

Report of seminar in Aru, D R Congo, held 16-21 March 2009

Summary: The people of north-east Congo suffer poverty, the effects of the civil war and an almost complete lack of support from government. Even so, many people are highly educated, very motivated and hard working. With a minimum of resources they are using Natural Medicine to enable them to develop an effective health service throughout the province.

Venue: IPASC, the Panafrican Institute of Community Health, in Aru, D. R. Congo.

Background to the seminar: About 12 years ago Innocent Balagizi visited IPASC, and established the medicinal garden. In 2004 René Gayana, the Head of the Diploma for Community Health Nurses and Midwives at IPASC, attended a seminar with Keith Lindsey in Arua, Uganda. Also in 2004 Hans-Martin Hirt visited Akuma Tande, the Head of the Hospital in Adi. Akuma later attended a seminar led by Hans-Martin Hirt in Tanzania. Since then, Akuma, ably supported by Flory Lechabo and Agele Obiasa (hospital chaplain, currently on study leave in Kenya) has actively promoted Natural Medicine in the north-east region in general and the regional hospitals in particular. In 2006 and 2008 Keith Lindsey and Akuma Tande led seminars in Adi (twice) and Ombayi. Supported by Flory Lechabo (nurse) and Agele Obiasa (Pastor), Akuma himself has run many training courses for the staff of Adi hospital and for healers, health workers, pastors and others active in the community in seven adjoining regions. In each of these seven centres medicinal gardens have been established, and the locally trained people themselves run training workshops in the surrounding villages.



Innocent Balagizi describes the medicinal uses of the frangipani flower (*Plumeria regia*)

Financial support

The costs of the seminars in which Keith Lindsey has taken part have been met by Stiftung Entwicklung Zusammenarbeit (SEZ) in Baden Württemberg, Germany, and the supporters of anamed in Germany.

The protestant church in Winnenden has met the costs of establishing and maintaining demonstration and production gardens in Adi, and the church has also made a substantial contribution to the costs of the seminars led by Akuma and his colleagues. There is no doubt that this help from the Winnenden Churches has made an enormous contribution to the practice of Natural Medicine throughout the region, and in this way to the health of hundreds if not thousands of people.

Leaders of the seminar: Akuma Tande (Surgeon and Head of Adi Hospital), Flory Lechabo (Nurse at Adi Hospital), Innocent Balagizi (Ethnobotanist and leader of anamed in Bukavu), Gayana René (Teacher of Natural Medicine and Peace Issues in Community Health Courses at IPASC), David Sharland (present for 3 days, Agriculturalist and Missionary) and Keith Lindsey (from anamed international).

Participants: 33 people, about half from Aru and others from other centres in Province Orientale. Two came from Yei in Sudan. The participants included teachers, pastors, agriculturalists, healers, nurses and missionaries. In addition 8 students of IPASC attended the seminar whenever their lessons allowed.

Aims of the 2009 seminar in Aru:

1. To further support the development of anamed in Province Orientale.
2. To establish Aru as a centre of Natural Medicine activity.

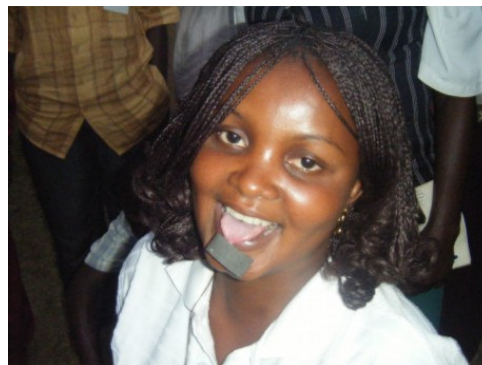
3. To reintroduce Innocent Balagizi to IPASC and to establish a good working relationship between anamed Province Orientale and anamed South Kivu.

I am very satisfied that these aims have been realised.

Course content

Most of the major topics featured in the anamed Seminar handbook were covered. Of particular note was:

1. The use made of the well laid out medicinal garden of IPASC and the benefit from the extensive knowledge and experience of Innocent Balagizi, who is a very competent ethnobotanist.
2. The use of a lap-top and digital projector, which allowed us always to see pictures of the plants which we were describing.
3. As always in Congo, the vitality with which the group applied themselves to songs and poems about Natural Medicine.
4. The encouragement of Innocent Balagizi in urging
 - a) more research in Africa – there is for example no African Pharmacopoeia.
 - b) the seminar participants to see anamed not as an NGO but as a revolution! Why? Because the aim of anamed is to make effective medicines available to the poorest people in each village.



One of the students attending the seminar demonstrates the successful production of an effective black stone

Examples of the benefits of Natural Medicine quoted in the seminar

1. A patient from Juba in Sudan had spent 200 USD trying to find treatment for her haemorrhoids. She came to Adi for an operation. Flory said to her, “let us first try artemisia ointment”. It was applied three times daily. Within a week the patient was healed – she could not believe it! Cost of the treatment at Adi Hospital: 2000 Shillings (1 USD).
2. Epilepsy. Flory has had 7 patients. Djurua, an anamed healer in Sigoli, has had 32 patients. They gave the full malaria dosage for 30 days. Each patient was completely healed and never had another fit.
3. A lady who took part in the seminar in Ombayi had a ten year old chronic wound. It healed within 3 weeks with pawpaw sugar.
4. Between January and March 2009 Flory treated 6 undernourished children with maize porridge and moringa leaf powder.
5. A diabetes patient is now completely stable with tea of avocado leaves, black jack and Vinca rosea.

anamed in Province Orientale

Centres of anamed work are now established in Aru, Ombayi, Laybo, Kumuru, Agura, Sigoli and Abedju. The leaders in each centre practice Natural Medicine, develop their own gardens of medicinal plants and train others in their villages and the surrounding areas in Natural Medicine. The centre or hub is at Adi where Akuma, ably supported by Flory, acts as the regional coordinator.

Adi Hospital

I continue to marvel at the work of Adi Hospital and the devotion of Akuma and the staff. To meet its running expenses, the hospital receives no financial support from government. In fact the opposite is true; the hospital must pay 500 USD per month to the state. It must also pay 2% of its turnover to the church. The hospital has 69 staff. Flory as a nurse receives a salary of 60 USD per month. If his salary is an average, then the monthly wages bill is 4140 USD. The hospital must also pay for water and electricity, for the drugs it

buys in and for the raw materials for preparing Natural Medicines. All this must be paid from patient fees and the sale of medicines. And, in this caring hospital, if a patient comes with nothing, the patient is still treated.

The hospital has received grants from missionary / Christian development organisations to pay for capital equipment. For example Samaritans Purse in the USA recently paid for the construction of a new Maternity wing and a small guest house.

Civil unrest in northern Congo, which has impacted upon Adi Hospital

Because of rebel activity in the north of Congo perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), 6000 people fled 200km and settled at Ingbokolo, just 3 km from Adi. They arrived with only the clothes they stood up in. They came to Adi Hospital for treatment, but had absolutely no money with which to pay. This has cost the hospital 4000 USD. Without Natural Medicine, it would not have been possible to treat these people free of charge. Akuma told me that he will visit these people, ask to speak to their leaders and arrange to give them some basic training in Natural Medicine. In this way, the demand upon the hospital resources will decrease.

Recommendations as to how anamed international may support anamed Congo Province Orientale (ACPO) in the future

1. The Winnenden Churches be encouraged to continue their invaluable financial support to the work of promoting Natural Medicine in north-east Congo.
2. Anamed international keep in close touch with Akuma Tande, receive his reports, and plan to make a further visit in 2011.
3. ACPO has almost completed the translation of the anamed Seminar Handbook into the local language Lingala. Anamed international should help with the preparation of this book for printing, and finance the printing at the Marianum Press in Kisubi, Uganda.
4. Encourage and strengthen links between ACPO, anamed South-Kivu (Innocent Balagizi), Kuluva Hospital in Arua, Uganda and other centres of anamed activity. (Following this seminar at Aru, Flory Lechabo accompanied me for two weeks in Uganda, during which time we visited Kuluva Hospital in Arua, several projects and conducted a second seminar in Masaka.)



In Africa, as in Europe, drinking a range of locally available herbal teas makes an important contribution to good health

Keith Lindsey, April 2009