FLYING FOR LIFE

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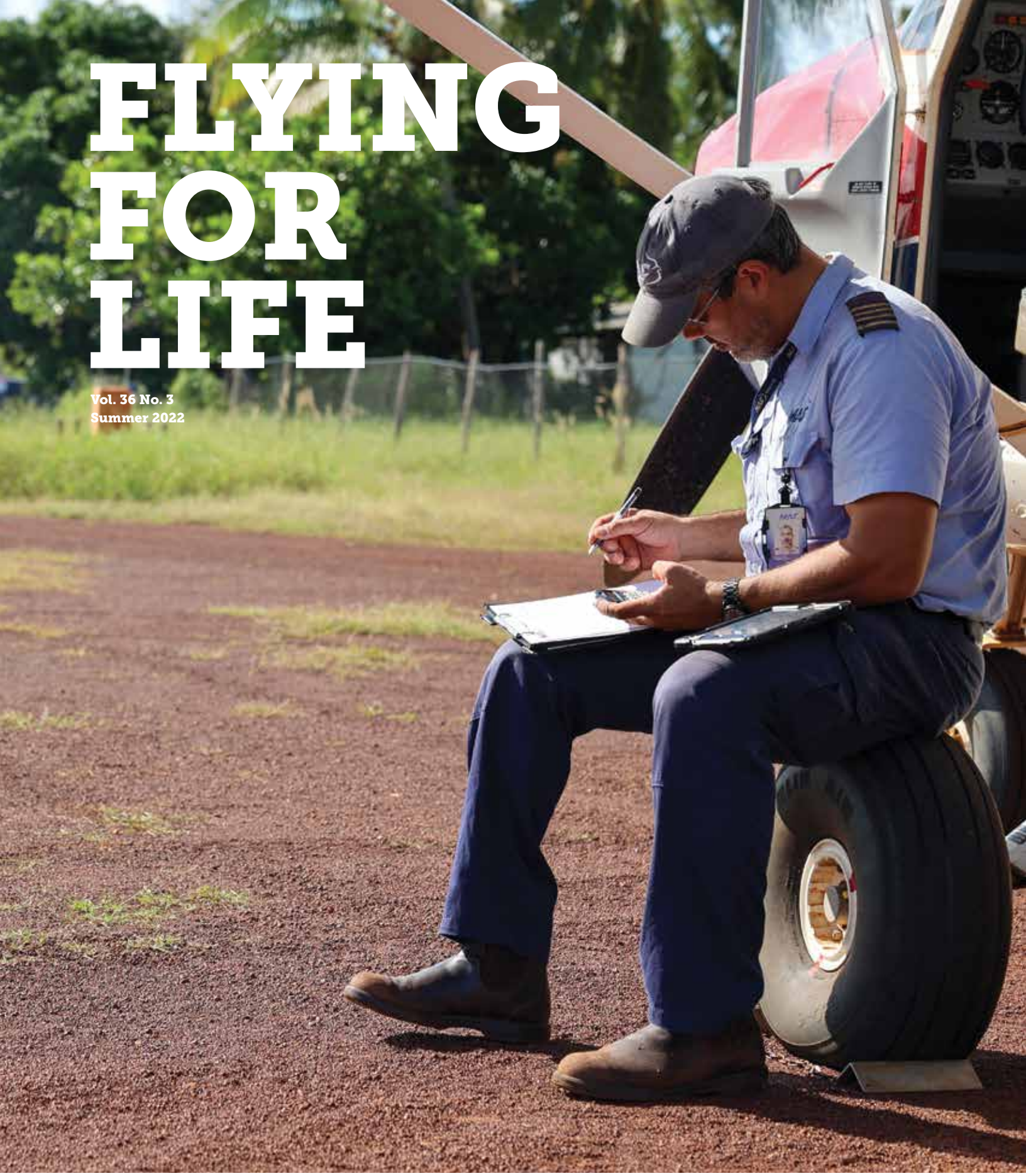

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Brad Bell
President & CEO
MAF Canada

School may be out for the summer, but the hope that education brings to the future generation is never on hold.

I've always believed that education is the key to improving your life. It creates a spark inside us, and a hunger to want to do more, learn more, and create a brighter future for ourselves and our families. Reading and writing is fundamental to success- it helps us improve living standards, create sustainable agriculture practices, and open businesses.

But in isolated areas, access to school, materials, and teachers is not a given. How is hope through learning gained when access is so difficult?

I've had opportunity to witness hope arriving first-hand. In many of these communities, it comes in the form of an MAF plane. It carries teachers, supplies, medications, and building materials. It picks up critical medical patients, and takes them for urgent care. After seeing and experiencing that, and then returning to Canada, it made me want to work harder to ensure that all of this and more is possible through what we do.

On reading through this issue of *Flying for Life*, the hope that is brought through education really stood out to me. Not only are futures becoming brighter for these students, they're able to improve their entire communities through what they're learning. The school building that MAF has been flying materials in for will serve generations of children, and maybe some of these will go on to teach in the very same school that educated them. They're gaining skills, lifelong friends and community, and work ethic - and all these attributes will help them on their journey.

I'm reminded daily of the privilege I have to serve with MAF alongside so many others who have sacrificed of themselves to show God's love through what we do. I am continually humbled that I get to be a part of that. Even though I'm not an engineer keeping our aircraft safe, or a pilot delivering vital supplies, I am blessed to play a role in making what we do possible.

Your role is equally important.

For every dollar we are paid by partners and those who fly with us in various countries, we provide three additional dollars through fundraising to make these life-saving and life-altering flights possible. You, our donors, are absolutely integral in keeping our planes in the air. YOU are bringing hope. Thank-you for believing in brighter futures for people in all the locations where we serve.

Thank-you to teachers everywhere, who are passionate about igniting a spark for learning. And to those who serve with MAF as teachers, you go above and beyond to minister, inspire, and love the children of our staff; training them in work-ethic, compassion, and a drive for their futures.

To our staff on the field who make this work possible every day - thank-you, too! I feel as though my words are inadequate in conveying your worth, and what you are doing for His kingdom. Together, we are reaching the isolated, with a means for a future.

In Him,

Brad Bell
CEO, MAF Canada

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Lighting up the future in South Sudan

In rural South Sudan, electricity not only brings light to a school, it also brings hope for the future.

photo Jenny Davies

church resources

Do you want to help your church, school, or social club partner with MAF to provide a lifeline of hope to forgotten people living in desperate need?

Your congregation or group can help change the lives of people living in remote communities in several ways:

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mafc.org/church-resources

photo Mark & Kelly Hewes (Kenya)

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Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) is a Christian organization whose mission is to fly light aircraft and use other technologies in isolated parts of the world to bring help and hope to people in need. Since 1946, MAF has been spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ in places of deepest human need – where flying is not a luxury, but a lifeline. Worldwide, MAF provides over 200 flights a day. **Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada** is a Canadian registered charity (Registration # 12994 2561 RR0001) and is able to issue receipts for income tax purposes. Financial statements are available on request. Every gift helps! Please mail your gift, visit us at mafc.org, or call us toll-free at 1.877.351.9344. Each gift allocated toward an MAF approved program will be used as allocated with the understanding that when any given need has been met, additional allocated gifts will be used where most needed.

Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada is a charter member of the *Canadian Centre for Christian Charities*.

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Cover MAF pilot Matt Henderson updates his log after arriving in Laynhapuy region in East Arnhem Land. **Photo** Annelie Edsmyr

Above MicroSD card and printed details
Below Marlene Bloch encodes the cards
Right MAF pilot Timon Kundig with a package of microSD cards for distribution in rural areas

Big things come in small packages

Story and photos: **Joy Suarkia**

Marlene Bloch, a volunteer from Germany, has been serving with MAF Technologies in Papua New Guinea for the last five months. She has been helping with home schooling for families there, and also assisting the Learning Technologies Department at MAF Technologies to upload and lock micro SD cards.

Christian content and other fun and educational applications are loaded onto these cards and then distributed through the Bible Box for rural communities.

This set of microSD cards are write-protected so that the contents cannot be removed or changed. This is vital so that the cards serve their original purpose; distributing and sharing the word of God to benefit and impact individuals living in isolation.

There are no proper phones or network available in a remote setting to download digital applications. But now with the already loaded microSD card, this enables a person living in rural PNG to have easy access to and share the variety of Christian digital resources provided in the microSD card.

The microSD card is well suited for this role since it is convenient for the inexpensive button phones or feature phones that are commonly used in the remote communities of PNG. All the resources on the microSD card are also accessible on smartphones, tablets, and computers.

Without MAF these Christian resources wouldn't be in the hands of people living in hard to reach places. ●

Snapshots from the field

We often get glimpses into the days and lives of our staff serving overseas. These images were too good not to share!

Keeping Up Rural Airstrips (photo Joseph Tua)

For several weeks this year, MAF PNG pilot Joseph Tua flew Rural Airstrip Agency officers in the Western Province. They spend an hour on the ground at each airstrip to inspect, speak to the airstrip maintenance officer about what they need to do to keep the airstrip in good condition, and deliver fuel drums and lawn mowers where needed. Joseph says, "Most of the airstrips we have been to have seen significant improvements, and as a bush pilot, I really appreciate the work they do!" ●

Coffee time (photo Tim Neufeld)

Coffee season is in full swing, and earlier our Goroka team flew 18 tons of coffee beans to market from various isolated communities. These farmers don't have any other means to transport their coffee to be sold, so this is one way MAF can support local communities in places where we operate. ●

Ready for anything! (photo Jeshiah Thiessen)

On May 2nd, MAF was tasked with the unexpected medevac of a young man who had broken his femur in a road accident in rural Madagascar. His aunt told us, "He had the accident early in the afternoon, and by 10pm, we still hadn't been able to see a doctor." They called MAF for assistance and early the next morning he was flown to Mandritsara and had a successful surgery to repair his leg! ●

Stopping Measles in its tracks (photo Irina Randriamandra)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, measles vaccination campaigns were affected or postponed in 41 countries, which increases the risk of this infectious disease.

In May, Canadian pilot Ryan Unger flew 527kg of measle vaccines and related cargo to Maralambo, Madagascar. These vaccines will reduce the risk of an outbreak, like the one in 2019 which claimed the lives of 800 people in Madagascar. ●

Opening doors through reading

In many countries where we operate, education is the key to unlocking hopeful futures for children. MAF's Sarah Montgomery aims to help children stay on track through tutoring in a local Ugandan school.

story and photos
Sarah Montgomery

Above The Doors Primary School
Left Sarah in the classroom
Right Learning to read

Our family moved to Uganda in August 2015 where Nathan serves with MAF as an Aircraft Engineer.

I first learned of Doors Primary School in 2018 through a friend. She had been connected with the school previously and was aware of the need for help with students who were below grade level in their English reading. We met with the director and discussed the best way we could help. We began tutoring the first group in a small extra space at the school, with all the kids crowded into the little room! As the need grew, we expanded our tutoring services to two different groups and levels.

I love teaching the kids who are just starting to learn their letter names and sounds; you know exactly where to start. My friend enjoyed working with the older ones, so our team worked out well. When the kindergarten teachers heard us teaching songs for the vowel sounds, they asked if we could also teach their classes! Again, our lessons expanded, and we would end the morning in the Junior Kindergarten class teaching the vowel sounds in song as an easy way to remember them.

Before now, my only experience with this sort of learning was teaching my own girls to read and helping out at their elementary school in Canada with the "Book in the Bag" reading program. I would go in one morning a week and read with each student for a few minutes, then they would exchange their book and choose a new one to take home for the night to practice, but this new tutoring role was a learning experience for me as well.

I think it's amazing how God works. I don't have any formal post-secondary education, but if I had gone to university, it would have been to become a teacher. And now God has seen fit to use my gifts and desires to serve Him in this way.

Before Covid, my friend and I each had one group that we would work with, and that would cover all the kids that needed extra reading support. Now, I have four groups. The gap in their learning is very large – they have missed school for two years, as Uganda had one of the longest school closures in the world during the pandemic. They had no means of doing school online. Now the younger ones are too old to be in Junior Kindergarten, so they've all been promoted because of their ages. This creates a large need to fill in the gaps that they would have been taught in those early years.

On a typical day, I arrive at the school at 8am, just as the students are lining up outside for Chapel. I gather my first group - the youngest level - and head into one of the small classes. There is no electricity at the school so if it is cloudy, it can be a little hard to see in the room. I spend 45 minutes with them working on one new letter sound, review the letters we have done, and then we work on writing that letter in their notebooks with examples of words that begin with that sound. They have a genuine love of writing! It is so fun to see their enthusiasm, although it might also be because they get to use the new pencils that I bring with me!

> "I think it's amazing how God works. I don't have any formal post- secondary education, but if I had gone to university, it would have been to become a teacher. And now God has seen fit to use my gifts and desires to serve Him in this way.

After writing, we go over some sight words, then look at books as I read one on one with as many as I can in the remaining time. I have been able to purchase a number of phonics readers that are very basic and great for these early readers.

My second group is much the same but moves along a bit faster, and I am often able to add a read aloud story into our time. They love the picture books I bring, and always want to look at it after I finish reading to them.

My third group is working on some of the trickier parts of reading English. The different spellings of a single sound can be very hard to remember. I don't think I really thought about how many ways you can spell a long 'a' sound before I was tutoring. I will have different work sheets of writing activities for them, as well as reading with them one on one as time allows. Our read aloud with this more advanced group has been a small chapter book about a boy in Africa who is the No.1 Car Spotter in his village, and the different adventures and problems he encounters.

My fourth group is the older students (grade five-six equivalent) and their greatest need is spelling. Each lesson I spend focusing on a spelling pattern and doing simple activities to help them remember those words. Lots of exposure to words and books helps in many ways.

The hardest part for me is when I see a student struggling to grasp the basics, and I realize the possibility of a learning disability that is hindering their progress. It could be dyslexia, or simply the need for glasses. Both are things that these student's families would not have the means to pursue a further diagnosis of. I would love to see the school develop a lending library. They have only a few books that the teachers use once in a while during English class. Exposure to books and being able to read to family members would be a huge boost in their English reading abilities.

There are many rewarding moments as well. Hearing a student blend sounds together to read a word for the first time; it seems small, but it's a big deal after all our lessons, multiple tries at sounding things out, and hearing all the different letter sounds. I've also been given feedback through the Head of School, who has told me that the teachers have seen a noticeable improvement in the students' performance in their classes. Even their confidence has grown, just from being able to read better.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve my community where I am, and to use the skills God has given me. I truly believe that He has given this role to me for a reason, and if He continues to enable me serve here, I know He will also guide these kids into an incredible future. ●

Above Left Learning how letter sounds are made
Top Right Learning to form words
Above Right Sarah and Nathan with Jasmine, Lauren, Aliyah, and Hannah

Giving peace a chance

Based in Eastern DR Congo, the Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC) works with children coming out of armed groups to help rehabilitate and reintegrate them into their communities in the conflict-affected provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. They work tirelessly to keep communities together, build relationships, and train people from various tribes to live together peacefully.

Story and interview: **Chaundra Eagar**
with photos courtesy of **CRC** and **Greg Funnell (Peace Direct)**

With a population of more than 80 million people, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the fourth most populous country in Africa. A lack of infrastructure, especially roads, makes travel throughout the country difficult. For much of the past two decades, this country has been torn apart by conflict. The Second Congo War left almost six million people dead in one of the most violent conflicts in the world. Even today, conflict continues to disrupt the lives of thousands of people in the eastern provinces of the country.

Executive Director of CRC, Rehema Mussanzi, spoke with us recently on the accomplishments, hardships, and why the risk of working in these conflict zones is worth it. "Centre Résolution Conflits has been operating here since 1993, and I've been heading the CRC for the past three years. I was born in Congo and spent most of my formative years here. I was just a child during the second Congo War, and it left a huge impact on me. It led to my parents leaving Congo for the UK because of security, but I always had it in the back of my mind that I would come back. It was like a magnetic pull for me. Five years ago, I realized that pull was a calling, and I began to pray, and to figure out what I could do if I returned. That's when I was selected as the head of CRC.

"The link with MAF has always been there for me - as kids we used to fly with MAF quite often. My parents worked for CME (Centre Medical Evangelique) and would fly to remote or dangerous locations to deliver medical supplies and equipment. My dad was a radiologist, and my mum was the hospital administrator and later on the chief auditor."

> "We cannot wait for others to bring peace, it starts with us.

Building a Peaceful Oasis

CRC is a peace-building NGO, focused on reaching at-risk population segments of North Kivu and Ituri. They have been able to rehabilitate just over 1000 former child soldiers, and have reintegrated over 5000 vulnerable adults and former combatants back into their communities. In addition to that, they empower communities in the fight against child labor in mining quarries. Addressing this issue contributes to peace, and allows young people to go back to school, find a job, and flourish.

Between 2020 and 2021, 140 children (including 86 girls; some as young as eight years old) who were working in gold mines, have been reintegrated into schools, and 200 women have received micro-credits to help them create income-generating activities. Through this initiative, CRC continues towards their calling; focusing on the vulnerable and at-risk segments of these communities, and working towards peace.

Opposite Top Rehema with some former child soldiers
Opposite Bottom Left Enroute to Beni with MAF
Opposite Bottom Right A hazardous gold mine
This page The CRC market outreach

"We also work on decreasing the risk of violent conflict through the training of community leaders in conflict affected communities. We try to change what their understanding of conflict is, and provide them with tools and mechanisms to deal with, and prevent conflict. We realized that peace committees tended to disappear with the end of our projects, so we began to identify existing groups, like women's groups and youth groups, and built their capacity. Now they have all taken the ownership of the peace process in their locations. By empowering ordinary people to identify issues and causes of root conflicts, they can support the whole community and better develop a plan for reconciliation. It rebuilds trust where it has broken down.

"In Beni, a huge chasm of distrust had grown between civilians and the military who they thought should be protecting them. Whenever people were dissatisfied, they would riot to call the authorities to attention. As part of the Beni Peace Build Project, CRC facilitated public forums to allow everyone to voice their concerns and be heard. FFollowing these forums, the authorities that took part receive more visits from all people. This project has had an amazing impact on maintaining a level of stability, and helping people realize the importance of talking things out instead of rioting or violence. The success of this project has been compared to creating a peaceful oasis in an unstable area, where conflict affected areas have been negatively affected by militia groups."

Reintegration of Child Soldiers

Although many militia members want to stop fighting, they're unable to see any opportunities for work outside of the armed groups. CRC works with them to get them to lay down their arms and integrate into the national army, or find other means of income. CRC also negotiates with these groups for the release of child soldiers who have been forcefully taken from their communities. Once the children have been removed from the environment of violence, the process to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into their communities begins.

For many children, living amidst the chaos and destruction of violent conflict, taking up arms is one of the only livelihoods available to them. While life is hard in the militia, it provides a kind of stability and protection to young people who are unable to see any other opportunities for themselves outside of the militias. CRC helps children re-imagine their futures by presenting them with new opportunities and offering psychosocial support to deal with the trauma they have faced.

(continued)

> Our activities require a lot of travel back and forth, and MAF has been a lifesaver for us! We haven't had to stop our activities because we could not get there.

"It's probably the most frustrating work I've done in my life, but it is also the most fulfilling. It has immediate impact. When we have child soldiers, I've seen them rehabilitated and provided with professional training, and they've been reintegrated into society. It's difficult to see and hear what has happened to them. They have killed. They have been sex slaves. But when I see that progress - from the first days that we take them into the program, to when we release them- it's so fulfilling!

"There was a boy called Muhindo, he was 17. He specifically asked us if he could go back to school, and once he finished, he got married and has two children now. He's working, and every time he comes to Bunia, he comes by our office and keeps us in the loop on how he's doing. That always warms my heart!"

Working with multiple other organizations, they realize that the path to peace in Congo is not an easy one. Rehema says, "It's like fighting a multi-headed monster. We can only take on the one head we're equipped to handle, and we partner with other local organizations so that together we can take on the rest. It's important to put value on local organizations that know the environments best, and who can foresee any issues that may arise. We value the bottom up approach, identifying what is affecting these communities, and what recommendations the community has."

Close Calls on the Road

"I've been flying with MAF since I was a child, and we've been flying with MAF as an organization since the beginning of last year. Prior to last year, the roads were relatively safe from Bunia to Beni, but rebel groups are now roaming around the national route. The frequency of mass killings on the main road has increased exponentially; cars and people were being attacked and burned. The risks went from medium to extremely high. Our activities require a lot of travel back and forth, and MAF has been a lifesaver for us! We haven't had to stop our activities because we could not get there. For me, MAF has sentimental value because of the work my parents did through them, also it's affordable, and as Christians, we begin the journey with a prayer and end it with a prayer. It's refreshing and it brings peace to us.

"There was a case when I first came back here in 2019, and travelled by road for the first time. On our journey back from Beni, the army had attacked a militia group close to Irumu. We intentionally decided to leave early, so that we could pass that stretch of road well before dark. It would normally only take 5 hours, but by 6 pm we were just arriving there, because the roads were so bad. Just then, we had a flat tire. It was beginning to become dark, and if I said we were panicking, that would be an understatement. Finally, once we could go again, we were stopped multiple times by the military in the dark. They questioned us repeatedly. That taught us a huge lesson about the dangers of traveling by road.

"The last time we decided to drive to Beni, in June 2021, the situation seemed to be improving and we felt safe enough to drive on the road. Going there was okay, but returning was a whole different issue! Several days before our return, there were a few cars stopped on the main road by militias. We still decided to drive, but as we passed through various villages, they had all been burned. Too close of a call for us. All of this led us to flying MAF for our travels in country.

"The work we do may seem simple, but the impact is huge. We want to always resolve instead of turning to violence. It seems simple, but it is far-reaching and immense. We cannot wait for others to bring peace, it starts with us."

We are immensely thankful for the work that CRC is doing in Eastern Congo, and we look forward to seeing their work continue to grow and impact thousands more lives. ●

> MAF has sentimental value because of the work my parents did through them, also it's affordable, and as Christians, we begin the journey with a prayer and end it with a prayer. It's refreshing and it brings peace to us.

For more information about the work of CRC, visit crc-rdc.org

Above Left Rehema with the team at CRC
Above Right A community meeting in a village in the territory of Djugu

Connecting Isolated Communities through Education

The Laynhapuy Homelands School services nine different homelands in the Laynhapuy region in East Arnhem Land, and are one of MAF's largest customers this area, using our services regularly to transport teachers and supplies into these isolated regions.

photos and photos **Annelie Edsmyr**

Laynhapuy Homelands School provides educational services from transition (kindergarten) to grade nine in the main schools, and a senior secondary service for grades ten, eleven, and twelve. These services are provided by their team of teachers, who instruct and support students in their homelands, and at times bring them all together in Garrthalala for combined learning camps. They also provide a FaFT program- a parenting program to support families with children aged zero to four years old.

Pilot Matt Henderson has been flying in Arnhem Land for six years now. He often flies the teachers from Laynhapuy Homelands School. "[Isolation is] extra hard when you see things fall through the cracks, like when people's health is compromised, or you see they don't have access to education. We take that for granted in the Western world - that knowledge is power- and that it gives us so much opportunity in a lot of areas. Seeing people deprived from that because of where they live is difficult. It's more than just education, it's empowerment and having control over your own life properly. I think that making this consistently happen is meaningful, and something we'll continue to work very hard at."

The current enrolment for these programs is approximately 160, but it can fluctuate from between 150 up to 200 students. The biggest program sites can have around 35 students in their schools and are regularly having 20 to 35 students per day.

MAF flies the teachers in and out of these remote communities and homelands, as well as transports the senior students to Garrthalala for their training camps. This saves them hours of road travel on unimproved and unsafe roads. We are thankful that God has given us the skills and provisions to be able to connect isolated communities to the rest of the world through aviation, and through delivering quality education into their homelands. ●

Above The flight to Laynhapuy
Below Left Laynhapuy from the air
Below Right Waiting for the MAF plane

A School in the Jungle

When the people of the Hewa tribe realized their isolation and the need for further services, they were determined to turn the dense jungle into an airstrip now known as the Yifki Airstrip.

This past Spring, MAF used the airstrip to fly in loads of iron posts, timber, plywood, and other building materials that will be used to build a new school.

interview and photos by **Annelie Edsmyr**

Missionaries Jonathan and Susan Kopf were invited to live amongst some of the Hewa people. They shared the Gospel of Jesus, taught literacy in the local language, and helped them care for basic medical needs. Jonathan shares how he believes God responded to the tribe's need for education, and how He has continued to provide the teachers and the buildings necessary for this endeavor.

Literacy in the Local Language

We moved to Yifki in 2012. Susan has always had a heart for kids, and we've seen a real need for education here. The Hewa adults wanted their kids to be able to attend school, because it takes some sort of education for the children to later become teachers, or medical workers, or police officers in their own village. We began by teaching literacy in their own language, so that they could read the Bible that we were translating for them. But Susan took it to the next level, and began to hold classes every day on how to read and write in the Melanesian Pidgin language that is spoken in towns.

The People's Plea for Continued Education

As we were getting closer to the end of our translation project, the village leaders approached us and said, "Who is going to continue to educate our children?"

We had tried to be a liaison, speaking with government officials and asking for a little public school in our village. It never materialized for one reason or another, and we struggled with that.

A pastor from the Goroka area then challenged us, "Why aren't you praying and asking God to bring you Christian teachers? Let's start a little Christian school."

> "MAF is such a blessing, and we are deeply grateful.

I worried that I wouldn't know how to find the right teachers who could live way out in this remote location, who had a love for these kids, and who would teach them how to follow Jesus as well as the necessary academics. The pastor told me, "I will worry about that. You pray. You ask God to lead me to the right person."

Through this pastor, God sent two men for us to interview. We asked our elders to make sure that they are not just religious, but that they were actually followers of Jesus. We began this school venture first with just one teacher, then later we got a second, and now we have a third.

Crammed into the School House

A previous co-worker donated his house to the village to be used as a temporary schoolroom. It's not a huge house, but it provides enough space for the three teachers to teach their 58 students. It is very crammed in the house, and it's obvious we will need more classroom space in order for the school to grow. So again, we began praying about the need for more school rooms, and many people realized that this is a beautiful thing that the Lord is doing out here in the jungle and contributed.

A new School for Yifki

As the Lord provided finances, we were able to have the building materials needed flown into the Yifki airstrip. We are now in the process of putting up the first of three double classrooms. The village is extremely excited about what God is doing, and they can't wait to see more of their children joining the school.

Right now, we're teaching up to the fourth grade, and we are hoping to expand. As the Lord provides, we'll expand up to grade eight. We are so thankful, because we're already seeing the growth happen.

God's Blessing and a Team's Effort

Susan and I are limited in what we can accomplish, but we know that God will work to accomplish His plans. It will be clear that He was the One who made all this happen.

We are grateful for the huge team that has made this possible- like MAF coming in and helping with flights, and all the people who have contributed, and volunteered to help. MAF is such a blessing, and we are deeply grateful. ●

Opposite Page Top Jonathan Kopf at Yifki
Opposite Page Main Stacking plywood
Above Left Unloading building materials
Above Right A bedroom currently used as a classroom
Middle Right Digging foundations by hand
Below setting iron pylons in place

Dreams become reality

In what one missionary called "a coming together of Christian organizations," a dream was born to help spread the Gospel to the furthest corners of Angola.

photos by **Afonso Chinhama**
story by **Jaelynn Stutzman**

The idea started in 2019 when MAF Angola missionaries met with leadership from the *Instituto Superior de Teologia Evangelica no Lubango* (ISTEL - a Lubango based Bible institute) and Serving in Mission (SIM) to dream and plan for how they could be serving the broader Angolan church.

Discussions led them to one common point of interest – teaching community and church leaders how to disciple others and truly foster peoples' relationships with God. After prayer, they decided to do this through providing training and support to rural church and community leaders; leaders who may never have had any theological training.

In 2019, SIM missionary Afonso Chinhama described a "coming together of Christian organizations" when a proposal was put into action. ISTEL Director Alberto, Pastor Zebedeu, Afonso Chinhama, and Pastor Afonso would fly with MAF to the rural town of Luena, in Eastern Angola. The journey would take them over 972 kilometers – a two to three day drive – or a short MAF flight on their mission to provide instruction on family life, discipleship, and an overview of the Bible. The plan would be to fly to Luena four times per year, for two full years. In between these visits, those attending the training would have time to put into practice what they had been taught in preparation for the next visit. Then, if all went well, the team would start fresh in a new rural community after the two years in Luena.

The visiting Pastors were initially discouraged in their efforts, with those they were there to serve showing up late for meetings, or sometimes not at all. People seemed unenthusiastic in their participation and did not show much hospitality towards the Pastors. Yet, the Pastors persisted, knowing in their hearts that this was a calling that God had placed upon them. 2019 was a struggle, and following that, the pandemic brought additional difficulty, increasing the time between their visits to Luena. Though they had hoped to finish the training in 2021 but it became necessary to shift the completion date to the end of 2022.

> These things were only able to happen because God stirred the hearts of the Christian community in Lubango, because they listened, and because MAF was there and able to fly.

However, their perseverance in following God's lead has been blessed! They have witnessed a transformation of the group of twenty community leaders of whom they had started with. Afonso Chinhama shared with Pilot, Brent Mudde at the end of 2021:

"One leader (pastor), resisted being in these meetings, making excuses to not be present and so we did not count him as a part of the group even though he was someone of great influence in the region and churches. To our surprise, he appeared again on the second day, and sat very far away to observe without giving an opinion or interrupting the meeting. On the third day he was in the middle of the room and intervened in very defensive ways. On the fourth and fifth days he surrendered. He openly participated in small group discussions, and had the courage to say that as leaders, they often behaved badly. After we returned [to Lubango], this man called me and thanked me for the teachings and asked not to be forgotten. All because God overcame his prejudice."

He also wrote that some of the men were seeing their marriages and family lives transformed:

"A pastor testified he had been able to rebuild his marriage by looking at everything from the perspective of the Bible. Studying [the Bible] with his wife was not something he had previously done, and he had not paid much attention to what his family would say. Now, he is experiencing a happier marriage, stating 'he has been able to overcome these problems by the Grace of the Lord.'"

These things were only able to happen because God stirred the hearts of the Christian community in Lubango, because they listened, and because MAF was there and able to fly. At the end the last flight of 2021 to Luena, Pastor Alberto excitedly reported that the local leaders were waiting to welcome them on the first morning of teaching. They were hospitable, and showed appreciation for the work the pastors were, even sending them home with a giant bag of mangos! Such an incredible difference from their first days there!

Back when this work was still in the beginning stages, the team was also dreaming about how this ministry could spread the deep love of Christ. If the trained leaders go on to each to disciple ten people, and those new people each discipled ten others- how far could the Gospel grow? We pray that eventually, it will reach the furthest corners of Angola, and take hold in a deep and lasting way.

MAF has transported new knowledge and teaching of the Bible to the rural community of Luena, and we hope that throughout 2022, as the Pastors finish their time with the local church leaders, that the spirit of God would continue to stir, and that doors would open for them to continue this good work in other towns in Eastern Angola. ●

Opposite Page
Providing training and support to rural church and community leaders
Above Left Smiles abound at the ISTEL school
Above Right Local leaders on the first morning of teaching
Below The ISTEL school (credit Jaelynn Stutzman)

The True Healer

On it's first flight, MAF's newest aircraft has already been used to help save a life.

story and photos by **Jaelynn Stutzman**

MAF provides a scheduled weekly patient transfer flight from the major city of Lubango to the remote Cavango clinic in Angola. The clinic sends urgent patients in need of advanced care to the mission hospital in Lubango. These patients often need life or death surgeries that are not able to be carried out in the more remote clinic, and MAF also brings medications and other items to support the missionaries and the clinic outpost.

This flight was the perfect candidate for the first operational flight of our new Cessna Caravan, Wings of Love, or WOL. But as the pilots have found, even this scheduled flight can be full of surprises! As pilots Brent Mudde and Andrew Stutzman were preparing to depart, they received an urgent message from the doctor at the Cavango clinic; "We have an additional critical patient who will need a stretcher!"

> We have an additional critical patient who will need a stretcher!

A young pregnant woman had come into the clinic in serious condition and needed and emergency intervention. The message came at the perfect time, and the pilots were quickly able to add the stretcher to the plane before they departed, giving thanks for this new Caravan's larger size. On the program's previous Caravan, they would have had to bump someone off this flight to bring back the new patient.

When they arrived, the woman was laying on a stretcher, with four other patients in the back of an ambulance after being transported for nearly two hours over rough dirt roads. She was clearly in an incredible amount of pain and was drifting in and out of consciousness. The pilots worked quickly to transfer her into the airplane; she was suffering from eclampsia and needed to have an emergency C-section to save both her life and that of her unborn child.

Due to the level of pain and distress, it was apparent that the flight was going to be a difficult one. The nurse that traveled with the patients to the runway gave her a quick injection to help calm her before leaving, but she continued to struggle with the pain. It was a tense and nerve-wracking flight for everyone on board, as the young woman fought for her for her life during the hour and a half flight to Lubango. An ambulance from the CEML hospital was waiting when the airplane finally arrived. The pilots prayed silently for the woman as she was whisked off; thankful that she had made it.

Three weeks later the weekly Cavango flight had a completely different feel to it – it was one of pure celebration!

The young woman was alive and was going home with her newborn baby. The emergency C-section had been successful, and both mother and baby were doing well. Andrew had a chance to speak to the new mother as they prepared for departure. She expressed gratitude to everyone involved in caring for her and getting her to the help she desperately needed, but it was clear that her full praise was directed in the right direction - to Christ the true healer who has power both in life and over death. ●

Main WOL at Cavango
Above A life saved
Below Passengers on WOL's first operational flight

NHOMLAAU

Shannon Albert has set her heart to the beat of rural South Sudan. The community that surrounds her is being empowered and learning about Christ through her literacy programs and street ministries, but it doesn't stop there. She'll continue to blaze a trail through the country, leaving a path for more to follow Him.

story and photos **Jenny Davies**

After two months away, the three-hour MAF flight has brought Shannon Albert safely back to Aweil. "Coming from Juba, the roads aren't safe, so we fly to get to Aweil and then use road transport from Aweil to the villages," Shannon explains. "I began flying with MAF a couple of years ago, and it's been a good option for me because MAF is reliable. When they say they're going to fly, they fly. That is so important. And in case of an emergency or insecurity, the missionaries know that MAF is here. Even if all the commercial flights fail to go, MAF will come and get us."

Shannon works with Nhomlaau, the organization she founded in 2013, and is driven by a single goal; to share the good news of Christ with the people of Aweil, South Sudan. Nhomlaau means 'freedom' in the Dinka language - and it is her desire that all would come to know Christ, experience freedom in Him, and live for His glory. They also equip South Sudanese believers and point all to Jesus through literacy programs for women and children, agriculture training and translating of Scripture into the Dinka Malual dialect. They are currently working to translate the New Testament using a "modified literal" approach, so that the Dinka Malual may have a clear, natural, and accurate translation of the Word of God in their mother tongue.

As she unpacks her supplies, Shannon knows that tomorrow, there will be neighbours to greet. She will catch up on the progress that's been made with Dinka Malual Bible translation which has continued while she's been away. She'll also restart her Saturday Street Kids ministry. Next week, she'll resume teaching Dinka literacy classes every afternoon with as many as 60 local kids at a time. Soon, as she'll be settled back into the pattern of life she's come to love in this remote rural community, and the connections she's making will continue to make an impact in these rural areas for generations.

But she also has ambitions beyond Aweil, to reach one of South Sudan's last unreached areas, Raja in the far northwest. This has led to two extremely challenging survey trips, one by public transport and another by motorbike, which pushed even this resilient missionary to her limits.

Shannon's pioneering personality means that she will always keep moving forward. A homemade decoration on her kitchen wall, made by a teenage supporter back home, bears a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ***"Do not follow where the path may lead, instead go where there is no path and leave a trail."*** ●

Below Left
Working on the Dinka Malual translation
Below Middle
Literacy class
Below Right
Catching a flight

Lighting up the future in South Sudan

An MAF flight brings LIGHT to a remote school.

story and photos by **Jenny Davies**

Nestled on South Sudan's southern border, is the remote village of Lotimor. The closest market where essentials like soap and salt can be bought, is a full two-days walk away.

The only road in from Kenya, is considered to be one of the most dangerous; with reports of vehicles being ambushed weekly.

It's here that we find the Lotimor Mixed Primary School, and teachers Daniel, Philip, and Thomas, who opened the school in 2020 after journeying to Lotimor from their homes in the Turkana region of northern Kenya; a trip they've made at the beginning of each school term since. The personal cost and dedication of these teachers is measured in the months they spend away from their families without cell service, Internet access, or means of transportation.

A few years ago, MAF opened an airstrip in Lotimor which has since provided safe and efficient access for the teachers, a medical team, and Filip Lidström and Magdalena Waern, two Swedish missionaries who just flew on this most recent flight to install solar panels and lights at the school.

Growing pains

The school opened with just 56 students, and now has and enrollment of 260. Students arrive from as far as they can walk, and the school has already outgrown it's current size. Although it's modestly appointed, the teachers' room has everything you'd expect to find in a well-run school. Timetables and duty schedules line the walls, while the school's few resources are displayed neatly on shelving.

Filip starts work immediately - wishing he had more time, and more electrical cable. The first thing he does is fit the switchboard and inverter on a stretch of wall; out of the way of small hands and away from leaking sections of roof. By the end of the day, he's run cable and installed the lights in the first of two classrooms. He surveys his handiwork with satisfaction. The amount of light is 'lagom', a Swedish word which is practically a philosophy meaning "not too little, not too much."

There are no purpose-built accommodations for boarding students, so in the other classroom, fifty students bed down for the night on mattresses on the floor. Tomorrow they'll have a "lights out" for the very first time!

Lighting up the future

Electricity and children aren't a good mix, so the village children have been given the day off. The school's fifty boarders head down to the airstrip with head teacher Daniel to carry out repairs on the airstrip. The older students hack away with machetes and rakes to remove some of the more stubborn bushes from the sandy soil.

Amongst them is 17-year-old Patrick Mapuon, the school's head boy. Patrick is bright and motivated, loves mathematics, and wants to be a teacher when he finishes school. His village is 45 kms from the school, which is a six hour walk. The distance means he doesn't go home very often to see his family. Lights will mean he can study in the evenings, and complete his education sooner.

Daniel is happy that they are installing the lights, but he's most looking forward to being able to run a printer. Printing exam papers for marking instead of ripping pages from the students' exercise books will revolutionize their work.

As the workday ends, darkness envelops the school for the last time. When the lights are turned on for the first time, the effect is impressive. The school shines on the hillside like a beacon of hope.

Time for school

On the last day of installation, Filip moves outside to install floodlights to improve the building's external security. There's no shade, and he's working against the clock to complete the work by 10am when the MAF plane is scheduled to arrive.

As Filip works, children inside recite vocabulary drills, while in the next room, students read math problems from a blackboard. The teachers switch between grades as they task students according to their ability. The age-range is wide. Younger children with more education are mixed in with older ones that never had the opportunity to go to school. The quality of education they receive from their Kenyan trained teachers is way ahead of the curve.

There's a notable absence of teenage girls at the school. As a chief source of domestic labour, they're often expected to cook and provide care for younger siblings. Child marriage is also common in the local culture, and girls traditionally leave the home in exchange for dowries. Education is seen as a poor investment that interrupts this traditional way of life, and source of income.

While Filip completes the installation, Magdalena listens to the teachers as they share about their hopes for the school. When they return to Juba, she will distill this feedback into a realistic plan to provide support for the school. Two years ago, development was just beginning when it suddenly stalled as the global pandemic hit. Now, the community is keen to accelerate the process of development to make up for lost time, and Magdalena is eager to see that happen.

Leaving and left behind

The skies are clear as the plane, piloted by Canadian Daniel Loewen-Rudgers, makes a low pass and lands. There's time for thanks and final farewells, and then the plane is airborne again.

After three long days of working from dawn to dusk, Filip and Magdalena settle in for the 45-minute flight that will take them to their next destination.

From the plane, Filip follows the path of the road that leads to Lotimor, connecting it from the outside world. It's a long road to development, and while every challenge can't be overcome with a plane and an airstrip, they can be used to help speed the pace of change. ●

The introduction of lighting will make a huge difference to this rural school and community.

Opposite Page Installing a light
Top Right Securing the solar panels aboard the airplane
Middle Right Installing a solar panel
Bottom Right Filip and Magdalena

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