



Dear Friend:

I just recently returned from Congo. I wanted to visit one more time before retirement to see progress on the ground. Choose any of the following words. They are all correct: Amazed. Humbled. Impressed. Grateful. Encouraged. Resolved. Convinced. Motivated. Teary.

What is rooting in is actually ahead of where I thought we could be at this point. There is genuinely impressive, visible progress. The clean water projects (deep wells/towers/spring taps/distribution system) already serving 40,000 people are incredible feats of engineering. The new schools, the refurbished and stocked clinics—tangible and operative.

And there is equally impressive not-so-visible-to-the-eye progress. Already 4,000–5,000 mothers of sponsored children are in savings groups (which means 4,000–5,000 families are on a new income trajectory); advocacy programs are bringing the voice of the community forward; children's programs like Child Parliament where children address legitimate concerns of kids (we watched a session on child labor); and other agricultural and nutritional projects.

I have a deeper and genuine sense that local government is on the side of the people. With the new move to make provinces smaller, they have become more manageable. The new governor had us over for dinner, and sincerely underscored the appreciation he has for what we are doing. One of his very first acts was to dedicate a PCP bridge. The new mayor is a son of the Covenant Church of Congo (CEUM) and has great familiarity and appreciation for the work underway. Both attended a special worship service with us honoring the work of the CEUM/ECC partnership.

Here is an analogy that is rumbling in my brain. I watched a special on beavers, and the essence was that a single beaver can change an entire ecosystem. When the beaver gets busy, a small creek in a desolate area forms a pond, which grows the grass, which brings the animals and the birds ... and pretty soon an entire area is transformed. You get the picture. The beaver didn't do it all, but the beaver set it all in motion. Well, we are seeing that kind of activity beyond CKC—because of this, pharmaceutical grants, local government inspired to undertake water projects, a real spirit of partnership between CEUM/CECU/Catholic churches, and more. The traction is real.

Let me underscore my highest regard for the local World Vision staff, all of whom are from throughout Africa. They have done tremendous work under very trying conditions. This is true and transformative work well done and well underway.

So thank you for your commitment! You are driving things forward. Make no mistake about it. My heart is full, my confidence is high, and my gratitude for each Covenanter who participates is great. Of course the need and the challenges remain great and we must take a long horizon ahead, but tens of thousands of lives are already impacted, including the three girls we sponsor who I got to meet for the first time. And more progress is yet to come!

Together in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary B. Walter".

Gary Walter
President of the Evangelical Covenant Church

