



*Caring  
Healing  
Ministering*

## What is PROLASA?

The Laymen's Health Program, or PROLASA, is a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Africa. Founded in 1990 by Désiré H. Murhima, and remaining under his administration today, PROLASA has become a recognized leader in health care, orphan care, education, and community development in the area surrounding Lake Kivu both in Rwanda and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In a region which has been plagued by political conflict, the movement of waves of refugees, disease, and poverty, PROLASA strives to meet the medical, physical, educational, and spiritual needs of the local population.



## The Work of PROLASA



### Orphan Care

Due to war, poverty, and illness there are many children in Congo who are left with no one to care for them. These

children, often of elementary school age or younger, are left struggling to survive by whatever means they can. For over a decade PROLASA has been providing orphans in Congo with shelter, food, health care and a family environment. With orphanages located in Goma, Beni, and on the island of Idjwi, over two hundred children now receive care, love and hope. PROLASA also strives to support the potential of the children through their on-site school program, self-supporting work program, and vocational studies.

Children arrive at the orphanage with various degrees of illness, malnutrition and emotional frailty. The children receive required medical care, quality nutrition, and a family household environment using a family-based care model. In this model, ten to fifteen children live in a home on the orphanage site with a houseparent couple who care for, discipline, and tend to the children.

These are the words of a seven year old girl who spoke for herself and her sisters aged three and five,

*"Before we came to the orphanage, we were hungry... Now we have food to eat. Before, we were naked... Now we have clothes. We used to have to sleep on the ground... Now we sleep in a bed. Before we came here, we were alone, and now, we have the other children and the houseparents."*

### Health Care

A hospital, located in Goma, serves to meet the health care needs of the city and the surrounding area. In a city of over one million people there exists only one government hospital and a very limited number of small church run clinics. Despite a constant struggle for resources the PROLASA hospital strives to provide quality health care to well over a thousand people each week.

In addition to PROLASA's hospital, they operate four regional clinics. For those living in even more remote areas PROLASA operates a mobile clinic which is composed of personnel and equipment which travel from one remote location to another staying for one month at each location to administer health care and to provide community health education. Through their hospital, regional clinics, and mobile clinic PROLASA strives to make health care as accessible as possible.

Among services provided by PROLASA's health care team are health screening, fertility planning, general surgery, and general medical management, especially of common regional illness such as malaria. PROLASA's doctors, nurses, and administrators continue to look for new ways to expand their services in order to meet the needs of the communities they serve. As a result, PROLASA's capacity continues to expand as they gather new resources, personnel, and equipment to be used in caring for those in need.



## Education

Education is highly valued by PROLASA and is incorporated into each service provided. PROLASA operates a nursing and midwifery training school known as the Institut Technique Médical, or ITM. Located in the Masisi district, the ITM trains approximately one hundred students in the medical sciences.

PROLASA also operates a preschool at the Goma orphan centre and a primary school at the Idjwi Orphan Village. Here the children not only receive formal scholastic education accredited by the Congo Ministry of Education, but they also receive vocational training in agriculture, sewing, and cooking. These programs also contribute to the financial support of the orphan village.



Community health education is central to PROLASA's philosophy of care. At the hospital, health centres, orphan centres and the mobile clinic a formal program exists to teach the community about the causes and prevention of disease, maternal child health, nutrition and hygiene.

Volunteer health workers have also been trained in the communities surrounding PROLASA's health centres. These volunteers go from home to home teaching about disease prevention and simple home remedies in an effort to promote wellness rather than only treat illness.

## Community Development

In an area with very little infrastructure community development is very important to PROLASA. Currently numerous projects are active in the area surrounding Lake Kivu in Congo in order to improve health and community wellness. One such projects are public latrines which are leading to improved sanitation.

PROLASA is also very active on Idjwi, a small island located in lake Kivu. Here, there is no infrastructure and the island cannot even boast of having roads or electricity. PROLASA, however, has been working very hard to develop infrastructure on Idjwi. Clean drinking water is now being provided by a piping conduit which is over 3,000 metres long.



PROLASA workers on the island have also implemented a hydroelectric project and a dam has been built in order to generate electricity for the island. This is the first time in history that electricity has been generated on the island other than by small gasoline powered generators. PROLASA intends to continue community development work on the island in order to offer these capacities, not only to their primary orphan site found there, but also to the entire island.

## Ministry

A final dimension of PROLASA's work is spiritual care. Volunteers work with PROLASA in their communities teaching such subjects as health, hygiene and child care while providing spiritual support and teaching about the Bible. Many people have come to know God as a result of PROLASA's ministry program and many have committed their lives to Christian service as well.

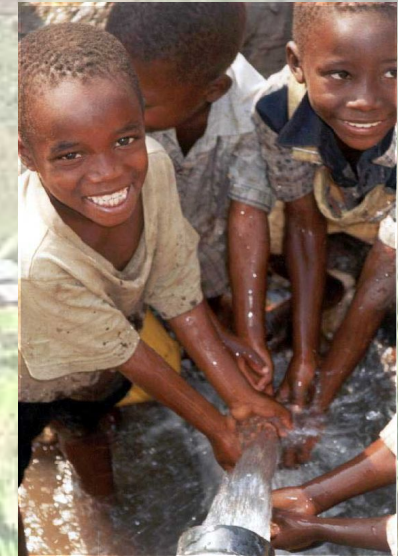
## The Direction of PROLASA

The workers of PROLASA are constantly seeking to expand their capacity in order to better meet the needs of the people they serve. It is challenging to work in an area where political instability and the threat of volcanic eruption are ever present. The needs are many and the resources are few but PROLASA has great dreams and goals.

Assistance is needed in order to turn these dreams and goals into reality for the people of Congo. A dream of smiling children, education, and the healing of the sick. Will you be a part of this dream? Every contribution does make a difference. If there is any way in which you can help this effort to move forward, please contact PROLASA Canada.

*"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can still do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."*

Helen Keller



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