



leja bulela
show that you care



2020 through 2023

SHINING MOMENTS

**HIGHLIGHTING 3 YEARS OF LEJA
BULELA IMPACT IN CONGO**

**Presented By The Executive
Committee & Board of Trustees**

www.lejabulala.org

A Note From The Executive Committee

Dear friends and supporters,

It is with great pleasure that we present to you highlights from 2020-2023. As we reflect on the past three years, we are proud to report that we have made significant strides in advancing Leja Bulela's mission to galvanize support for the people of Grand Kasai.

Over the past three years, our dedicated team of staff, volunteers, and board members have worked tirelessly in the midst of a pandemic to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve in Tshibombo Tshimuangi (and beyond). Through our programs and partnerships, we have touched the lives of countless individuals and families, providing them with the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.

"Thank you to those who have supported us in our mission"

As a nonprofit organization, we understand the importance of transparency and accountability. This publication provides a comprehensive overview of our activities and accomplishments over the past three and a half years. We hope that this report will not only serve as a reflection of our hard work but also as a testament to the generosity of our donors and supporters.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have supported us in our mission. Without your unwavering support, we would not be able to achieve the impact that we have. We look forward to continuing to work together towards a brighter future for the Congo and the people of Grand Kasai.

Sincerely,

Muamba I. Kabongo, Executive Director &
Tshiunza D. Kalubi, Deputy Executive Director



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1 - Leja Bulela Has a New Logo!

Page 2 - Celebrating the 10-Year Anniversary of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center

Page 5 - From Arid to Abundant: A Visual Journey of the Evolution of Water Infrastructure at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center

Page 17 - Project Delivering Dignity: Destigmatizing Women's Health

Page 19 - Care In Action: 2021 Christian Brigades-Leja Bulela Medical Mission Trip

Page 27 - Member Spotlight: Reflections on My First Trip to Congo by Tshilumba Kabongo

Page 34 - Health Center Updates

Page 36 - Thank You, Donors!

Page 38 - Leja Bulela Leadership

VISIT US AT WWW.LEJABULELA.ORG

SCAN TO DONATE:



SCAN TO BECOME A MEMBER:





We are thrilled to unveil our new logo for the organization, which is fresh and modern while still honoring our history and mission. The logo incorporates a fingerprint motif, which serves as a visual representation of our hands-on approach to making a difference in Congo. The use of the fingerprint also symbolizes the unique and individual contributions of each person who is a part of our organization, highlighting the importance of collaboration and inclusivity. We believe that this new logo captures the essence of Leja Bulela and will serve as a powerful symbol of our dedication to creating positive change in Grand Kasai.

"The use of the fingerprint symbolizes the unique and individual contributions of each person who is a part of our organization"

Mulamba Kalubi, Creator & Graphic Designer

2011

A DECADE OF RESULTS:

2021

CELEBRATING THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE
KALALA MUZEU HEALTH CENTER

July 2021

The Tshibombo Tshimuangi community came together in July 2021 to commemorate a significant milestone—the 10-year anniversary of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center. This momentous occasion not only recognized the health center's humble beginnings but also celebrated the remarkable progress made in providing essential healthcare services to the population of internally displaced people who have called Tshibombo Tshimuangi home since 1992.

In 2005, Leja Bulela took action and acquired a piece of land with the goal of constructing a healthcare facility capable of addressing the pressing needs of the surrounding population. Construction work commenced shortly thereafter, signifying Leja Bulela's determination to improve health outcomes for the residents of Tshibombo.

After five years of concerted efforts among Leja Bulela members and supporters, the doors of the health center swung open in 2011, ushering in a new era of accessible healthcare for the Tshibombo Tshimuangi community. The health center was fittingly named after Kalala Muzeu, one of Leja Bulela's founding members, as a tribute to his selfless service to his fellow countrymen.

The early years of the health center were not without challenges. From its inception, a significant hurdle was the absence of electricity, which posed formidable obstacles to providing critical medical services, particularly during nighttime hours. However, undeterred by this early setback, Leja Bulela actively sought solutions to overcome this limitation.

In 2012, one year before the installation of solar panels, Leja Bulela took decisive action by installing two Solar Suitcases—one of which was generously donated by We Care Solar—at the health center with the technical expertise of Leja Bulela member Kalonji Kadima. These innovative, compact solar power systems proved invaluable, ensuring a reliable source of light that enabled the health center to operate efficiently during the night.

Recognizing the significance of sustainable energy solutions, Leja Bulela continued its commitment to enhancing the health center's infrastructure. In 2013, solar panels were installed, harnessing the abundant sunlight available throughout the Congo. This transformative addition provided a reliable and renewable energy source,



enabling expanded services and extended operating hours for the health center.

The 10-year celebration of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center attracted active participation from community members, distinguished guests, and notable speakers who convened to honor the remarkable achievements and express gratitude to the dedicated staff. Among the speakers were Pierre Bakafua, Leja Bulela's Mbujimayi-based liaison, who eloquently highlighted the health center's history and the tireless dedication of Leja Bulela members, both locally and abroad. Additionally, The Honorable Louis D'or Ntumba Tshiapota, the Mayor of Mbujimayi, graced the event with his presence, reaffirming the significance of the health center and its profound impact on Tshibombo Tshimuangi and Mbujimayi.

During the anniversary celebration, certificates of appreciation were bestowed upon the health center's staff members, recognizing their years-long commitment and contributions to the health center's success. The event further radiated a joyous atmosphere as a local choir delivered an amazing performance, fostering a strong sense of unity and solidarity among attendees who enjoyed refreshments and moments of fellowship under the pavilion.

Amidst the festivities, Muamba Kabongo, the Executive Director of Leja Bulela, took the stage and addressed the assembled audience, reaffirming the organization's commitment to the health center and the community. He assured the community that Leja Bulela would continue its support of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center, promising to return and further extend their care to those in need.



Top left: 5 of the 9 staff members at the clinic pose for a photograph in their matching "uniform". **Top Right:** The choir performs for the attendees as refreshment wait consumption under the pavilion. **Bottom:** Excited attendees wait in line to enjoy refreshments at the 10-year celebration of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center.





NUMBERS TO KNOW


- 1,400 babies born between 2011-2021
- 1,300 "Well-Child" visits for children under 4
- 14,400 patients served
- 18,000 blood samples tested
- 960 children treated for malnutrition
- 20,000 children vaccinated against polio, measles, Hepatitis B, and much more

Over the course of its 10-year journey, the Kalala Muzeu Health Center has achieved remarkable milestones in providing healthcare services to the Tshibombo Tshimuangi community. A snapshot of the past decade reveals significant accomplishments, including an impressive record of 1,400 successful births without the loss of a single child, with only one maternal death. Additionally, the health center has played a pivotal role in promoting the well-being of children, having provided comprehensive "Well-Child" visits to 1,300 children between the ages of 0 and 4. The health professionals at the center have diligently attended to the needs of the community, having seen and treated 14,400 patients in total. Furthermore, the center's laboratory has been instrumental in analyzing a staggering 18,000 blood samples, aiding in the accurate diagnosis and treatment of various illnesses. Notably, the health center has made significant strides in addressing malnutrition, having treated 960 malnourished children while playing a vital role in improving their overall health. Additionally, the center's commitment to preventive care is evident through the administration of 20,000 vaccinations to children. These achievements reflect the transformative impact of the Kalala Muzeu Health Center.



FROM ARID TO ABUNDANT:

**A VISUAL JOURNEY OF THE EVOLUTION OF
WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE KALALA
MUZEU HEALTH CENTER**

A photograph showing a building with a light-colored, textured wall and a dark roof. A metal pipe runs along the roofline, supported by vertical poles. To the right, a green-painted metal water tower stands on a concrete base. The background shows a clear sky and some trees. A large, semi-transparent beige circle is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing text.

2011-PRESENT: THE THE WATER
TOWER, AN INAUGURAL PROJECT
ESTABLISHED IN 2011 ALONGSIDE THE
KMHC'S INCEPTION. DURING THE
RAINY SEASON, WATER IS DILIGENTLY
COLLECTED FROM THE ROOF,
ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE WATER
SUPPLY FOR THE CLINIC'S
OPERATIONS.



DISAPPOINTED DURING THE DRY SEASON: TWO MEN TURN THE FAUCET OF THE WATER TOWER, ONLY TO FIND IT EMPTY, HIGHLIGHTING THE CHALLENGES OF WATER SCARCITY AND THE DEPENDENCE ON RAINFALL FOR REPLENISHMENT.

INITIATED AS A PARTNERSHIP IN
2016 WITH THE SISTERS OF
EASTERN STAR, FURTHER
SUPPORTED BY COLLEGE HILL
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(CINCINNATI, OH), A TEAM OF
LOCAL WORKERS IS SEEN HERE IN
2018 DILIGENTLY EXCAVATING
THE GROUND FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A 6,600-
GALLON CISTERN.





A GROUP OF LOCAL RESIDENTS
DRAWS WATER FROM THE CISTERN:
WITHOUT A PUMP READILY
AVAILABLE, THE HEALTH CENTER
HAD TO ENDURE A LENGTHY WAIT
FOR ITS SHIPMENT FROM
LUBUMBASHI. THE CHALLENGING
ROAD CONDITIONS RESULTED IN AN
EXTENDED DELAY.



AFTER A LONG AND ARDUOUS JOURNEY SPANNING HUNDREDS OF MILES, THE NEWLY DELIVERED PUMP FOR THE HEALTH CENTER SITS DISCONNECTED, READY TO BE INSTALLED.

WITH THE PUMP NOW INSTALLED
AT THE CISTERN, A WOMEN
PATIENTLY WITS, 5-GALLON
CONTAINER IN HAND, TO WITNESS
THE FULFILLMENT OF HER WATER
NEEDS. THE ARRIVAL OF THE
PUMP BRINGS NEWFOUND EASE
AND EFFICIENCY TO THOSE
COLLECTING WATER.



PROJET D'EXTENSION ET DE CONSOLIDATION DES SYSTEMES
D'APPROVISIONNEMENT D'EAU POTABLE DANS LA VILLE DE MBUJIMAYI
FORAGE ET REHABILITATION DU RESEAU

ASUREP TSHIMUANGI


RESEAU 5

Enabel



Belgique

A SIGN ALONG THE MAIN ROAD IN
TSHIBOMBO TSHIMUANGI
MARKS THE PRESENCE OF ASUREP,
A POTABLE WATER PROVIDER ON
THE OUTSKIRTS OF MBUJIMAYI.

A photograph of a water spigot installed outdoors. The spigot has a green vertical pipe and a brass faucet with a red handle. Water is flowing from the faucet into a concrete channel. The surrounding area is dirt and grass. A circular text overlay is in the top right corner.

A WATER SPIGOT INSTALLED AT
THE KMHC, MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF THE
JOHNSON FAMILY FOUNDATION IN
CINCINNATI, OH. THE SPIGOT
DISPENSES TREATED WATER FROM
ASUREP (ASSOCIATION DES
USAGERS DU RESEAU D'EAU
POTABLE) THAT IS SAFE TO DRINK.

WORKERS INSTALL
PLUMBING FOR THE PIPED
WATER SYSTEM WITH THE
WATER TOWER AND
CISTERN IN VIEW SERVING
AS TESTAMENTS TO THE
KMHC'S JOURNEY TOWARDS
WATER SUSTAINABILITY



A WATER METER INSTALLED
AT THE SPICOT ENSURES
ALLOWS ASUREP TO TRACK
WATER USAGE AND INVOICE
THE KMHC MONTHLY BASED
ON USAGE.



ASUREP'S MAIN RESERVOIR AND
PUMPING STATION STANDS AS A
TESTAMENT TO THEIR
COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING A
RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY TO THE
COMMUNITY.

WATER PROJECT TIMELINE

2011

Kalala Muzeu Health Center Opens

The center opens with a 1,500-gallon water tower to capture rain water for use during dry season

2016

Partnership with Eastern Star Formed

Leja Bulela enters into a partnership with the Sisters of Eastern Star to fund the \$14,000 cistern project.

2020

Cistern Completed

After 4 years of planning and construction, the 6,600-gallon cistern opens at the KMHC.

2022

Johnson Family Foundation Partnership

The Johnson Family Foundation (Cincinnati, OH) commits to funding the ASUREP potable water installation at the KMHC.

2023

ASUREP Project Completed

The \$1,600 project is completed thus providing potable water at the KMHC. In honor of the investment, Leja Bulela provides free water to the community for the weekend.

Present

Monthly Expenses for ASUREP

Leja Bulela pays between \$70-100 monthly for water service from ASUREP.

Future

4th Phase of Water Project

In order to become fully sustainable and self-sufficient, a water well is needed at the KMHC. A well provides Leja Bulela with control of its water supply at an approximate cost of \$100,000.



Scan this QR Code to make a difference in the lives of the people in Tshibombo Tshimuangi! Join Leja Bulela's Water for Life donation campaign and help provide clean, potable drinking water. Every contribution counts towards ensuring a healthier and brighter future for the community.



PROJECT DELIVERING DIGNITY

A

ccess to sanitary products during menstruation is essential for women's health and well-being. In rural Congo, however, the lack of access to affordable, quality

sanitary products often forces women to resort to unhygienic practices, leading to adverse health outcomes. As part of Leja Bulela's ongoing commitment to improving conditions for women in Kasai, Project

"Delivering Dignity empowers women to take control of their menstrual health and challenge the often negative attitudes surrounding a very natural part of life for women world-wide"

Figure 1
Ms. Kadima, a coordinator for Leja Bulela-Mbujimayi, demonstrates how to use the Dignity Kits at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center



FIGURE 1

Delivering Dignity provided 200 Dignity Kits to young women over a 2-day period. Dignity Kits consist of 2 pairs of panties with waterproof and washable panty liners.

In Mbujimayi, the availability of commercial grade menstruation products is a major concern for young women.

Due to limited resources and infrastructure, these products are often difficult to access or completely unavailable. This lack of access not only limits women's ability to manage their menstrual cycles comfortably and hygienically, but also perpetuates the stigma surrounding menstruation.

However, reusable panties provide a much-needed solution for young women who want to continue their daily activities--specifically school--without fear of embarrassment or stigma. By offering a sustainable, cost-effective,

and discrete alternative to commercial menstrual products, Project Delivering Dignity empowers women to take control of their menstrual health and challenge the often negative attitudes surrounding a very natural part of life for women world-wide.

Getting the Dignity Kits to Congo was a challenging and time-consuming task, but the end result was rewarding. The process took approximately two months and involved multiple stages. The reusable panties were sewn by a group of women in Kenya and subsequently loaded onto a bus for transit. The bus journeyed through Tanzania and Zambia before finally arriving in Lubumbashi. From there, the kits were loaded onto a motorcycle and distributed to young women at the following locations: 100 kits to Le Lycee Muanjadi-Mbujimayi (an all girls Catholic school), 25 kits to the Church of Tshikisha in Mbujimayi,



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

and finally, 75 kits to the young women in Tshibombo Tshimuangi.

The partners in the process were Leja Bulela Board Member Jacky Kalubi, Jan Osborne and Sharlyn Stare (Cincinnati, OH), Nimo Kimani of Hami Imani Africa (Nairobi, Kenya), and Debby and Bob Sjogren of Richmond, VA. Hami Imani Africa empowers women and the community by providing life skills that lead to a self-sustainable livelihood (www.hamiimaniafrica.org).

Each kit represents an opportunity for a young woman to graduate from school on time without interruptions--and that is perhaps the most exciting aspect of the project. During a recent celebration for the success Delivering Dignity, project partner Sharlyn Stare of Cincinnati stated, "What seems like a small thing--a free Dignity Kit provided by a woman who cares--can literally change the life of a girl and enable her to have a future she may not have ever thought possible." Additional Dignity Kits will be distributed in Mbujimayi in August 2023!

"What seems like a small thing can literally change the life of a girl and enable her to have a future she may not have ever thought possible"

Sharlyn Stare (Cincinnati, OH)



FIGURE 5



FIGURE 4

Figure 2

100 young women gather in a classroom at Le Lycee Muanjadi in Mbujimayi on September 23, 2022 awaiting their Dignity Kits.

Figures 3 & 4

200 Dignity Kits are prepared for shipping at the Hami Imani Africa (HIA) headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Leja Bulela's partnership with HIA will continue in 2023. Visit their website at www.hamiimaniafrica.org

Figure 5

Ms. Kadima, a coordinator for Leja Bulela-Mbujimayi, picks up the delivery of kits from the Mbujimayi airport.



2021 Medical Mission Trip

Christian Brigades & Leja Bulela Put Care Into Action

Traveling to Congo is not for the faint of heart.

The moment you step off the plane at N'djili International Airport, the chaos is palpable. Covid documentation check. Covid test. Passport control. Verification of Covid documentation (again). Yellow Fever documentation check. Another passport check!

Once you've passed through the bureaucracy, you reach the baggage claim. Oh, the baggage claim in Kinshasa! It's like stepping into a circus where additional chaos reigns supreme.

Imagine a sea of suitcases, backpacks, and boxes, all jostling for attention on the carousel. Every so often, a traveler will spot their bag and pounce on it, only to find it is somebody else's. When you do locate your bag, it's off to the races as porters push and shove their way through the crowd hoping to help you carry your bags to your vehicle for a small tip.



Left: Following a 1-day layover in Istanbul, the Christian Brigades volunteers arrive at N'Djili at 10 PM and set up camp in the terminal in order to catch the 9AM flight to Mbuji mayi. **Right:** Mamu Jacky Kalubi catches a quick nap before the flight to Mbuji mayi.

On July 22, 2021, 42 volunteers from Christian Brigades and Leja Bulela dove headfirst into the chaos of N'Djili International Airport en route to the Kalala Muzeu Health Center in Tshibombo Tshimuangi with the goal of providing free medical care to the surrounding community for 4 full days. After spending an eventful night at the airport, the team took the 1 hour and 45 minute flight to the airport in Bipemba.

The contrast between Mbuji mayi and Kinshasa is stark and unmistakable. Comparatively, Mbuji mayi is relatively small and tranquil compared to the bustling metropolis of Kinshasa. The city moves at a slower pace, and despite being one of the largest cities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it has been neglected by the central government and suffers from a lack of investment in its infrastructure.

In addition to 42 volunteers, the group was accompanied by dozens of boxes and large duffle bags containing medical equipment, medications, eye glasses, and other items necessary for the mission.

Those items did not go unnoticed by airport staff and were twice confiscated: once in Kinshasa and upon arrival in Mbuji mayi. The sight of medical equipment being seized by customs agents at the airport--who were hoping to squeeze a few dollars from the volunteers--was a sobering reminder of the corruption and exploitation that plagues the DRC. After a bit of negotiation, we found a sympathetic agent who declared, "*Mema ndi ngenza mudimu mujalama*" (I do honest work). All items were subsequently liberated and the mission proceeded as planned.

After much-needed rest, the first day of the mission arrived with plenty of

"In addition to 41 volunteers, the group was accompanied by dozens of boxes and duffle bags containing medical equipment and other items necessary for the mission"

excitement! As the team arrived at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center, they were greeted with a heartwarming scene: hundreds of people, young and old, waiting patiently for medical attention. Upon stepping out of the SUVs that had bumped along the unpaved roads for 20 minutes on the way to the health center, the air was filled with joyful singing, clapping, and laughter.

Medical mission work is no walk-in-the-park. The days are long--10 and 12 hour--with only a 15-minute break thrown in--which barely leaves enough time to catch a breath, let alone grab a snack. Despite the grueling schedule, spirits remained high as one-by-one, the doctors and nurses made it a point to take time with each patient, actively listening to their concerns while providing the best care possible.

"Christian Brigades and Leja Bulela are a natural fit. We have a health center operating in a corner of the Congo with limited infrastructure, but we have electricity, a well-trained staff, and a membership supporting the functions of the center"

Dr. Martin Kabongo, LB Board Member

Christian Brigades has been working in rural areas for many years and relishes the opportunity to bring volunteers to areas where they can make a real impact. Free medical care is often scarce in rural communities like Tshibombo Tshimuangi, and the work of Christian Brigades can be life-changing for those who cannot afford care on their own.

Before embarking on a mission, it is essential to have a well-established partner in the field with the infrastructure to accommodate volunteers and a high number of patients. Leja Bulela's focused investment in Tshibombo Tshimuangi over the previous 15 years made the partnership between Leja Bulela and Christian Brigades possible. Having volunteered with Christian Brigades on previous missions, board member Dr. Martin Kabongo experienced the impact of these medical missions first-hand. Says Dr. Kabongo, "Christian Brigades and Leja Bulela are a natural fit. We have a health center operating in a corner of the Congo with limited infrastructure, but we have electricity, we have a well-trained staff, and we have a motivated membership supporting the day-to-day functions of the center."

Left: Dr. Magali Tshiamala meets with a patient on Day #2 of the mission.

Right: Executive Director Muamba Kabongo, Dr. John Dawkins, and volunteer Edgar Barrera had the best (or worst) seats in the house. Transportation is a challenge as the roads are unpaved and bumpy.





Left: Joyful anticipation: A woman in rural Congo experiences the wonder of an ultrasound for the first time, thanks to the efforts of Christian Brigades and medical volunteers. **Right:** The first ultrasound at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center! **Bottom:** Dr. Jenna Diggs removes a lipoma from a patient's arm on Day #1.



Medical care ranged from simple to complex. Many of the younger children visiting the health center had never seen a doctor. During registration, parents with young children were asked, "Musangu mushala uuvua muya n'enda ku buanga uvua diba kayi?" (When was the last time your child saw a doctor?) Often times, the parent would respond, "Muan'anyi katu

muanji kumona munganga to!" (My child has never been to a doctor) Overall, the mission received over 1,000 people.

People came with a wide range of ailments, from minor skin infections to more severe knee pain, and there were even some prenatal care cases. The volunteers worked tirelessly, providing thorough and compassionate care (and prayer) to each patient, despite the challenges posed by the sheer volume of people traveling to the health center daily.

Prior to arriving in Mbujimayi, it was assumed that the majority of patients visiting the mission would be from Tshibombo Tshimuangi and perhaps a few from Mbujimayi. However, last minute ads on local Catholic radio resulted in a significant increase in patient numbers from all over the region. During registration, which was the first point of contact for each patient, the registration team was amazed to hear that people

"Musangu mushala uuvua muya n'enda ku buanga uvua diba kayi? Muan'anyi katu muanji kumona munganga to!"

Left: Dr. Hopper examines a young girl as her mother and the translator look on. **Right:** Dr. Kabongo examines a woman's arthritic knee. **Bottom:** The infected heel of a young child in Tshibombo Tshimuangi.



Overall, the Christian Brigades-Leja Bulela medical mission trip was a phenomenal success. The need on the ground was overwhelming, but thanks to the hard work and dedication of the volunteers, the mission was able to provide crucial medical attention to those needing it the most. Plans for future trips with Christian Brigades are already in motion, and both organizations are actively seeking more volunteers, especially those with language skills, to help make these missions possible.

traveled from Kabeya-Kamwanga, Lukalaba, Katanda, Bena Kabimba, Ngandajika, Kabwa, Miabi, and several other localities in between. More often than not, the mode of travel was by foot or motorcycle. One couple from Katanda arrived at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center the day before the mission, spent the night under the pavilion, and saw the doctor the next morning.

But none of this work would be possible without the financial support from members and donors, whose generosity and commitment to the people of Tshibombo Tshimuangi make the Kalala Muzeu Health Center an epicenter of hope. Furthermore, the success of the mission is a testament to the power of partnerships and Christian Brigades is determined to continue making a difference in Kasai.

"One couple from Katanda arrived at the health center the day before the mission, spent the night under the pavilion, and saw the doctor the next morning"

Christian Brigades- Leja Bulela Mission

& by the numbers



30

The number of West Coast-based Christian Brigades volunteers. West coast is the best coast! 28 west coast volunteers on their way to Istanbul for a long layover before flying the Kinshasa. We are grateful for their dedication and commitment to the people of Tshibombo Tshimuangi!



The number of University of Mbujimayi medical students volunteering at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center. Leja Bulela is happy to empower the next generation of medical professionals! Our partnership with the University of Mbujimayi brought a team of eager med students to the mission. They were able to observe and ask questions, gaining invaluable experience in the field.

5

University of Mbujimayi med students Left to Right: Rachel Ngomba, Tshibangu Kabengele, LB volunteer Tshiunza Kalubi, Kassalu Muteba Martin, Kabangu Tshikunguila "Junior", and Rachel Kankolongo



13

Number of translators employed for the mission. Our language superheroes! Our translators were the unsung heroes of the medical mission, seamlessly switching between English, French, Tshiluba, and Swahili to make sure everyone could communicate. We could not have done it without them!

Translators: Mardoche Mbaya, M. Tshingomba, Stephane Mudingayi, Donat Lumbala, Jonh Tshiepelayi, Kabamba Bajika Patrick, Daniel Kimeme Kimeme, Ngimbi Milamba Jonathan, Joseph Kapongo, Jeff Tshibong, John Mukembi, Lamza Katumbwa, Crispin Muyombo



Above: Translators to the rescue! Christian Brigades founder, Sarahi Montoya, gives the translators a pep talk at morning meeting before the start of Day #3.

Left: No backseat driving here! Just sit back and enjoy the sights and sounds of the streets of Mbuji mayi!



Number of wardrobe changes. The crew brought a splash of color to the mission in Tshibombo Tshimuangi, with each day marked by a different colored shirt. Who says you can't look fashionable while serving?

5



3

Number of amazing women doctors! The majority of the volunteers were women, and our women doctors led the way in providing high-quality medical care from start to finish!



Above: The Kabongos made it a family affair! Muamba Kabongo, Tshilumba Kabongo, and Dr. Martin Kabongo on the last day of the mission **Right:** Sharon White, Dr. Jenna Diggs, Dr. Patricia Rios Brady, Mamu Jacky Kalubi, and Dr. Magali Tshiamala

42

Number of volunteers who traveled to Mbujimayi. 42 strong, making a difference together! Our amazing team of volunteers came from all walks of life, but they all shared a common goal to serve the people of Tshibombo Tshimuangi.

Volunteers: Alyse Ochoa, Angelica Olivares, Brenda Cervantes, Candace Narvaez, Christina Halverson, David Hopper, Denise Santellano, Edgar Barrera, Elizabeth Rocio Ochoa, Emma Miramontes, Eriberto Santiago, Erika Esquivel, Gustavo Garcia-Solis, Habacuc Reyes, Iris Gamboa, Irma Valles, Isela Chavarria, Ismael Montoya, Israel Esquivel, Jacqueline Aguilar, Jazmin Flores, Jeffrey Brady, Dr. Jenna Diggs, Dr. John Dawkins, Jorge Pineda, Juleidy Armenta, Kasandra Morales, Lucia Heredia, Maria Calix, Marina Carillo, Dr. Martin Kabongo, Migual Arzate, Monique Miranda, Muamba Kabongo, Nohemi Lopez, Musau Jacky Kalubi, Olga Rivera, Dr. Patricia Rios Brady, Dr. Magali Tshiamala, Sarahi Montoya, Sayra Velasco, Sharon White, Sinai Lepe, Tshilumba Kabongo, and Tshiunza Kalubi

Number of Mbujimayi-based doctors who volunteered during the mission. Local heroes in action! These incredible doctors selflessly volunteered their time and expertise during our time in Tshibombo Tshimuangi. With there deep understanding of the community and their unwavering commitment to work long days, they played a vital role in providing quality healthcare. Deepest thanks to Dr. Disashi Ntumba, Dr. Keleku, Dr. Charlotte Nsey, Dr. Tshiunza Mukeba Patrick, Dr. Ilunga Monga Gabriel, Dr. Lufuluabo Crispin, Dr. Jeef Mutombo, and Dr. Emile Ntumba.

8



Top Left: Christian Brigades founders Ismael and Sarahi Montoya share some laughs with the former Governor of Kasai-Oriental, The Honorable Mamu Jeanette Longa Musuamba **Middle:** Several children received shoes during the medical mission, prior to getting new shoes, however, Christian Brigades volunteers washed the feet of each child. **Top Right:** Dr. Jenna Diggs and one of our drivers, Samy, share a selfie prior to the team's return to Kinshasa. **Bottom Left:** Many of the children who visited the doctor received gifts. Barbie reigned supreme! **Bottom Right:** The team arrives at the airport in Mbujimayi prior to returning to Kinshasa.



REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST TRIP TO DR CONGO

A Member Spotlight Piece
by Tshilumba Kabongo

THE TRIP BEFORE THE TRIP

Prior to the long journey home, I had to make a few stops.

I left my home in Hercules to meet my brother in San Francisco. Together we flew down to San Diego to meet our father. After we gathered in San Diego we took a drive up the coast to Los Angeles where we would start our voyage back home. We rose early, before dawn, and got in the luxury SUV and drove 132 miles up the coast. On that drive we witnessed the most interesting natural phenomena. It was a lightning storm with no rain. It was a clear sign from God that this trip was going to mean much more than I could ever imagine. I was sitting in the front seat in awe of the sky lighting up periodically. The lightning dancing in the dark. There were no rumbles of thunder. No rain. No heavy winds..

Just lightning. It was surreal and beautiful.

We said our goodbyes to Mama Albertine and checked in for the long trek ahead of us. LA to Chicago, Chicago to New York, New York to Brussels, Brussels to Kinshasa. Let's just say it was one EPIC ride. However, the question that was top of mind for me was: Why must we go through Europe to get to Kinshasa? Why must this trip go through Brussels of all the cities in the world?



Kabongo Residence at Sunset, San Diego, California. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

For me, I never really had a desire to backpack through Europe. I loved to watch European football and have a love for cultural diversity, but going to and staying in Europe was and is not something I want to plan on doing. There has got to be a way to get to Congo via the Caribbean or South America. The one thing I very much appreciated about our stop in the Brussels airport was the bathroom. Let me tell you it has one of the top airport bathrooms in the whole world. I truly appreciated the space, the privacy and the luxury of that toilet. Little did I know how much I'd miss the amenities that I grew up with and was used to every single day.

"It was a clear sign from God that this trip was going to mean much more than I could ever imagine."

ARRIVING IN KINSHASA

CHAOTIC. That is the word that I would use to describe landing in Kinshasa. From the moment we stepped off the plane and hit the tarmac it was suboptimal efficiency with any and everything. To the unseasoned, and first-time traveler it is beyond unsettling. What are they saying? Where are we supposed to go? Is that Lingala? Who can speak English? Oh I know that word! However, amidst the chaos I found my calm. Upon producing my passport I was greeted warmly. An immediate acceptance met with a perplexed look as to why I couldn't speak a lick of Lingala or basic functional Tshiluba. It was a mixed feeling. It felt amazing to be where I belonged, and equally terrible I couldn't fully express myself independently.

Traffic in Kinshasa was off the hook. The rule: THERE IS NO RULE. Get in pray and hang on. I literally thought I was going to die in the first 10 minutes. I accepted that if this is how I was going to die, on a trip from the airport to the hotel, then so be it. That ride fundamentally shifted my way of being. My mortality was something that I was able to let go of and fully hand over to God. It was from that car ride that I had to move from a place of faith and faith alone. I was thinking to myself, "This is really how we get down in Kinshasa?" I was vibrating to and through my core, however, I didn't let it show on the outside. I just sat and breathed it all in. Here I am, finally. After all these years.



N'Djili Airport Kinshasa, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo



N'Djili Airport Kinshasa DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

"I was vibrating to and through my core, however, I didn't let it show on the outside. I just sat and breathed it all in."

Upon reflection, I fully understand why my father did not announce his arrival. We went on a whirlwind tour to meet and greet with damn near half the city. Wake up, meet someone at the hotel, feed them, pay them, go and rest. Get in a car, go drive somewhere else, meet, greet, bless with money and so on and so forth. However, my cousin, my dear, loyal, trustworthy, legendary cousin, was there as our guardian and guide. He was our everything in Kinshasa. It was such a blessing to have him there for us. He was our translator, our tour guide, our real blood family.

He was able to take us to the Kinshasa that the locals see, not just the tourist traps. There were times I just wanted to weep because it was so beautiful to be in the motherland and to see an endless sea of people with the same skin as me. The lack of diversity was a joy that I never even knew I could feel. A black Congolese man in Kinshasa is not an anomaly nor a rarity. It is such a contrast to my every day in America. Even in my own house I am the only one with skin like mine! So, the deep soul comforting feeling of being in the atmosphere of Limete, with all its history took my mind to places that I can't even reveal in this thought piece.



Congo River Kinshasa. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

"A black Congolese man in Kinshasa is not an anomaly nor a rarity. It is such a contrast to my every day in America."

THE FLIGHT TO MBUJIMAYI

On my second trip to N'djili, I was ready. I was ready for what I initially saw as chaos. I was able to see the systems within the systems. Now that I had the insight from my cousin and his airport connections, we flowed through from the parking lot to the terminal. Handshakes with francs prepared beforehand allow us to slide through to our CAA flight to Mbuji Mayi. At this point in my trip I was so comfortable I openly bribed airport staff to allow me to bring my comically huge bottle of water from security to the tarmac. The white person I was next to was not so lucky. The security staff made him pour his bottle out, while I stood next to him, taking huge gulps from my bottle.

I thought that my arrival to Kinshasa was emotional, boy was I wrong. When I landed in Mbuji Mayi my soul was stirred. I touched the earth and felt a kinship with the soil. The atmosphere felt different. The tense energy of Kinshasa gave way to a relaxed, almost sleep-like calm. Not only was I in Mbuji Mayi for the first time, I was there with my father, my brother, and my brother from another mother. On top of that, all the way from East Oakland, my brightest, most intelligent student that I ever had the privilege of teaching was there with me. She came on this trip to serve. She came on this trip to experience something new. She came to do the work we set out to do. I didn't have to beg her, nor even convince her. She asked about the opportunity, and on her own did the work to get there. It was and still is, one of the most beautiful aspects of my first trip home. My precious pupil, now mature and university educated, is there on the ground with the people who have known me my whole life. What a story!



Mbuji Mayi Airport Mbuji Mayi, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo



Tshilumba Kabongo and Isela Chavarria. Kalala Muzeu health center. Tshibombo Tshimuangi, Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

"I thought that my arrival to Kinshasa was emotional, boy was I wrong. When I landed in Mbuji Mayi my soul was stirred."

THE SERVICE

The work at the clinic was challenging and nothing about it was easy. We rose early, we went to work in the village clinic and did our service to the community. I was put in charge of the pharmacy and I had no idea what I got myself into. However, since I was spiritually prepared for anything I stepped into the space and gave it my all every single minute I was in there. The first thing was that we had to unpack the medicine. Then sort it, label it and organize it, all while there were people waiting for prescriptions. The space was small. The weather was hot, and we were working without an initial clear vision. However, that did not stop us from making decisions, bringing a positive attitude and joy to the space and going hard. I sweat through my shirt in the first 30 minutes. However, after we got the space organized, the pharmacy became the space and place to be.

We had music going, we were singing and dancing, and we were handing out prescriptions like a well-oiled machine. The nurse team liked to stop by and vibe out with us and we did our best to bring energy and purpose to our part of the mission work. The days were long. The nights were even longer. The bugs, the lack of amenities, and the rolling internet outages took a toll on me. I missed my family and kids so much that if my brother even mentioned a name I would give him a look. I never prayed like I did on this trip. For patience, for perspective, for relief, for blessings, and for a better future for my people. However, towards the end I started to realize that it was just the colonization of my own mind that skewed my perspective. My people are free from the expectations of American life. The dependence on God far exceeded the dependence on technology. Every day was truly a gift and I finally got to realize that by the time the mission work with the brigade ended.



Nurse Christie Halverson and Tshilumba Kabongo with staff at the Kalala Muzeu Health Center, Tshibombo Tshimuangi, Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo



Somewhere on the Route Nationale No. 2, Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

THE ROAD TO BIBANGA

The road to Bibanga made me a real man. From Mbuji Mayi, we took a trip up to Bibanga and boy let me tell you, it was a ride of a lifetime. All 12 feet of my brother and I tucked into the back of an NGO White Toyota Land Cruiser. We got a flat tire on the way there and on the way back. That road was bumpy and windy, and crooked, and jagged, and dusty, and exceptionally beautiful. My physical discomfort and exhaustion turned to awe and wonderment. We went to Sunday service and let me tell you, the Spirit of the Lord was definitely in the building. I prayed, sang, and quietly wept in the village of my ancestors. I visited my Kakus house and gravesite.

I walked the same paths as my parents and my mind was filled with visions of the past. There was a question that I kept thinking about over and over: "HOW IN THE WORLD DID MY FAMILY GET FROM HERE TO CALIFORNIA?!" It was a humbling experience. It was a life altering experience. How did it alter my life? It was full circle. I was a parent with my parents, while with their parents in a village we have been in since time immemorial. In the village we were handed a photo book, in that photo book was a picture from every single stage of MY life. This was my place. These were my people. They knew me and always knew me and we had no idea if the day was ever going to come that we would meet in the physical.



Shambuyl Kabongo at the gravesite of my grandfather.
Bibanga, Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo



Sunday Service, Bibanga Presbyterian Church, Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

THE REFLECTIONS

What a trip. It was simultaneously the best and the worst trip I have been on. It was the worst because I can't believe it took me so long to go back home. It was the worst because the distance to travel was so great and so tedious and expensive. It was the best because I finally got to experience true home cooking at home. I got to eat fufu until my belly could take no more. I got to finally meet my first cousins after a lifetime (literally). This trip came at the right time in my maturation process. I was able to learn so much more about my family and my parents. Things made so much more sense when I was able to be in the same time-space as my ancestors. This trip was my birthright. It gave me more intentional purpose with my time here on Earth.

I highly recommend all Congolese diaspora go back home. There is no place like it.



The Children of Tshibombo Tshimangi. Tshibombo Tshimangi Kasai-Oriental, DRC. Photo by Tshilumba Kabongo

Kalala Muzeu Health Center Service Statistics

2020-2023

2020		
Month	Births	Non-Maternity Patients Treated
Jan	13	35
Feb	8	42
Mar	15	48
Apr	5	27
May	3	21
Jun	11	18
July	11	29
Aug	15	29
Sep	10	36
Oct	8	28
Nov	4	34
Dev	9	30
Totals	111	377
2021		
Month	Births	Non-Maternity Patients Treated
Jan	11	30
Feb	11	42
Mar	15	48
Apr	10	26
May	10	42
Jun	12	37
July	6	35
Aug	10	49
Sep	9	67
Oct	10	57
Nov	13	55
Dev	11	62
Totals	127	549
2022		
Month	Births	Non-Maternity Patients Treated
Jan	16	50
Feb	7	48
Mar	16	60
Apr	11	17
May	11	33
Jun	10	26
July	13	37
Aug	13	47
Sep	15	64
Oct	6	55
Nov	10	49
Dev	13	24
Totals	141	510
2023		
Month	Births	Non-Maternity Patients Treated
Jan	12	26
Feb	5	37
Mar	13	35
Apr	8	34
May	8	50
Totals	46	182
20-23	425	1618
Totals		

Kalala Muzeu Health Center Expenditures

2020-2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	\$ 550.00		\$ 800.00	\$ 1,705.00
February	\$ 875.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 650.00	\$ 580.00
March	\$ 550.00	\$ 2,655.00	\$ 630.00	\$ 985.00
April	\$ 550.00	\$ 1,100.00		\$ 580.00
May	\$ 550.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,050.00	\$ 1,008.00
June	\$ 30.00	\$ 665.00	\$ 580.00	\$ 650.00
July	\$ 550.00	\$ 582.00	\$ 1,410.00	
August	\$ 550.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 960.00	
September	\$ 627.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 580.00	
October	\$ 1,525.00	\$ 1,350.00	\$ 350.00	
November	\$ 550.00	\$ 650.00	\$ 2,560.00	
December	\$ 1,100.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 833.00	
Totals	\$ 8,007.00	\$ 10,452.00	\$ 10,403.00	\$ 5,508.00
			20-23 Total	\$ 34,370.00
			+Transfer Fees (5%)	\$ 36,088.50



THE LEJA BULELA ANNUAL GIVING LIST (2020-2023)

CELEBRATING CONTRIBUTORS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Aja Aguirre	Jevic Muteba	Mukendi Tubajika
Alex & Georgette Kasongo	Jim Ngokwey	Mulamba Kalubi
Allyson Sipe	Jocelyn Kabongo	Mwanga Kazadi
Amelia Rivera-Burnett	Joel Mpoloesha	Nadege Kanzeu
Angela Kabongo	John & Maguy Kongolo	Nadine Luboya
Armando Osuna	John Henry	Nana Katanda
Augustin & Rose Kabongo	John Ntumba	Neeki Bashiri
Badia & Agnes Katambwa	John Rising	Nelly Muamba
Barb Wiley-Kroner	Julian Mensah	Ngoyi Bukonda
Benitel Kabongo	Julie Buatu	Nicole Dowdell
Beya Kasongo	Julienne Muteba	Nkitabunyi Tshiamala
Bululu Ngokwey	Junior Kayembe	Nohemi Lopez
Caitlin Kelley	Kabeya Nkashama	Nyanguila Kakolesha
Calvin & Ndaya Harper	Kabuika Butamina	Patrick Mulumba
Casey Carr	Kalombo Kadima	Pascal Mutanda
Chris Cassidy	Kalonji Kadima	Paul Moore
Christine Ilunga	Kalubi Florence Muganguzi	Peter & Blanche Kabengele
Clarisse Kabongo	Kalubi Tshiangala	Phillip Jackson
Clarisse Mavuanda	Kanku Kabongo	Rachael Jeffrey
Clement & Justine Lufuluabo	Katharine Wilkinson	Raymond Mbuyi
Colleen Kabongo	Kayimbi & Mathilde Tubajika	Rebecca Stutzman
Courtney Cerefice	Kayowa Kasongo	Rob & Mbuyi Brox
Crystal Gandy	Kellen Williams	Romain Wankombe
Danny Kabongo	Ketsia Kahambwe	Rosario Eva
Darrick Dansby	Kunaal Arya	Sam & Marlee Stephens
Eric Trebes	Laetitia Kalombo	Sarah Purdy
Geneen Gin	Laura Kupe	Schuyler Murdock
Gilbert & Melanie Mulamba	Lena Kalubi	Shannon Carvajal
Gillian Abineri	Lukogho Kasomo	Pastor Stephane Kalonji
Ginny Tallent	Magali Tshiamala	Stephen Dronen
Greg Koehler	Mairin Baity	Susan Popovic
Gustave & Julienne Mbuyi	Mairin May	T.J. & Rutha Kadima
Herve Tshibengabo	Marc Mundembu Mbuyi	Tanya Zangaglia
Ilunga & Deona Kalala	Marcel Kazadi	Tara Jean Mosley
Isabelle Kalubi	Martin & Albertine Kabongo	Thierry Tubajika
Isela Chavarria Oviedo	Marycarmen Castro	Tibo Katambwa
Ismael & Sarahi Montoya	MaryFrances Todarello	Tim & Janet Johnson
Jacky Kalubi	Masengu Kalala	Tshijuka Kalala
Jacques Mbiya	Michael Kanyiki	Tshilumba Kabongo
Jamaal Mobley	Mick Mukadi Kasonga	Tshimankinda & Marceline
Jane Kanyinda	Misumba Kalala-Gandy	Kadima
Jean-Marie & Honorine Kanyinda	Mpanda Kalala	Tshisumpa Kalala
Jeff & Patricia Rios Brady	Muamba Kabongo	Tshiunza Kalubi
Jeffrey Delaney	Muenyi Kalala	Valentine Muyumba
Jerome Ntumba	Mujinga Felicia Kadima	Vicki Swartz
Jessica Powell	Mujinga Massela	
	Mukala Kabongo	



THE LEJA BULELA ANNUAL GIVING LIST (2020-2023)

CORPORATE CONTRIBUTORS & CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Christian Brigades
College Hill Presbyterian Church
Faust Haus Coffee Company*
Fly243, LLC*
Little Caesars*
SonLight Power
The Johnson Family Foundation
The Law Practice of Dennison Keller
The Seven Hills School
Yowa Events*

*- Denotes Conference Sponsor



THE LEJA BULELA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Ilunga L. Kalala, Board Chairman
Mrs. Nicole Leslie Dowdell
Dr. Blanche Kabengele
Mr. Augustin Kabongo
Dr. Martin Kabongo
Ms. Musau Jacky Kalubi
Dr. Jean-Marie Kanyinda
Ms. Kayowa T. Kasongo
Ms. Caitlin Kelley
Dr. Kayimbi Tubajika

THE LEJA BULELA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mr. Muamba I. Kabongo, Executive Director
Mr. Tshiunza D. Kalubi, Deputy Executive Director
Mr. Tshilumba Kabongo, Membership Committee Chair & Planning Committee '23
Mrs. Deona Kalala, Planning Committee Chair '23
Clarisse Kabongo, Planning Committee '23
Crystal Gandy, Planning Committee '23
Lena Kalubi, Planning Committee '23
Misumba Kalala-Gandy, Planning Committee '23
Mukendi Tubajika, Planning Committee '23
Ndaya Kalubi Harper, Planning Committee '23
Tshijuka Kalala Nelson, Planning Committee '23



VISIT US AT WWW.LEJABULELA.ORG