

The Fuller Family Link - February 2012



(Pictured: Epulu River, Epulu, DRC, February 2011)

For many people there exists a place which has a special spot in their heart—a place tied to childhood memories, a vacation destination, an ancestral home, or some other location with special meaning. It’s a place that holds an almost magnetic attraction and unexplainable allure. Deep down you’re drawn there, like it’s where you truly belong.

Sometimes when people first hear we are going to Congo...as a family...with four kids ages five and under...a shocked look comes across their face. It’s as if we said we have three arms, or something. While they try to process what we just said, and come up with a response, usually the first thing out of their mouth is an awe-filled, “Wow!”



Once the initial shock wears off the usual round of concerned comments and questions begins. “You’re taking your kids with you!? Isn’t Congo a pretty dangerous place?” “IT specialist—do they

even have electricity to run computers over there?” “How will you get clean water and food?” “I could never do that!”

It’s been a year since my (Owen) first trip to Africa. During those two weeks I got the *Reader’s Digest* version of the challenges that accompany missionary life in eastern Congo. Water shortages. Faulty electrical systems. Difficult government offi-

cial. Roads that make trails at Boy Scout camp look good. Open-air markets. Language and culture barriers. Stories of the atrocities occurring in the region. Discovering that a US dollar bill is valid tender unless it has a pinhole or crease, but a Congolese franc that has been taped back together—with a bill of different denomination, none the less—is almost always accepted.

Life in Congo really isn’t without its challenges, and I understand why many people could never imagine living there. I wasn’t particularly interested in Africa (or missions in general) when God first called us to ministry. I saw the surface, the things listed above, and remember thinking, “You don’t ever hear anything good about Congo!”

Thankfully, God has changed my perspective. Sure, the challenges remain, but I see more than that. I remember the smiling little boy who chased after our pick up as we left the airstrip, laughing as he tried to keep up. I think about the excited humanitarian workers who were able to call home to their families from the middle of the jungle after I helped install their Internet system, and the chance I got to share the Gospel with one of them. I can’t forget Alex, the young Congolese man whom I will get to train and work with once I return. I think of the miles and miles of jungle, and the MAF pilots who take to the sky daily to bring workers and supplies to isolated of villages. I smile and remember the students I saw in the computer lab at Shalom University who are getting a Christ-centered education. I think of the translators copying the Bible into languages never before printed.

I remember the time I fellowshipped in the jungle with a congregation of Believers in a church building made of mud walls and a thatched roof. Visions of beautiful flowers, trees, animals, and people also come to mind.

Congo is that place with a special spot in my heart. I feel

drawn there like it’s where I belong—the place God wants me to be. It’s so exciting to see the potential that exists there, and all the ways God is working! It’s also exciting to know that our family will be there very soon!

While our ministry support continues to grow slowly, the need for an IT specialist family in eastern DRC continues to grow quickly. Therefore, our family will not go to language school this fall, but instead, we leave in May for a two-year term in Congo.

We can’t wait! ☞





Alex, finishing his first solo VSAT Internet installation at Garamba

MEET ALEX, A CONGOLESE IT TECHNICIAN

Alex Bahati Okuonzi was born in Nyankunde, DRC, March 1, 1988. After he finished high school, he wanted to study technology. In 2007, he went to Kenya where he spent four months learning English (he also speaks French, Swahili, and Lingala), so he could study IT at a university there.

The cost of attending the school was very expensive for Alex and his family, and it appeared that he would not be able to complete his program. He explained the situation to one of the wives of one of the MAF pilots who said she would see if there was any way they could help. A few days later, the man in charge of MAF's IT programs in Africa, contacted Alex with a proposition: MAF would pay for his second year of

schooling if he would pay for the first year and agree to come work for MAF back in the east DR Congo program when he graduated.

For the last year and a half Alex has been working for MAF in Bunia, as an IT Technician. His day-to-day tasks include troubleshooting network and computer problems, keeping our partners connected to our network, doing system maintenance, and installing anti-virus software. He has assisted with the installation of four VSAT Internet systems in eastern DRC, and recently performed his first solo installation at Garamba. He is a great asset to MAF's ministry in Congo, and has a passion for the work we are doing.

"We are glad to serve, and we are glad to bring tools like VSAT Internet that give people access to the outside world," he recently told me. "Being part of MAF technology...I wake up every morning and say, 'No matter how hard it is, I'm going to do it!'"

One of the ways MAF seeks to carry out our ministry is through training and development of the nationals we serve. It's clear to me that Alex is one of the success stories! I look forward to working with him again soon, and teaching him what I know about IT. I also look forward to learning what he has to teach us about the culture, languages, and serving God in Congo. ☪

PRAYER AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We are so excited to leave in May for DRC, but it's not all down hill from here! Our to-do list for the next three months got a lot of new items added. There are lots of things to consider when moving abroad. We are sorting through our possessions, fill out passport and visa applications, finishing immunizations, along with a myriad of other things. In April we head back to MAF headquarters in Nampa, ID, for three weeks of orientation training. Our heads are starting to spin a little! Please continue to pray that we would have wisdom and patience through this pro-

cess, and that we wouldn't overlook any important details. We really appreciate all of you who continually remember us in prayer!

In addition to these preparations, we continue to seek new financial partners. To function properly, our ministry needs to be fully funded. We still need a little over \$2,000 per month to reach our goal of \$7,200. Each individual, couple, family, and church contributing on a regular basis helps meet this goal. It's this team of partners that enables us to minister in DRC. If you're not yet part of this team, will you please prayerfully consider taking on a portion of our remaining ministry support requirement? ☪

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Omri - 9 mos.



Macy - 2



Gabriella - 3



Larinda - 5

We've been trying to get our kids ready for Congo, too. They have fun learning French words, and talking about going to Canada and Africa. We also encourage them to pray for the other MKs (missionary kids) over in Bunia. Here they are pictured making Valentines for some of the MKs who will be their future playmates in Congo.