

In the Democratic Republic of Congo over the last twenty years, six million men, women and children have died as a result of civil wars, ongoing violent conflict and the poverty, disease and injuries that followed. Adding to DR Congo's grim legacy of exploitation, these recent events brought the nation to its knees. But amidst this tragic loss of life, hope still lives.

HEAL Africa began when two people – Jo and Lyn Lusi – responded to an urgent need. Planting a seed of hope among the war-ravaged people, over time their efforts grew into a hospital. Now, HEAL Africa provides health and development services to thousands of people in communities throughout eastern Congo – and is helping heal that damaged nation. HEAL Africa's story is wonderful. It speaks of the triumph over adversity that results when people put their God-given talents to work to benefit others. It is a uniquely Congolese story – but one with a strong Australian flavour. And, HEAL Africa's story is also one of partnership with CNEC Partners International and a raft of Australian volunteers.

Ask any of the people that have visited HEAL Africa, and they will share with you how it is more than a hospital. The Congo is a failed state, the world's poorest country, yet it has some of the world's most precious mineral reserves including gold, diamonds and coltan which is used in the production of most modern electronic products from smart phones to game consoles. Whilst international mining companies extract the countries natural resources little or none of the wealth is distributed back to the Congolese.

We were told stories of child slavery, violent sexual crimes against women and the brutal murder of many men, women and children. This is a justice issue. International governments are in partnership with foreign companies urgently extracting precious minerals to meet consumer demand, at the expense of human life.

HEAL Africa is more than a hospital. Congo is a country where there are few or no safety nets to fall back on when times are tough. HEAL Africa is a non-government organisation that is providing healing to the community via medical assistance and healing to the nation through empowering women, gender & justice and advocacy initiatives and child sponsorship.

Love in Action: HEAL Africa is a mixture of inspiring stories and stunning photography. This book shows how the people of CNEC and HEAL Africa are working together to provide healing, health and a brighter future for thousands of individuals, families and communities right across eastern DR Congo. This is a story of ordinary people putting love into action, and together achieving great things. This transformative work is truly bringing healing to a nation.

HEAL Africa represents something far greater than a problem requiring a rescuer. The Congolese have great resilience despite a torrent of resistance spanning from war and corruption through to natural disaster and human greed.

What can **YOU** do today to help HEAL Africa?

Please read the excerpts from the book along the wall here, enjoy the images, please support HEAL Africa and purchase a copy of the book. Smaller framed versions of the photographs are available to purchase. Profits will be donated to HEAL Africa. Need I remind you that Christmas is just around the corner, buy an extra book for a gift, or a framed photograph.

Get involved. Partner with HEAL Africa through CNEC Partners International, and help provide long term healing to the nation of Congo. Come to our info desk to find out how you can get involved.

Please sign our Partnership Wall. We plan to send a photograph of our partnership wall with all your signatures and messages to the staff and patients at the HEAL Africa Hospital in Congo.

Finally, let me leave you with this closing thought. Everything that you've seen has been done through partnership. Good things happen when we partner together. When we pool our resources. When we work together using our individual gifts and talents. Love in Action is the observation of people working together in partnership, putting love into action.

Coming alongside our neighbour and working together to solve problems.

Where there is great need there are often good capable people that are in need of partnership. People that need someone not just to help them up, but to work alongside them. When we think of the developing world we think of desperate poverty, and massive need, and that is true, but as I experienced while in the Congo, helping isn't always about flying in with quick fix solutions. Sustainability is achieved by ensuring that people have a fair chance in life, that their rights as human beings are respected, and they are able to safely build and provide for their families. On television recently, I watched a BBC production about the new Africa where Jonathan Dimbleby in his closing remarks reflecting on his African journey stated the following.

"Africa needs respect not pity. It needs fairness not handouts. And surely we have to think afresh about a continent which is so rich in resources and potential and is destined to play an ever larger part in all our lives in the decades ahead."

A wise prophet wrote these words about what is required of us as human beings:

"Act justly. Love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

Thank you again for coming tonight, please enjoy our hospitality, meet someone new, and let's discover what we can do **together** here in Hobart and put love into action.