

I Am Surrounded!

The writer of Hebrews talks about “a great cloud of witnesses,” that surrounds us...all those who lived and died in their faith. In Goma I am not only surrounded by the saints who have gone before me...but truly live among faithful servants who continue to humble and inspire me.

Salomon is a young man, a senior in high school, with whom I work at HEAL Africa, appropriately named because he demonstrates great wisdom. Salomon was abandoned as a child, first by his father, then by his mother and was subsequently passed from one distant family member to another... whoever could afford to feed another mouth. He remembers as a child being told that his mother ‘threw him away in the forest when he was 8 months old because he reminded her of his father’, an uncle who grudgingly took him in for a few years nicknamed him ‘worthless’. In many of the families he was passed to, he was fed only once a day. He remembers as a child always being hungry. He told me “the only one who ever loved me was God”, whom he came to know as a boy. Even now, he has no permanent home, he recently found shelter at night in a kitchen somewhere (I can tell by the charcoal smell of his clothes). He smiles however, and tells me that he has never been abandoned by God who “keeps him in the palm of His hand”, providing for all his needs as He has done throughout his life.

Salomon has grown into a faithful and well-spoken young man with a passion for telling others, especially children, about Jesus. He dreams of the opportunity one day to write books on Christian leadership, go into youth ministry or become an evangelist. He senses the call that God has placed on his life.



Salomon at a refugee camp in eastern Congo

Many of you know of the current crisis in eastern Congo (DRC) with renewed fighting between government and militia (M23) forces. Over a million people have fled their villages, farms and homes, and have settled in refugee camps around the city of Goma.



Several months ago, Salomon felt an urging to visit one of these camps where he came across hundreds of desperate families in make-shift huts with children everywhere. He sat down, listened to their plight, and revisited them every week. The children often spoke of the unimaginable trauma they had experienced... one girl couldn't stop crying as she talked of watching her mother set on fire and killed by rebel soldiers. His heart was broken by their stories. He started a weekly group that now has over 300 children who come together every Saturday morning to sing songs and receive words of encouragement. He requested permission from camp leaders to use the tarp covered school on Saturdays and then recruited colleagues who have been trained in trauma counseling to return with him to minister to these children. They sit huddled on cardboard mats wearing the only clothes they have, listening to Salomon as he tells them stories of a God who loves them dearly and, as God did for him, will surely stay by their side through the challenges they face in life.

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
1 Samuel 16:7

Bill and Ann Clemmer
41 Forest Ave
Orono, Maine 04473



Salomon and Ann in Goma, DRC (September 2024)

<https://www.internationalministries.org/author/ab-clemmer/>