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Surgeons step in to help pastor shot by rebels

■ Duchess says thank you to Cheadle team

LAURA PULLMAN

AN AID worker left for dead in a Congolese jungle after an attack that killed seven of his friends has undergone life-changing surgery in Manchester.

Pastor Antoine Munyiginya was travelling through the war-torn country to train school teachers with fellow charity workers when their car was targeted by militia rebels.

Four of his colleagues from the education programme Eben-Ezer Ministries were murdered, as were two of their relatives and the bus driver.

But Antoine survived after being shot three times in the arm, shattering his elbow.

British charity Children in Crisis, who work with the EMI in the Democratic Republic of Congo, arranged for Antoine to be flown to England to undergo surgery at the Alexandra Hospital in Cheadle.

Two surgeons, Waseem Saeed and Adam Watts, performed a seven-hour operation to ensure the charity worker would be able to use his arm again.

Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, the founder of Children in Crisis, has visited Antoine and thanked the surgeons who carried out the work for free.

The duchess said: "There is a stock of decency in the Congo DRC through the veil of fear and violence and there is a stock of decency back here in the UK, especially from the Alexandra Hospital.

"The team here has been incredible. People in the Congo feel alone and excluded but through the pastor and how he has been helped they will realise that people care."

Despite his terrifying ordeal, Antoine told how is keen to return to his country to work where he runs the EMI's theatre workshops educating teachers about violence and reconciliation.

He said: "I hope to return soon and maybe peace will be restored. We try to make things better."

Since arriving in Manchester in November, Antoine has been living in Chorlton with James Thompson, a professor at the University of Manchester and a volunteer for Children in Crisis.

James, who lives with his wife and youngest daughter in Salis-

'The team her has been incredible'





➤ **SUPPORTER** The Duchess of York with Antoine Munyiginya who was badly injured in an attack in the Congo but received treatment for free at Cheadle's Alexandra Hospital

bury Road, said: "It has been amazing having Antoine with us. Of course, he has been through a terrible incident and that is hard but people around here have been really welcoming.

"A lot of friends have helped out and taken Antoine to hospital. In these circumstances you just do anything you can."

Consultant plastic surgeon Waseem Saeed said it was a

'privilege' to treat someone who does such great work.

He added: "Antoine is such a great person to treat. These guys are putting their lives at risk every time they go out on a charity mission. It was not a difficult decision to make when I was approached to help. Of course, I would."

Despite the Congo's five-year war officially ending in 2003, the

east of the country is still plagued in violence – with the minority population of ethnic Tutsi Rwandans being targeted as 'foreigners' by the 'rebel' Congolese militias.

After the killings of their aid workers, EMI and Children in Crisis have redoubled the efforts to help educate every child on the plateau of South Kivu in the far east of the Congo.