

## Letter from Lubumbashi

May 06

Here's Eric ready to greet an old man with respect: "*Ham Jambo, Dada!*" (translation: Greetings to you, Sister!) And he's been going around for a few days calling old men sisters! He got all mixed up with Dada (sister) and Baba (Father or Mister).

Here's Sandra wanting to say: "you can hold my child?" (*U guze mutoto yango*) instead it came as: "*U uze mutoto yango*" (You can buy my child).

We prepare the text for the day and spend 2 hours memorizing and internalizing it. Right, we're saying it fluently and off we go to practice. Confidently we say the first line to someone, who then rattles off in response and we can only catch the 'You..' in it. It throws us off, and stammering-looking up the sky-scratching of head sets in, and I then resort to lots of gestures and join in the laughter. Well, at least I made some friends. My favourite 'practice audience' are the ladies selling vegetables in a market near Peter & Atiyyah's school. Eric actually is doing much better than me as he has more discipline while I easily get distracted by -"Mummy, Peter is being mean to me..." And thinking what to cook for supper. He also has the confidence to make sure he is saying the text properly even if it means his audience waits in suspense for 2 minute as he tries to remember a word. There are days when we think we're doing good progress and other days when we think we must be so dull!

Peter and Atiyyah are also picking up some Swahili and they sometimes like to join in our lessons for a few minutes, especially when we are doing exercises to learn vocabulary. School age children all speak French here so they are picking it up more. Peter is always proud to say "I speak French and Mummy can't!"

"Swahili is easy to learn, you don't conjugate verbs" we were told. Instead there are different sets of pronouns for different tenses and for positive and negative statements, to be polite, for a command... much to our dismay! On the other hand there seem to be no hard and fast rules for sentence construction and it is not tonal. We are learning the local Lubumbashi Swahili which is a pidgin Swahili (and we are even more pidgin!) Everyone is helpful and gracious and they seem to look forward to our

daily visits to practice. They also like to learn and practice English so it is a sort of 'bartering words' --- except they seem to learn faster than us!

We are amazed with Joseph (our teacher). He speaks fluently and teaches Swahili, English and French, calm, patient, and always helpful, someone who radiates Christlikeness. He is also a presenter of a local TV Christian programme.



"Now you are real Congolese..!" I suppose getting malaria is a sort of "integration with the local culture". Not a very pleasant part but it is a reality of everyday life here. While we felt just miserable and all could do was lie down, the Congolese just plod on as usual. Made us feel like wimps. While we had the encouragement and support of our Congolese friends and comfort from phone calls of families, we thought of the pioneering missionaries when they did not even have the medicine for it and comfort of a soft bed, completely isolated from comforting relations and by the language. They had it tough. But the Lord carried them through it. As He did with us in our wimpishness. Thank you all who prayed for healing especially for Peter's legs. Is it not wonderful that our God transcends distance--- you pray there and we get blessed here!

Please continue to pray for the elections, which have been postponed to 30<sup>th</sup> July. Please pray also for our language study, it has been disrupted by the malaria and moving house and the work going on to the house. We want to get on and make faster progress now.

Please pray also for Peter to be able to find a good friend of his own age.

Love and from Eric, Sandra, Peter & Atiyyah  
Read

Just a reminder of our new Email:  
[esread@smallburn.co.uk](mailto:esread@smallburn.co.uk)