

2020

ANNUAL REPORT



MWANA
VILLAGES

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The Year of
**SOLIDARITY
PERSEVERANCE
RECKONING
SUPPORT**



We never know what to expect from one year to the next, but each year – and 2020 was no different – shows us God’s great faithfulness. He provides for Mwana each and every year by touching hearts around the world, inspiring our leadership teams with ideas and strategies to manage different challenges, and by sending amazing people who want to help.

Being involved in Mwana for the last 11 years has taught us to walk by faith and trust that God has got us. He already knows how He will provide just enough money for all the expenses we will face – many unexpected ones – and how He will help us make big and small decisions alike. We’ve learned to trust that He takes care of every little detail because this ministry was His idea and we are just His hands and feet. We only need to keep walking forward by faith, knowing that, as we do, the path will get brighter as we advance.

What a blessing it is to participate in God’s work, day in and day out, and to see so many miracles take place – from watching a child take their first steps to seeing a life-changing transformation to witnessing one of the children thriving in their new family.

Praise the Lord for His kindness.

Cheryl and Lambert Laki-Laka
Co-founders



From our founders...

WHAT'S THE SAME

Mwana Villages provides refuge within orphanhood to vulnerable children and families in the Republic of Congo

We do this by:

PROVIDING SHELTER to orphaned and vulnerable children at the Mwana Refuge

CREATING SAFETY for vulnerable children who may otherwise face trafficking, exploitation or death

EMPLOYING TRUSTWORTHY LOCAL STAFF who holistically and lovingly care for the children and families

UNITING EACH CHILD TO HIS OR HER FAMILY, either through family reunification or through adoption when needed

EMPOWERING VULNERABLE WOMEN toward stability, self-sufficiency and hope

We uphold this model as an ethical, holistic and biblical model of orphan care and invite peoples across the world to learn, support and advocate for this model of orphan care.





WHAT 2020
WAS ALL ABOUT



SOLIDARITY:

(n.) Unity in purpose and responsibilities



In 2020...

we welcomed 17 new children into our full-time care at the Mwana Refuge and are currently caring for over 40 children, representing our largest capacity of the near-seven years since the Refuge opened.

Highlight: **MARIA'S STORY**

In April 2020, we received a call that a woman in the hospital was quite sick and likely would not survive; her daughter had been with her since her arrival at the hospital with no other family. We met Maria, and a few days later had the heavy responsibility to tell her that her mother had passed away.

With an arms-wide-open arrival at the Refuge, we got to know Maria, a resilient and delightful little girl. We worked with authorities to investigate, and finally located her grandmother, living in Nkayi, who had not heard of Maria's mother's death. Though Mama H had not seen Maria since she was a baby, she was eager to raise her.

After spending a week together at our Refuge getting to know each other and building a bond of trust, the two now live happily together in Nkayi.



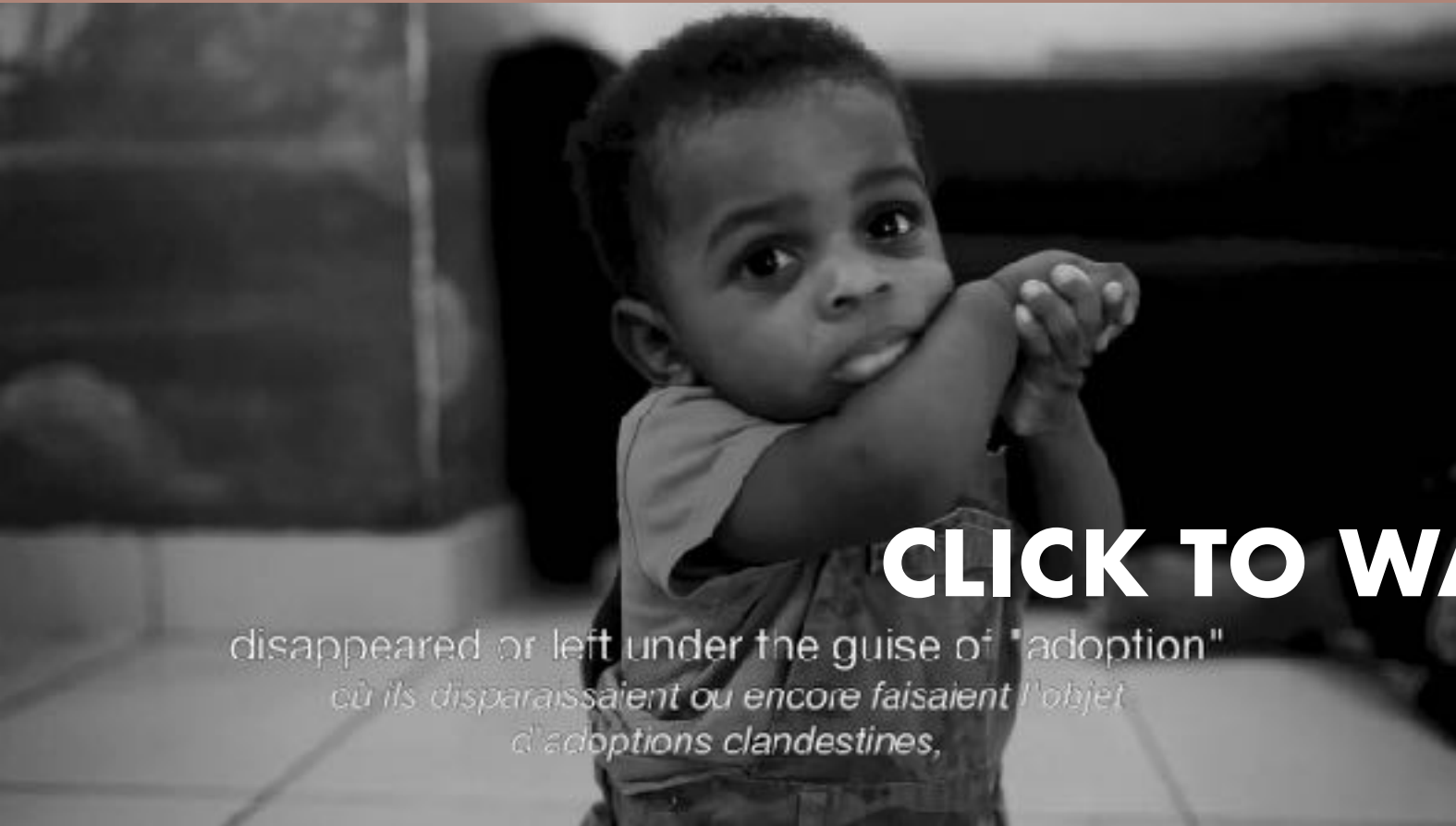
Once in the Mwana Family, *always in The Mwana family.*



In January 2020, videographers filmed six mothers and their children who had experienced family preservation or reunification because of the work of Mwana.

These women shared their testimonies that have since been televised as commercials on local television channels throughout Congo.

While each story was unique, there was one common thread: where there was once desperation, now there is hope.



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO

disappeared or left under the guise of "adoption"
*cù ils disparaissaient ou encore faisaient l'objet
d'adoptions clandestines,*

In March 2020, we released a new video that follows the 10-year journey from Mwana Villages' earliest existence to today's work.

THE
TEN-
YEAR
JOUR-
NEY

PERSEVERANCE:

(n.) Steady persistence in a course of action, especially in spite of difficulties



Life around the world changed in March. At Mwana Villages, we entered a two-month lockdown, wherein selected staff brought in their own children to live full-time at the Refuge so that they could continue caring for our Mwana children.

With shortages and inflation throughout the country, Mwana supporters rallied to provide food, medicines and household necessities for what was then an unknown amount of time. With many children in our care that are immunocompromised, we adapted heightened principles of hygiene and protection for their health.

Despite the multitude of challenges that the pandemic presented, our Mwana children have remained healthy and safe, and they continue thrive.

THE PANDEMIC



Highlight:
MAMA CLAUDE

In October 2020, we celebrated six years of service of Mama Claude. She was part of the original team of caregivers hired at the Mwana Refuge and has been the warm and welcoming face to over 100 children who have found refuge. Through these years, she has shown steadfastness and consistency of committed love—the mark of a true mother.





[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

MAMA IMELDA'S SHOPPING DAY

We had the privilege to hire a local Congolese photographer and videographer to document our weekly market day.

THE
MAR-
KET
DAY



RECKONING:

(n.) The process of acknowledging the reality of a circumstance



Serving vulnerable children and families in Congo forces us to confront many difficult, multi-layered and complex situations. Though limited in what we can share publicly, we invite our supporters to learn more about these complexities in our [Insider Email Series](#). Throughout the past year, we took closer looks at topics such as unethical adoption, the white savior complex, trafficking, post-colonialism and more.



GRIT

Throughout the month of January, we celebrated one of the core characteristics that our Mwana women show: grit. We celebrated the courage, strength of character and resilience that so many women have shown when facing unimaginably difficult circumstances.

“Grit does not come from pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. Grit comes from recognizing the source of power in God. But more than power and strength, God promises love. God will heal the dark and broken places in our lives. His redemption enables us to love ourselves and, in turn, love others.”

—An excerpt from “Grit,” a blog post by Ann, Advocacy Board Member



Grâce

Our beloved Grâce, who had been in the care of Mwana since May 2018, passed away in June of 2020. We deeply grieve her loss, while rejoicing in the hope of our Savior and her Creator, with whom she is whole and rejoicing.



As of April 1, 2020, the Republic of Congo became signatory to the **Hague Convention**, an international treaty intended to provide safeguards to protect the best interests of children, birth parents and adoptive parents in inter-country adoptions. The country's implementation of the convention standards and protocols is forthcoming, as it requires a complete overhaul of government operations related to child welfare. The signing of this treaty directly impacts Mwana children for whom international adoption would have been appropriate since new international adoptions are halted until standards are implemented. Amid an uncertain future for international adoptions, our Mwana team continues to evaluate how to provide a loving, stable and familial permanency plan for such children.

SUPPORT:

(n.) A thing that bears the weight and enables it to function





MWANA SUPPORTERS AROUND THE WORLD

continued to support the ministry work generously and sacrificially, in spite of the challenges of the past year.

FINANCIALS

\$638,721

Total global fundraising: \$638,721 between Congo, US, Canada and France, representing a 19% growth in giving from 2019

\$20,000

\$18,000

In-kind donations in Congo (such as food, clothing and household staples) in 2020 are valued at \$18,000.

Congolese individuals donated \$20,000 in cash.

95%

Donors: Individuals represent 95% of donations; church and corporate donors represent less than 5%.

82% 13% 4%

Expense breakdown (\$561,000 total expenses):
Program 82%, Fundraising 13%, Administration 4%



The past year, we had several fundraising highlights, including the launch of new peer-to-peer campaigns, an increase in donor retention, new church and corporate partnerships, a goal-exceeding matching gift on Giving Tuesday and our Holiday Pop Up Shop.





CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO

This is the real cost to comprehensively care for one child for one day at the Mwana Refuge. We share behind-the-scenes glimpses at what goes into caring for these children in a new video.

\$17
A
DAY

WHAT'S AHEAD

Connecting you

Podcast | Live sessions | IGTV videos | YouTube Channel | Social Media

Growing on the ground

Following several months' pause in construction on our new Mwana Refuge due to the pandemic, we have resumed construction and finished the foundation and first floor walls. We will continue construction on our permanent Mwana Refuge as funding above and beyond our operational budget is available.

Involving you

Stay tuned for more Mwana Gatherings, Peer-to-Peer Campaigns, Kids for Kids activities and more! We invite you to stay in the loop by following us on social media.

M W A N A V I L L A G E S . O R G

Photo credit to Rob Nzaou

