

A Place to Heal, A Place to Learn

This past year has brought extraordinary challenges to those with whom we live and serve here in Goma. The women of Femmes de Valeur continue to recover from the violent takeover of our town and surrounding areas, even as they face the shadow of a rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak, border closures, and quarantines. Daily life has grown more difficult than ever. Movement is restricted by curfews, heavy taxes, and the mandatory *Salongo* on Saturday mornings, when residents must clean the streets and public spaces in their neighborhoods.

Since we last wrote:

- 5 children of these widows have been taken and conscripted by militia forces
- 21 women lost their street businesses as their merchandise was taken
- 20 watched their homes burn
- 9 husbands died

It has been a season of deep hardship for all. For several years we have supported a local income-generating initiative, the 'Village Savings and Loan' program. In better times, the women were able to save an average of 15,000 Congolese francs (about \$7) each, funds they relied on for

emergencies and essential needs such as health care, school fees, and food. By August, however, their savings had fallen to just 683 francs (about 30 cents). Many have lost their small businesses and are struggling simply to survive. Those who took loans from the group are now unable to repay them

as their livelihoods have been swept away.



Women of the Femmes de Valeur celebrating the opening of their new building

October 2026

Nevertheless, there is good news and joy for the women! On Friday, October 16th, we gathered to celebrate and dedicate the new Women's Center. This center has already begun to restore hope, providing a place where new training programs can be launched, seeds distributed, and the Village Savings and Loan program strengthened with renewed funding to help the women rebuild their lives.



Ground floor: Kitchen and ovens for baking bread
First floor: Women's Center Second floor: Library



Cutting the ribbon with Dr. Justin Paluku, HEAL Africa's CEO



A new experience... the chance to browse and borrow books

On the same day we dedicated our new library which is above the new women's center. So many have asked us to send their greetings and appreciation to all who made these gains possible. How thankful we are that God gives us **JOY** in the midst of trials.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

1st Corinthians 2:9

Blessings to you,

Bill and Ann Clemmer

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