



imagining a brighter future.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

A Message from Congo Initiative's President

The year 2020 presented us with challenges like never before. Though we fortunately saw the end of the second-largest Ebola outbreak in June 2020, violence and insecurity have killed over 2,000 people in and around the Beni territory. There are now thousands of people internally displaced. Other regions of eastern Congo have also experienced an increase in political instability and conflict, with many people in the rural areas susceptible to attacks. Thankfully, we have not seen the surge of COVID-19 cases in the eastern part of the country, but new Ebola cases have emerged.

Some of you may wonder, "David, why are you and Congo Initiative still there?" Simply stated, because we believe change is possible. Through Congo Initiative - Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (CI-UCBC), we strive to demonstrate and give God's love, hope, and light to the people who need it most in our region.

You, our friends and partners, are also part of this call and the reason we are devoted to creating change. We are not ignorant of your own struggles with the pandemic, racial injustice, political upheaval, and massive unemployment. And yet, you remain steadfast in your commitment to us through your ceaseless prayers and sacrificial giving. You make it possible for us to function and to fulfill God's work here. Words cannot express our sincere gratitude for your partnership.

Recently, we held seminars that explored and reflected on African Christian faith, suffering and hope, and the global church. We've also held bi-monthly, global prayer sessions. From the beginning, we firmly believed the Congolese people had gifts to share across the globe.

For us in Africa, the vibrancy of our faith is watered by suffering, lamentation, resilience, hope, prayer and worship. We see God at work here and we want to share our experiences with you as we continue to believe God will and is "doing a new thing" (Isa. 43:19) even amidst the hardships and suffering, here in Congo and across the world.

Our 2020 Congo Initiative report presents a glimpse of what the Lord has done in and through us, including you, our partners. Today, we can say with certitude that some good grains of transformation have been sown in Congolese soil because of CI. Our hard work is already bearing fruit and will bear more due to the faith and sacrifices of us all.

Tuko Pamoja,



David M. Kasali, PhD

A Message from Congo Initiative USA (CI-USA)

Last year was indeed incredibly difficult. It was a year many have described as “unprecedented.” Our lives were, and continue to be, disrupted. But amidst the turmoil and uncertainty, you were part of something else unprecedented as we celebrated 15 years of hope and lasting change in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From equipping hundreds of university and primary students with an education, to raising close to \$50,000 in COVID and Ebola Response Funds, to breaking ground for a new Holistic Family Development Training Center, we have a lot to celebrate even as we lament the hardships of 2020.

These celebrations were made possible because of your generous support and your unwavering belief that together, we can build a brighter future in Congo. Together, we equipped a new generation of leaders with a transformative education and supported community-driven initiatives that fight injustice, promote women’s empowerment and equality, bring healing to those traumatized, inspire Congolese-led solutions, and improve livelihoods through economic opportunity.

To every member of the CI family who shows their support through social media likes and fundraisers, monthly donations, and one-time gifts, thank you. To our Board of Directors and General Assembly who champion the vision in Congo, United States, and United Kingdom, thank you. To every ambassador, church partner, foundation, and major partner who has made the past 15 years possible, from the bottom of our hearts we say *thank you*.

All of us have seen our lives change in ways we never imagined would happen. Many of us are looking for stories of hope that remind us of God’s presence as we sort through our own anxieties and fears.

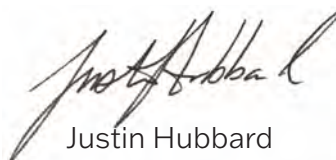
We hope you are encouraged by the following report, knowing you join our community in Congo that is a life-changing force. A community that leans into faith and dispels hopelessness and fear wherever it may take root. A community committed to peace, love, and justice. A community committed to one another.

Our commitment to seeing the kingdom of God manifested through the transformation of lives and a flourishing of DR Congo remains core to who we are. It drives us to work harder, to improve our programs and operations, and to deepen our partnerships. Together, we will continue to invest in the future leaders of Congo and grassroots initiatives for peace, hope, and justice.

With gratitude,



Chelsie Chan
Board Chair, CI-USA



Justin Hubbard
Acting Executive Director, CI-USA



**the future
leaders of
congo.**



Despite the Ebola outbreak, continued insecurity, and now COVID-19, UCBC continued to provide a transformative education to the next generation of leaders in Congo.

The significance and confidence in UCBC was witnessed when **144 new students** enrolled in the 2019-20 academic year. Even as the Ebola outbreak and militia attacks devastated communities, students and families continued to look to UCBC as a beacon of hope.

As the following pages reveal, even a four-month period of suspended activities due to COVID restrictions could not stop the UCBC community's hope-filled determination, resiliency, and resolve.

During the lockdown, graduating students worked on their final projects and staff improved their teaching skills and methods through online and staff workshops. Construction of the University Chapel and Community Center continued on campus and important lab equipment and books were acquired. All of this contributed to strengthening the quality of education and ensured students would graduate by the end of 2020.

As recent UCBC alum, Christopher Tibamwenda shared, *"UCBC has done all that it could to prepare us to face the enormous challenges ahead of us. Now, it is up to us to go out as the hope of our community, nation, and even the world to bring about the transformation and change people have been longing to see."*

Your support not only provides a transformative education for Congo's future leaders , you help improve gender equality, promote peace through transparent and equitable land management, equip faculty, and inspire service.

THE NEXT 500
FUTURE LEADERS OF CONGO

Through our NEXT 500 campaign you provided an education for

352
students

130

women studied at UCBC this past year, increasing the percentage of women students to 39%.



734

women and men have graduated from UCBC (50 in 2020).

57

land managers and community leaders trained by UCBC's Sharing the Land.

11

service-learning projects implemented by students and benefited the community.



11 UCBC staff were supported by Advanced Studies Program (ASP) to pursue Masters and Doctorates.



4 staff members completed advanced degrees through ASP.



7 staff members are currently enrolled in a Masters or PhD program.



3 full-time female staff members have been added by UCBC.



Faculty development is so important for UCBC. It is a way to obtain qualified teachers that will strengthen UCBC's education and develop students of excellence. Congo doesn't only need qualified teachers, but teachers who have a new mindset. This is what we are doing at UCBC and through ASP. We are the hope of the future!"

~ Vivian Bwirabuli, Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership, African International University



Improving Livelihoods Through Community - Driven Initiatives

Congo's Youngest Learners

Through the Académie Bilingue du Congo (ABC) and La Charité Primary Schools, **320 (164 girls and 156 boys)** received a primary education, the first step in breaking the cycle of poverty.

To date, close to **1,600** children have benefited from our primary schools.

Primary schools play a critical role in providing stability amidst a fragile context shaped by violence, displacement, and disease. It is not only the first step to breaking the cycle of poverty, but an opportunity to experience a safe and loving learning environment where children can dream of a future full of hope.

Vocational Training to Assist Vulnerable Women and Girls

22 disadvantaged women and girls received literacy training. To date, **172 women** have benefited from vocational training classes such as sewing. More than 25 have opened up their own tailoring shop.

9 tailoring apprentices produced hundreds of masks for Beni residents and US partners to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“We received training that taught us how to make helpful products like soap, baskets, and purses, in order to provide for our families and improve our futures.” ~ Bora

Bethesda Counseling Center

3,352 women, children, and men (ages 7-62), received some form of psychosocial and livelihood support such as grief and trauma counseling.

“I was welcomed at Bethesda’s office in a way that I have not experienced since I came out of the Ebola treatment unit. It is here where **I realized that I am still a human**. I will move on with my life even though my husband has left me. Here, I had the grace to be selected among those who were offered the financial assistance for social reintegration. I have started a small business. I am selling kids shoes and clothes.” ~ Gloire

Wakisha and Neema

Wakisha entrepreneurship program have helped **11 companies** collectively create more than **120 jobs** and secured \$3.8 million dollars from investors. One company, Nuru Congo, is deploying the largest off-grid hybrid solar mini-network in Africa and will provide sustainable energy for millions of Congolese. Another, Café Kivu, is the first DRC-based coffee roaster that sells directly to consumers in the United States.

635 beneficiaries served through Neema business training. Neema created 45 associations (515 people from 13 villages) to launch income-generating activities and provide economic opportunities in their communities. Neema also invested \$10,000 into two women-owned businesses: Grenaldi Food and Virunga Champignon (Mushrooms).

Justice Initiative

From land disputes, to defending the unjustly-accused or wrongfully imprisoned, the Justice Initiative’s pro bono services is transforming the justice system in Congo.

276 wrongfully imprisoned people were released through the work of the JI’s pro-bono services, including **73 youth and civil society activists**. **20 out of 37** gender-based violence perpetrators have been successfully prosecuted. The remaining 17 are under ongoing investigation.



**creating
space for
change.**



Creating space for transformation is a significant part of what we do. Since 2018, UCBC moved most of its activities to a safe and secure location in town. However, over the last year, activities have begun to return to the main campus.

Meanwhile, a team of dedicated contract and construction workers have continued building the centerpiece of the campus, the University Chapel and Community Center (UCCC). This past year, we've accomplished the following:

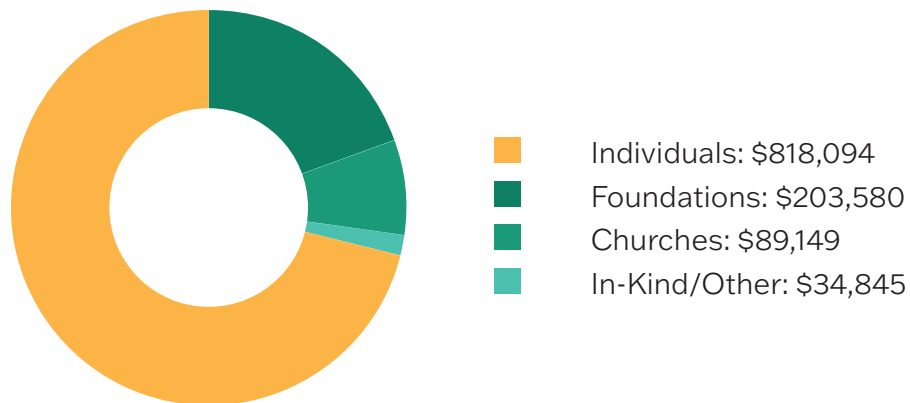
**4 classrooms and 2 lavatories
7 offices and science labs
Installed an accessibility ramp**

With the onset of Ebola followed by COVID-19, one of the concerns has been the safety of children and women at the Center for Holistic Family Development, which includes La Charité Primary School and Vocational Training for Women. The programs have outgrown the space, making classrooms and workspaces crowded.

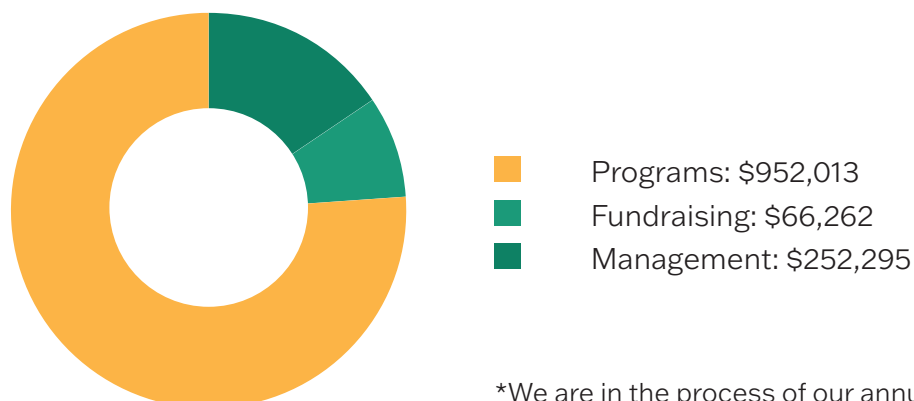
Led by women in the Holistic Family Development program, they secured \$27,745 in locally developed revenue and resources to launch the building of the new Holistic Family Development Training Center. CI-USA has come alongside the effort to raise the remaining \$46,428 to help complete the first phase of the building project - 10 classrooms. Thanks to your support, we've been able to send over \$24,000 to raise walls and put on the roof.

Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Financials

Revenue: \$1,146,669



Expenses: \$1,270,570



*We are in the process of our annual third-party audit. This audit and our 990 will be available by May 2021.



**Together
we are.**





**always
looking
forwrd.**



As we celebrated our 15th anniversary and reflected on our impact, we also planned for the future and opportunities for growth while adapting to the effects of the global pandemic.

Looking back, we are proud of the lasting impact we've made together. CI was founded 15 years ago on Christian hope and the dream of equipping a new generation of leaders through innovative education and empowering communities.

We did not only experience unprecedented challenges this year, but also underwent leadership changes. In 2021, our Board of Directors will appoint CI-USA's new CEO. In Congo, our 15th anniversary provided an opportunity to evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, and the ways we can secure and expand our impact.

As an organization, we are **always looking forward** because transformation is an ongoing journey. We are working harder than ever before so the vision of a transformed Congo, where all lives flourish, becomes a reality. We do not want to simply imagine a brighter future, but *be the* brighter future.

As we look ahead to what God might do through Congo Initiative in 2021, we are looking beyond to see where God might be leading CI for the years to come. We are exceedingly grateful for your support and prayers as we journey together, believing that change is possible and change will come.



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