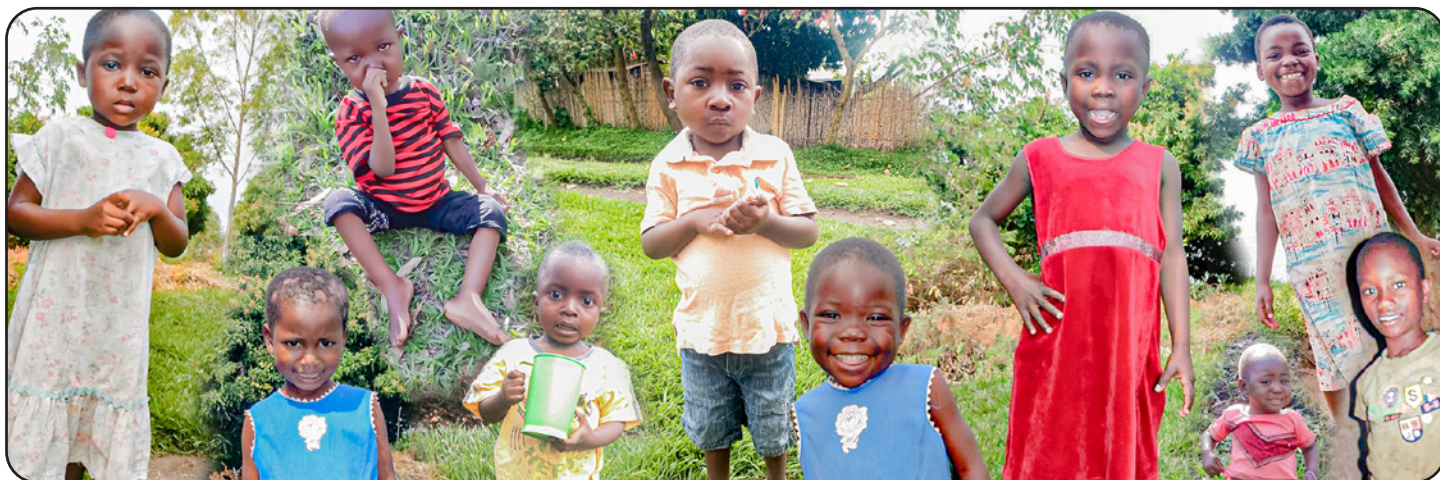
Rebels kill a mother and father and two of their children. Several other children are left all alone to fend for themselves.

Rebels murder a mother, and the father abandons the children,

After the death of a father, a mother remarries a man who is abusive. When the mother dies, the child is left to survive alone.

A mother tries to stop rebels from stealing from the family. She is killed leaving six children and her alcoholic husband who is unable to provide for their care.

The ravages of war are most harsh on the children – those who have little strength or voice with which to defend themselves.



You have the power to help transform the life of a child forever through sponsorship.

Critical Need #1 - Children Need Sponsors

The dozens of children who arrived last year are receiving life-saving care. But now they urgently need sponsors to come alongside of them to help in the work of transformation. During the months of March and April, we have set a goal to find at least 50 sponsors for these children. Will you, or someone you know step forward and sponsor a child in need? Contact Alanna at our office (800-422-7729 or Alanna@forhiskids.org) to respond and sponsor one or more of the new children.

More New Faces

Shortly after we arrived, a young woman, probably in her late 20s, came to find us at our guest house. She carried a small baby on her back. The baby began to cry, and the woman began nursing the infant while she shared her story. She and her sister were both pregnant and delivered their babies about the same time. Sadly, her sister died in childbirth. But her sister's baby survived. She then went on to say that her own baby did not survive childbirth. This woman now had her sister's baby and was caring for it!

She told us that she was too poor and couldn't continue providing care for the child as she has several other children as well as the fact that her husband is an alcoholic. Also, in Congo it is the wife's responsibility to tend the family garden and care for the home and the children.

After some discussion with Peruth, who is the Patmos Children's Services Director and Désiré's wife, we felt impressed to take in the baby. However, the woman would have to obtain permission from family and get the proper documentation so she could turn the child over to us. The Patmos staff gave the woman food that would last several days, and she left to walk the long journey back to her village to make the arrangements.

On another day, a middle-aged woman brought three children to us. They had traveled hours by foot. One child was a teenage girl 16 years old, and the others were much smaller. The woman who brought the children was a representative sent by the chief from their village. She told the sad story of the children. Their parents had both died, and they had gone to live with their grandmother. But she was very poor, and the children probably only ate once every two days. Though the village chief sent all three of these kids, he was only suggesting that we keep the two little ones. The teenage girl was the older sister. She had come along to help provide for their care.

We probed a little further and found out that these three were part of a sibling group of nine children and three had died. Sharon inquired of Désiré, "Is it good for us to take just a couple of the siblings? Shouldn't we keep them together? Can we take all of them?"

The woman who brought the children started clapping her approval. Désiré then made the following observation. "If you allow this 16-year old to come, this will be a turning point for her. She doesn't know Christianity or Jesus. When she comes here, this will be a new day for her. She'll be healthy. She'll go to school. She'll learn about Jesus. She'll be able to study a vocational skill so she can



Not often does ICC bring in newborn babies to live at a Children's Village. With your support, it is possible to provide the care this baby needs.

support herself. And of course, the other children will have a new life as well.”

They needed to return to the chief to complete the paperwork to turn all the children over to the Patmos Children’s Village. Peruth gave them food for a few days and sent them to their village to make the proper arrangements.

That same day, Judith, one of our grown children, came to the guest house with a little boy who was six years old. I’ll call him Daniel. Judith is in her early 20’s and is a nurse. She works with our partner organization, Prolasa Congo, in their project for Pygmies. With tears of emotion, Judith shared the following story about Daniel.

In April of 2019, a ferry boat had capsized on Lake Kivu. One hundred fifty people were drowned in the accident. A day or two later, Judith was walking in the nearby lakeside. She noticed a little boy huddled by a building. She understood that something wasn’t right, so she approached the little boy and spoke to him. She found out his name, and the story tumbled out. This little boy, Daniel, was on the ferry when it capsized. He was the only one in his family that survived, and now he was all alone and scared.

Judith understood all too well what it feels like to be orphaned. A government authority noticed her compassion for Daniel. “You are the only one who has paid any attention to this boy,” he said. “You must really have a heart for children!”

Judith put Daniel in school and tried her best to provide for him. However, this was difficult, and she thought about how much better his life would be if he could grow up as she had in a home at the Patmos Children’s Village. Since we were visiting, she decided to bring Daniel that day.

Together with Désiré, we discussed Daniel’s situation. We were impressed by Judith’s compassion and understood the difficulty she faced trying to work and provide for Daniel by herself.

Sharon asked Peruth and Désiré, “Which house mother would be the best to care for Daniel?”

Immediately, they answered, “Georime!”

Georime is such a loving and tender mother and even though she had a house full, we would ask her if she would be willing to take in one more child.

Peruth called for Georime, and when she arrived, we introduced her to Daniel and told her his story. Georime’s care and concern for Daniel were evident. We then asked if she would be willing to take him into her family and provide for his care. “Of course I will take him!” She said, and placed her hand on Daniel’s shoulder and willingly accepted him into her family.

Like Judith, Georime understands very well what it’s like to be an orphan for she is also an ICC child who had been orphaned when she was very small. She had been welcomed into the ICC family in 2002 after her parents had died in the civil wars that raged in the DR Congo at that time. She is now one of the children’s favorite house mothers at Patmos. Georime has such a touching story that I will share with you in May as part of a tribute to mothers.



Judith was able to recognize Daniel's pain and help meet his needs with ICC, just as you do with your ongoing generosity.

As Georime and Daniel walked down the path toward home, I couldn't help but be amazed and grateful for what had just transpired. A grown ICC child was now paying forward all the love and care and compassion that was shown to her. And I want to let you know that your support for ICC children is like an investment. It provides such a rich return when the grown children live to serve as they have been served.

This brings me to critical need #2.

Since our return from the Patmos Children's Village, Désiré has confirmed that all the children who visited us on the steps of the guest house have indeed become a part of the ICC family there at Patmos. This means 8 additional children and extra house parents are needed to help with these new children and to provide a home.



Because of your support, Daniel was able to be welcomed into his new home with housemother, Georime, where he can begin to find healing.

And while we were there, it was apparent that the house mothers very much need the assistance of aunts to help with the care of the children. There are so many little ones now – each vying for love and attention, not to mention mountains of laundry to be done by hand! It is very difficult to deal with situations when kids are sick, and the mother must stay in the clinic with them or the mother is sick or needs time off.

And there is one more position on campus that I feel is essential and for which there is no current funding available. That is for a campus pastor. Recently the Adventist church leaders said they could no longer provide Patmos a pastor. Having a pastor to nurture the spiritual life on campus would do so much to help hurting children heal and become whole.

Critical Needs #2 – Operational Support to Ensure the Wellbeing of the Children

The monthly increase in budget for wages and extra food will be considerable. The additional staff will provide a big boost to morale and to the overall wellbeing of the children. Even though the wages are low, hiring so many staff results in a large increase all at once. Would you or someone you know be willing to commit to a monthly recurring gift of support to enhance the wellbeing of the children? Perhaps you could sponsor the cost of an aunt (\$200 per month) or the Patmos pastor (\$300 per month). You can use the enclosed response coupon to designate your gift for this critical need. What a positive impact your support will have on the children!

New Spaces

Last month I told you about the triple wedding we attended in the Patmos church. I recall seeing some of the little children sitting wide-eyed, taking it all in. To me it was such a contrast. Walking down the aisle were grown children on their wedding day. Some years ago, they were the ones who had just arrived and who desperately needed loving care. As I witnessed this event, I couldn't help but realize that the ICC Family has done our best with the children getting married, but we still have a great work to do for the new children. **This brings me to critical need #3.**



Young children participated in the triple wedding that took place recently. They look forward to their own futures that you are helping to provide for them.

Critical Needs #3 – New Places

With all the new children on campus, the homes are once again overcrowded. Patmos needs an additional children's home which will cost \$55,000. Two other "places" are needed: a staff duplex (\$45,000) as well as a warehouse/shop building (\$25,000). If you can give or pledge a one-time gift for any of these needs, please indicate this on the included response coupon.

Or if you prefer, you can give online at www.forthiskids.org. If you have an interest in supporting any of these projects, I would be happy to speak with you personally about it. I can be reached by phone at the ICC office at 800-422-7729.

In Closing

The civil unrest and Ebola epidemic in the DR Congo have prevented us from visiting the Patmos Children's Village for a few years. Though we maintain regular contact by phone and e-mail, there is nothing like seeing firsthand all that is happening on this campus. And I must say, seldom in my years of serving the children of ICC have I felt that a project visit had such a positive impact on me personally. Patmos is being operated very well. The children are receiving quality care, even under primitive conditions, all due to each one of you and your love for the children. **I can't stress enough to you that your support is making such a positive difference in the lives of the Patmos children.**

Thank you for your continued generosity and for helping to make Patmos a refuge for "His Kids." May God bless you abundantly for your kindness and care!

On behalf of the children,

Rick Fleck

President

P.S. The Patmos children have so many critical needs now. Won't you help them? Please use the enclosed response coupon with your gift or pledge today. Phone and online donations are also welcome. Thank you!