

Our Family Adoptions



Where hope begins...

Thank you so much...

As we started preparing this newsletter, we reviewed what *Our Family Adoptions* outlined as goals for 2009. At that time, we hoped to complete 5 adoptions and start another 10-12. By year's end, however, we had completed 9 adoptions and started paperwork for 20. You have made this another incredible year of growth and development for OFA.

Adoptions were completed this year to families in Arizona (2 children to 1 family), Delaware (1), Indiana (3 children to 2 families), Texas (2 children to 2 families), and Washington (1). OFA educated adopting families about travel in DRC and provided escorts to guide them through processing and filing of adoption and visa papers at the United States embassy in Kinshasa. In some cases, OFA completed proxy adoptions for families who were unable to travel.

The children adopted this year are thriving in their new homes, with their loving parents and brothers and sisters. We are thrilled to hear and read wonderful stories of how their lives are unfolding. Both they and their families are having significant impacts on their communities. As all of you know, OFA teaches that each family has a duty and a responsibility to educate their community about the ongoing atrocities and poverty in DRC. Our network of families remains our biggest avenue of outreach. Your simple



Moses Liam, adopted 2009

message of international love is enormously effective at educating, creating action and changing lives.

OFA remains committed to volunteer action. We do not charge for anything, and every single dollar raised goes into delivery of services. No one takes salary or compensation of any kind.

We are blessed by each family that joins our expanding network.

What's new for 2010...?

As of the date of this letter, OFA is currently assisting families with the processing of 16 adoptions! We expect to complete 8 adoptions in the first quarter of 2010 and complete 8 more by the last quarter of the year. Included in that total are four special girls who make up OFA's Christmas Challenge 2009. Please see Page 3 for more details and learn about your role in helping that family.

OFA strengthened our partnership with *Christ the King* Catholic Church in Portland, OR and visited the beautiful site outside Kinshasa where they will build a new orphanage. As infant care is so hard to come by in DRC, we committed to raise money in 2010 to build a nursery facility, and provide critical infant resources such as baby formula. Without formula, babies will die.

We recently developed new relationships in DRC and in 2010 will provide nutrition to at least 2 orphanages in Kinshasa and 1 orphanage in Bukavu. Children at these sites now eat only 1 meal a day and need protein in their diet to prevent anemia, malnutrition and starvation.

In 2010, OFA will continue to partner with the United Methodist Church's Pacific Northwest Conference in the *Hope for the Children of Africa* Task Force in their capital campaign efforts. In 2009, in



Debora, adopted 2009

one amazing weekend, the last third of the money needed to complete the new Jamaica Letu Boys orphanage was raised. The foundations have been poured, the walls are up, and the roof beams are being placed.

Expansion

Our organization expanded in 2009 as parent volunteers began taking on important tasks on Gilma's behalf. Adoptive mother Cami began talking to inquiring families. Adoptive father Brian agreed to keep updates happening on our website. Adoptive mother Carrie started a *Congoadopt* chat group on Yahoo for any family adopting from DRC, not just those affiliated with OFA. To join, simply email: congoadopt@yahogroups.com

Outreach

You may have noticed a new look to our website! If you have not been there, visit: www.ourfamilyadoptions.org. It was unveiled in fall and rapidly started getting traffic. We find that much of the traffic is generated through links on adoptive families' blogs, so again the network of families is doing substantial outreach work on our behalf.

Connectivity

In 2009, several OFA board members were pleased to make the acquaintance of Lisa Shannon, who organizes the *Run for*

Website: www.ourfamilyadoptions.org

Email: info@ourfamilyadoptions.org

Phone: 360.903.3648

Congo Women and is based in Portland, OR, just a half-an-hour away. She appeared on Oprah to tell her personal story and raised over 4.5 million dollars in donations to support women in DRC. Please watch for her new book, *A Thousand Sisters*, coming in 2010.

We had the honor of meeting Candice Knezevic, who is the *Raise Hope for Congo* campaign manager for the Enough Project. The Enough Project held a global contest called *Come Clean for Congo* to select a 1-minute video that would be used as a centerpiece to educate about the relationship between violence in DRC and conflict minerals used to make cellphones. In an interesting “what a small world” moment, they selected a video produced by Matthew Smith of Bend, OR, which features rapper Micah Bournes. Matthew attends a church in Bend with one of OFA’s adoptive families currently in-process for 2010 completion.

DRC in the Media...

In 2009, the situation in DRC got substantially more press than 2008. Despite continued flaring violence, several local warlords in the eastern regions were arrested for war crimes. Other important leaders of DRC rebel forces were arrested in Europe.

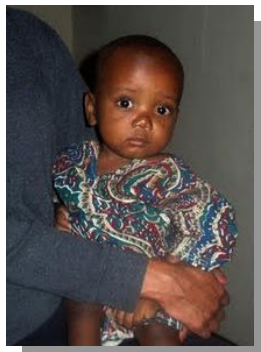
DRC got finally media attention in 2009 for the illicit trade in “conflict minerals” with diamonds, gold, coltan and tin ore being smuggled out of the country and sold to buyers in adjacent nations. Articles appeared in the BBC and many other international outlets. As a result, some mining companies pulled out of DRC altogether and refused to work there. OFA supported *Congoweek* by sending an awareness-raising letter on conflict minerals to our family network in October. Visit www.congoweek.com for more information. Near the end of the year, *60 Minutes* ran a brief story on the illicit trade in DRC gold. 2009 was the year the dots were clearly connected, showing various rebel forces’ efforts to control regions of eastern DRC in order to control mineral resource revenue. These forces use brutal tactics of rape, murder, village-burning and child enslavement to oppress, terrify or simply get rid of local populations.



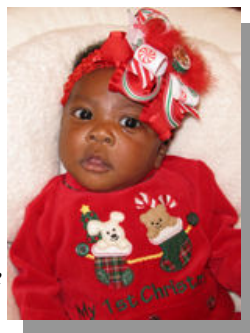
Haven



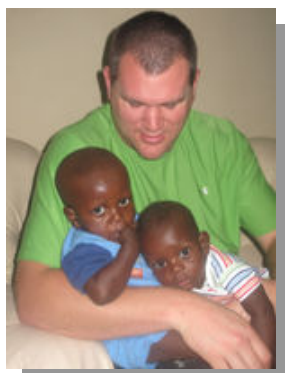
Joseph and Solange



Gabriel



Cloe



Papa Jamey with Chad and Ian

Message from Jilma...

Dear Families and Friends,
There is so much I want to tell you. There is so much you should know. This year, we together, saved lives and gave families to 9 children. Many more are in process for 2010.

I am often asked, “Why should people adopt from DRC, when there are plenty of needy children right here in the US?” Here’s why: While adoptable children in the US might not have families, they will still get food and care. The children in DRC are dying.

On my last trip to DRC, we visited an orphanage and saw a girl who was 12 months old and weighed 7 lbs. When we went back a second time, she was not there. There was no rescue. There is no medical care. She died alone, with no one there to hold her, or love her.

This year, one of our OFA families suffered a heartbreaking loss. Their daughter, Cassie Jamila, whose Congolese adoption paperwork was complete, died of malaria in DRC before her US adoption paperwork was finished. Death constantly stalks the children of DRC.

But miracles do happen. In the middle of my last trip, while processing the final completion of 4 adoptions, I was asked if OFA could coordinate the placement of 2 newborn twins. Their mother died in childbirth and each child weighed only 4 lbs. If we did not find a home for them, they would have gone to the same orphanage where the 12-month old had just died. They too would have died there, forgotten, unknown and alone. But with your help, we were able to rapidly place them with a loving foster family in DRC. There was an OFA family in-process who was willing to accept infant twins. Their DRC paperwork was quickly completed, and the new parents have flown to Kinshasa to spend several weeks there, with their new infant children, until the US paperwork is complete, and the whole family can return home.

OFA families – you give of yourselves, and you truly save lives. I am thankful every day to have been able to serve you.

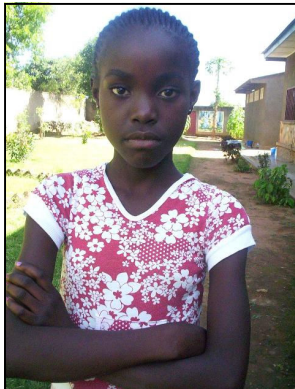
Jilma

Accomplish something extraordinary...

The 2009 OFA Christmas Challenge

Their mother died during Nenette's birth.
Their father has been missing for over a year and is presumed killed.

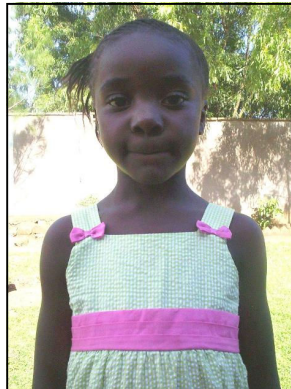
These four sisters are alone in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo.



Seraphine Aziza - 11



Jemima Sudi - 8



Cynthia Noella - 6



Nenette Safi - 12 mos

But their grandparents live in Arizona, and are adopting the four girls.

Your gift will unite these girls with their family.
Your gift will give these girls a home.

The Bolamba Family:

Guy Bolamba, his wife Safi, and six of their children fled the war-torn Goma region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2002. They lived in a Ugandan refugee camp for two years before they were able to obtain refugee status and permanent residency in the United States. They now live in Arizona. The Bolambas left one older daughter in DRC when they fled. She was married and could not leave her own family. In November 2008, she died during childbirth, leaving all four girls, including Baby Safi, orphaned. The father of the girls has not been seen in over a year and is presumed killed in the war. The girls have no family in DRC.

Miracles Begin to Happen!

When Guy contacted OFA and asked for help, OFA coordinated with a non-governmental agency called AirServ to airlift the girls from Goma to Lubumbashi, to the Jamaa Letu Orphanage (funded by the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church). The four girls arrived safely at Jamaa Letu in January of 2009. OFA then helped Guy obtain US citizenship, as he had just reached his 5th anniversary as a US permanent resident. Guy became a US citizen in May 2009.

The Remaining Need...

Adoption of the four girls will cost in excess of \$20,000, including DRC Government fees, US Government fees, notarized translations of legal documents, airline tickets, lodging costs for the family in Kinshasa while the US embassy is processing the adoptions, and many other details. Members of the Bolamba Family work hard, but the family currently does not have enough money to accomplish the adoptions of their granddaughters. The four girls have been waiting in DRC for over a year.

Our Call to OFA Families:

We challenge each family in the OFA network to rise to this occasion. We request donations of \$500, but appreciate any amount you can give. Families, please do *not* do this alone, but draw on your friends and your extended family members. Educate, inform and teach. Let those who have been touched by your adoptions have a chance to participate in this 2009 Christmas Miracle. Every single dollar raised will go directly to the costs of the Bolamba family adoptions, unless you designate otherwise. Your gift will unite these girls with their family. Your gift will give these girls a home.



Where Hope Begins...

Yes! I want to participate in the 2009 OFA Christmas Challenge!

Donor Information:

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

Email _____

Donation details:

My donation is:

in honor of: (Name) _____

in memory of: (Name) _____

Enclosed is my gift of:

\$25

\$50

\$100

\$250

\$500

\$750

\$1,000

\$2,500

\$ _____

Payment information:

Check (Payable to OFA)

For secure online payment using *Paypal*, visit www.ourfamilyadoptions.org

My employer will match this gift. Please contact: _____

- Please send me information about sponsoring orphans
- Please send me information about providing food and material supplies to support an orphanage
- Please send information about volunteer opportunities.
- I would like information about making a gift to Our Family Adoptions through bequest, annuity, charitable trust, insurance, securities or real estate.
- I have included Our Family Adoptions in my will/trust.

Our Family Adoptions (OFA) is a volunteer-run, non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization registered in Washington State, USA, with a mission to assist Congolese orphans. OFA partners with the United Methodist Church and is an extended ministry of Fern Prairie United Methodist Church in Camas, WA, USA. OFA does not charge for services, offers free legal aid and recruits funding and material support for DRC orphanages. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Thank You!

www.ourfamilyadoptions.org