



Dear Friends,

Much has happened since our last update. Undoubtedly you've heard about the violence in Kenya following the presidential elections. The violence did affect the clinic, though perhaps not in the way you'd imagine. Lwala remained peaceful, and for precisely that reason many patients who would otherwise have gone elsewhere walked great distances to get healthcare in Lwala.



Though there was a delay re-opening after the holiday, our clinical staff took advantage of a relatively peaceful window in mid January to return to Lwala, and the health center has been running ever since. Because the city hospitals were immobilized by the unrest, our patient load increased significantly. We are now seeing well over 2,000 patients per month.

Several members of our U.S. team were in Kenya during the violence including myself, our founders Milton and Fred Ochieng', members of our board Caitlin Reiner and Cathy Chamberlin, and friend Katie Rogers. Thankfully we managed to avoid direct danger. Milton, Fred, Caitlin and Katie safely delivered a breach baby while the clinicians were away for Christmas!

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## RECENT KENYAN POLITICS

The presidential election on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007 pitted incumbent Mwai Kibaki against challenger Raila Odinga. Voting day was peaceful, and the turnout tremendous. Over the next couple of days early returns showed Odinga leading by a significant margin, and his party taking a large percentage of seats in the parliament. However, on the 30<sup>th</sup> the electoral commission announced Kibaki the winner and swore him in for a second term, and the country spiraled into violence. The fighting left over 1,000 people dead and 300,000 displaced. Even in areas where tribes had lived intermingled for decades, members of minority tribes were forcibly removed, their homes torched, and their businesses destroyed. Subsequent investigation showed that much of the violence was not random. Political leaders on both sides used tribal structures to perpetrate violence. Election rigging by both parties was found to be so widespread that it would be impossible to know the true outcome of the election.

Months of intensive international intervention, led by Kofi Annan, culminated in a political agreement on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. Kibaki will remain president, Odinga will become prime minister with some executive powers, and cabinet seats will be awarded according to party representation in the parliament. Though the history of these two men does not recommend optimism, the public and international outcry for peace may be enough to hold this agreement together. Things in Kenya are slowly returning to normal. The economic and social consequences of the conflict will likely remain for some time, however, and the humanitarian issues associated with over a quarter million displaced people will not go away overnight.



In spite of the challenges, our team in Lwala continues to thrive. We hired a third nurse named Vine, a pharmacist named Dennis, and a new more experienced lab technician named Michael. The Lwala Village Education Committee selected five



new students to receive high school scholarships this year. One is a woman we featured in our holiday update; Monica was the first mother to deliver at the clinic in September. Olivia was her fifth baby. Several years ago Monica decided to return to school to finish her primary education. She successfully graduated from primary school in December and moved on to high school in January. She continues to inspire the women around her: "There is no end of studying. Even if you're old the way I am you can study. It has no end so anybody who wishes can do the same."



The work has continued in the U.S. as well. On March 1<sup>st</sup> the students of Dartmouth Medical School put on the "Dance for a Dream," a lively event that raised money to build a maternity program in Lwala. That event also

honored the late Deborah Miller, a nurse midwife who advised us on our maternal and child health programs. We feel greatly privileged to be a part of her legacy of passionate service in Africa.

We're looking forward with excitement to the release of the documentary *Sons of Lwala*, which follows Milton and Fred on their journey to build the clinic. A Nashville preview on March 27<sup>th</sup> with Bill Frist as an honored guest and the band Jars of Clay performing live will benefit the LCA. A preview in Hanover, New Hampshire is coming up in early May. More information about these events and clips from the documentary are available at our website, and details about the documentary are available at [www.SonsofLwala.com](http://www.SonsofLwala.com).

Our new website [www.LwalaCommunityAlliance.org](http://www.LwalaCommunityAlliance.org) is full of great pictures and rich detail about our programs, and we're beginning to blog regularly about our Lwala experience on the news page. Please join in and learn along with us!

Thank you for continuing by our side on this journey. Your support makes all the difference.

With hope and appreciation,

*Joel Wickre ~ Executive Director*

