

Girls' Education: Hope for Recovery

Educating a woman is educating the whole nation.—*Folk saying, Democratic Republic of Congo*



REALITY IN THE HEART OF AFRICA.

Marijo Kalumba is never late to her second-grade class at Nononga School. And Marijo's teacher is her role model, her Aunt Josephine Mpoyo

told a visitor recently. Marijo is one of 2,500 girls in five villages and towns in the southern highlands of Democratic Republic of Congo who qualify for assistance in a girls' education program managed by United Methodist Committee on Relief. Marijo is the orphaned daughter of Ms. Mpoyo's sister.

“In School by God's Grace”

UMCOR's education program for girls recognizes a reality here in the heart of Africa: Women are key to sustainable recovery and development here because of their traditional role in the family.

Committees of community leaders, teachers and parents selected the 2,500 girls who receive support in the program. All are impoverished. More than half are orphaned, most because of war or disease. The assistance for Marijo is a “huge relief,” said Ms. Mpoyo. She added, “Marijo is in school by God's grace.”

“I Want to Be a Teacher”

Many families in Congo need some version of grace to conduct normal life. According to the International Rescue Committee more than 1,200 Congolese still die every day of war-related causes. State-run

schools are shuttered. Culturally, a low acceptance of education for girls encourages some families to give in to the temptation of dowry. Yet the enthusiasm of Marijo is catching. Nearly 91 percent of the girls successfully pass their examinations for the next class.

In the evening a volunteer mentor from the UMCOR program can often be found helping Marijo with her homework. If she misses school her mentor calls at the home to find out why. If she's sick—many of the girls suffer from chronic malaria—the mentor arranges for medical care. Besides the personal support and interest of the mentor, Marijo receives a uniform and school supplies from UMCOR. Now, she dreams of being a teacher.

Prayer for Hope in Congo

Gracious and loving God, thank you for the blessings of your eternal presence. Remind us to pray through our actions toward others: to offer the cup of kindness, the responding hand when a community is overwhelmed by disaster or war, the spirit of justice and peace, and the open heart to all who are hurting. We know that in these ways we extend your love and hope to the world. Amen.

How You Can Help

Gifts to **UMCOR Advance #198400, Democratic Republic of Congo Emergency**, support this vital ministry for girls in the heart of Africa.

- By Offering** For local church and Annual Conference credit, put your gift in the offering plate on Sunday.
- By Check** Make your check to **UMCOR** and mail to UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087 Write the Advance code in the memo line of your check.
- By Credit Card** Call toll-free (800) 554-8583



The United Methodist Committee on Relief delivers hope and enhances human dignity through food, shelter, health and peace projects.

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