

Strengthening Health Systems in the DRC

APPUI AU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ EN RDC | ASSR

DELIVERING LIFE-SAVING MEDICATIONS AND EQUIPMENT TO REMOTE VILLAGES IN NORD-UBANGI

"It was 96 degrees Fahrenheit, flies and other insects swarmed around my exposed neck and ankles, as our transporter paddled steadily toward the far bank of the Uele river. On the other side I could see what looked like the entire village - women, children, youth - come out to greet us."

– Alberto Galora, ASSR Team Lead

In 2018, the World Food Programme estimated that 73 percent of the Congolese population, totaling 60 million people, lived on less than \$1.90 a day (the international poverty rate). As such, about one out of six people living in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa live in the DRC. The lack of transport infrastructure is directly linked to high levels of poverty. The distances are enormous across the vast nation, and chronic mismanagement and internal conflict has led to underinvestment spanning many years. Specifically, of the nearly 180,000 kilometers of roads, only 1.7 percent are paved while nearly 90,000 kilometers are foot paths or local roads.



It is in this context that team members and local partners from the ASSR project in the DRC took on the challenge of distributing FCDO-funded medications and equipment to some of the most remote villages in the country. Team lead Alberto Galora recalls one particular delivery to the Wasolo health zone in the Nord-Ubangi province, "Our objective was to deliver medications and equipment for emergency obstetrics and neonatal care. We also delivered two motorcycles for the health centre nurses to travel between the central health zone and their respective health centres, as well as two motorcycle ambulances." After a nine-hour drive and a 30-minute pirogue ride, we reached a small island on the border between Central African Republic and the DRC to deliver more medical equipment. We inspected equipment delivered years prior and found it to be well-used and still in good condition. Alberto relates, "As we pulled away from the shore after delivery and inspection of the health centre, having

received such hospitality from the villagers, we felt nothing but joy and fulfilment that we are making a difference in the lives of the Congolese people."

Over the course of the 30-month project, and despite the congestion and high international demand for limited air and sea cargo carriers, the ASSR project team was able to deliver more than 60 air shipments and more than 80 containers by sea. These shipments included:

- 15 Land Cruiser 4-wheel drive vehicles
- 66 Honda motorcycles
- 20 motorcycle ambulances
- More than \$3,000,000 in medications
- 80 oxygen concentrators for patients sick with COVID-19 as well as PPE equipment
- Medical equipment that included first aid kits, emergency obstetrics and neonatal care equipment, delivery kits



ABOUT THE ASSR PROJECT

Funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) through UK Aid, IMA World Health is part of a consortium that includes SANRU, Pathfinder International and BAO Systems that is improving access to critical, quality health services in 50 health zones in the DRC. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the project reduces mortality and morbidity of women, adolescents, children and newborns and improves community resilience by strengthening health systems. In French, ASSR stands for Appui au Système de Santé en RDC, which translates to Health Systems Support in the DRC.



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