



What's happening with Global Goods for Congo?

Unrest in the Central African Republic has caused us to ask you to stop rolling bandages and making baby goods and midwife kits. Here's what we can tell you about the current situation:

- Because the containers travel through Central African Republic (CAR) and stay in Bangui for some time, we cannot ensure the safe delivery of goods to Karawa, Congo. Could God be directing us to go in a different direction?
- The journey from Maryland to Douala, Cameroon to Bangui, CAR; to Zongo, Congo; to Karawa, Congo; is long, precarious and expensive, causing us to ask, "Is there a better way?"
- When we send containers of goods made by women here, we help. That's good. When we partner with our sisters and brothers in Christ on the ground in Congo, empowering them to help themselves, we help change a system that perpetuates poverty and helplessness. That's better.
- Could women here in the U.S. and Canada continue to come together to work with their hands—but rather than making bandages, could they make items that would then be sold to one another and to their local communities, generating funds to empower women and girls in Congo? Think crafting!
- Could the funds generated then be used to empower a Congolese woman to begin her own sewing business, making bandages and baby goods and being paid a fair wage with funds from the efforts of women in the U.S. and Canada? She earns a livable wage, the clinics and hospitals continue to benefit from the provision of the needed bandages, and women and their newborn babies receive needed baby items. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?
- There are multiple expenses incurred in sending a shipping container to Karawa—approximately \$30,000. We must ask, "What could this money do if it were used directly to help in Congo?"
- When we help a woman in Congo earn a fair wage, everyone in her community stands to benefit. Her children can attend school because she can afford to pay school fees; vendors in the community profit because she is purchasing their goods. For a similar perspective, watch this short video called The Girl Effect: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlvmE4_KMNw

So, for now, we ask that you stop rolling bandages, making baby layettes, and midwife kits. We encourage you to continue meeting and to consider together how you can do good for the people of Congo, but when you gather, ask one another, "What could we do that would generate funds?" Remember that you are already incurring significant expense as you ship your items to Maryland and remit the cost of shipping to the Women Ministries office in Chicago. Consider what those funds alone could do to empower one person in Congo.

There are two things everyone needs to know about this shift:

- 1) Some groups have been making and shipping these needed items decades, providing help for the

medical work in Congo. We appreciate that so very much and want to see women continue to gather. There is great value in this fellowship, and we don't want to see that end.

2) The goods that are provided for the medical work in Congo are still greatly needed. We stand by our commitment to help the clinics and hospitals there. How great would it be if those goods were created by Congolese, using Congolese resources, in a way that benefits Congolese people!

We genuinely hope to be able to deliver the items in Maryland currently awaiting shipment, so if you have bandages, midwife kits or baby goods, feel free to send them to Maryland and send the additional shipping funds to the Women Ministries office in Chicago. We'll keep you posted on that.

We also think that there may be women or churches who have never rolled bandages or made baby goods or midwife kits who may now want to consider this new and marvelously missional way of engaging with the people of Congo. This would be wonderful. We'd love to see dozens of new groups working together to raise funds to create small business efforts in Congo through our efforts. There are so many great crafting ideas on Pinterest.com—it's a great place to get ideas. Or, if the women in your church aren't "crafty," consider what you *can* do. One group told us they don't craft, but they can do a terrific rummage sale! Sounds like a great idea.

There are many questions to be answered as we move forward, and we promise to keep you updated as we learn and as plans develop. A team of women is being developed to gather information and provide vision for this effort. Please keep us in your prayers as we work together on this.

And above all, please know how deeply we appreciate the incredible, generous, good work you have done over the years to bless the medical work in Congo. And thank you for your forbearance and goodwill as we move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meagan S. Gillan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Meagan Gillan

Executive Minister of Women Ministries