Evaluation and teaching mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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I was asked by “Light for the World Belgium” to visit their 3 eye hospitals in the Southern province of Congo, Katanga. Light for the World is an international disability and development NGO who fights against blindness, who wants to improve quality of life of persons with a visual handicap and fights for their rights. Light for the World Belgium works in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Rwanda and Tanzania.

Beside doing a lot of eye operations, mainly cataract, they also do screening programs and eye examinations in the remote villages with mobile clinics. They teach the nurses and doctors and give especially training in eye care.

They have made a visual therapy department in each of the eye hospitals to treat and follow-up children with blindness, low vision, cataract, amblyopia, nystagmus and strabismus.

They provide the children with Low Vision with optical aids (glasses, loupes, telescopes,...) so they are able to go to school. They have a program to integrate blind children and Low Vision children in the regular school system (inclusive education).

The purpose of my mission was to evaluate the visual therapy department and to teach the nurses and visual therapists.
I spent in each of the hospitals 2 to 3 days and examined patients together with the visual therapists (nurses who got a special training in eye examination, visual acuity testing, strabismus evaluation, low vision training and visual stimulation).

I explained how to improve their visual acuity testing (correct test for the age and visual acuity of the patient, correct distance,....) , how to improve eye motility testing (quantify the limitations) and measuring the angle of deviation (do a APCT, use of a Maddox glass).

Beside the practical teaching I gave theoretical lessons before and after the consultations.

I enjoyed my mission very much, especially I like the purpose of Light for the World that they want to train the local eye care professionals, that they give free eye care to all children below the age of 15 and adults who are unable to pay.

I want to thank Light for the World Belgium for inviting me to this mission. Please find more information at www.lightforttheworld.be/