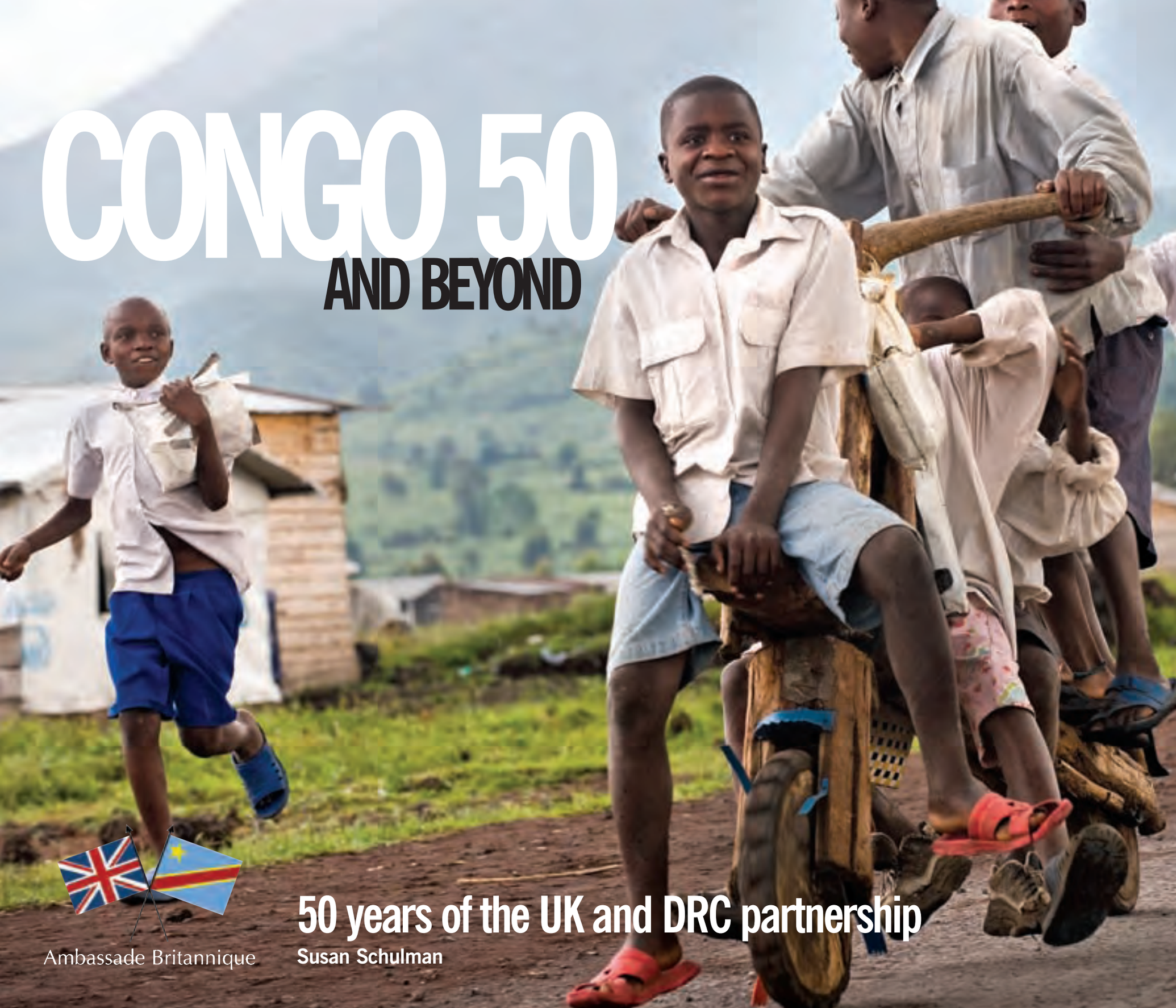
CONGO 50
AND BEYOND



Ambassade Britannique

50 years of the UK and DRC partnership

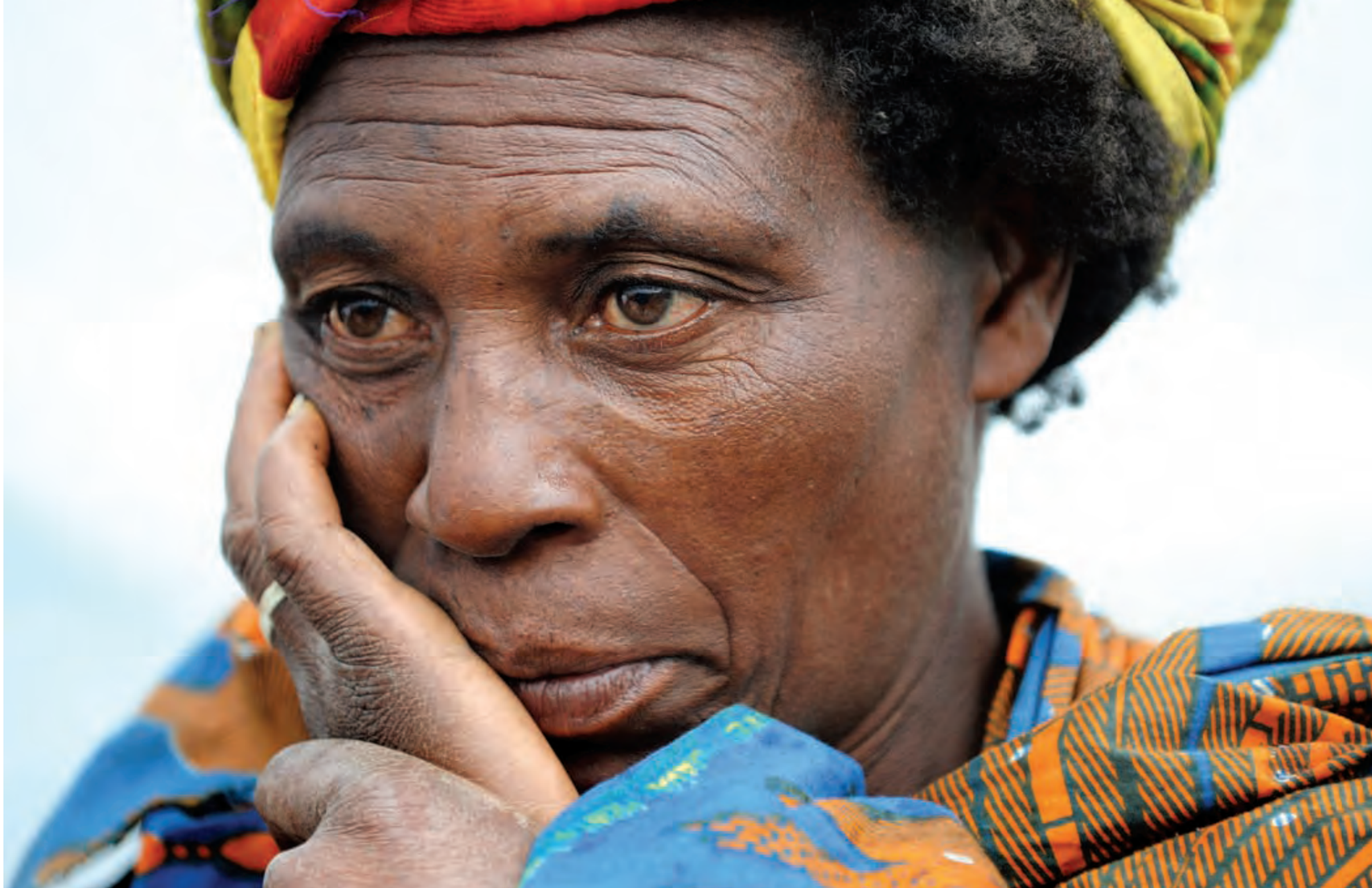
Susan Schulman

Published in 2010 in Great Britain
by the British Embassy, Democratic Republic of Congo

Photographs and text by: Susan Schulman

Design and artwork: Glen Powell Graphic Design

Printed and bound by Modern Colour Solutions



The British government is delighted to join in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In recent years the DRC has made major strides towards peace and stability, but enormous challenges still lie ahead as it seeks to realise its potential and become an African success story. We are proud to be playing our part.

Elected in 2006 in the first democratic elections in 40 years, the DRC government has set out an ambitious plan to develop the country, focussing on education, health, job creation, infrastructure and water and sanitation.

Th[illegible]im in DRC is to build p[illegible] reduce poverty. We will do this by joining the national a[illegible]
[illegible]rt to:
[illegible]nable and
(ii) [illegible]ace di[illegible]s to [illegible]es and imp[illegible]con
gro[illegible]
(iii) redu[illegible]t [illegible]ects.

The British go[illegible]ning its efforts [illegible], and d[illegible]. The aid programme led b[illegible]partment for I[illegible] (DFID[illegible]m of assistance in 2009 – [illegible]ugh the Foreign[illegible]e (FC[illegible]ing a contribution of £90m [illegible]support the pea[illegible]ac[illegible]ng e[illegible]on of the United Nations in [illegible]NUC), financing[illegible]k in[illegible]t, a[illegible]tegic and community based[illegible]s through a quic[illegible]al fu[illegible]e [illegible]fence (MoD) has supported [illegible]twenty training[illegible]d infra[illegible]r[illegible]ort of DRC's security sector.

Over a three year period the aid programme is expected to bring benefits to as many as one in six Congolese by providing direct assistance to over 10 million people. It will help to make health, education and improved water and sanitation services more available to millions of people. Economic growth is being promoted through improvements to the roads network and reform of the minerals sector. Major work is also being done to build democracy and accountability, reform the security sector, support integration of rebel groups into the army and fight corruption.

This booklet tells the stories of individuals and families whose lives have been improved through UK assistance. Through their words, we can see how hard they are working to improve their own lives and the catalytic role UK support plays in helping them.

The UK has demonstrated its strong commitment to build peace, support DRC's development and reduce poverty. We are therefore pleased to join in the celebrations of the 50th year of Congolese independence, both to mark what has been achieved so far and in anticipation of a better future for the people of DRC.

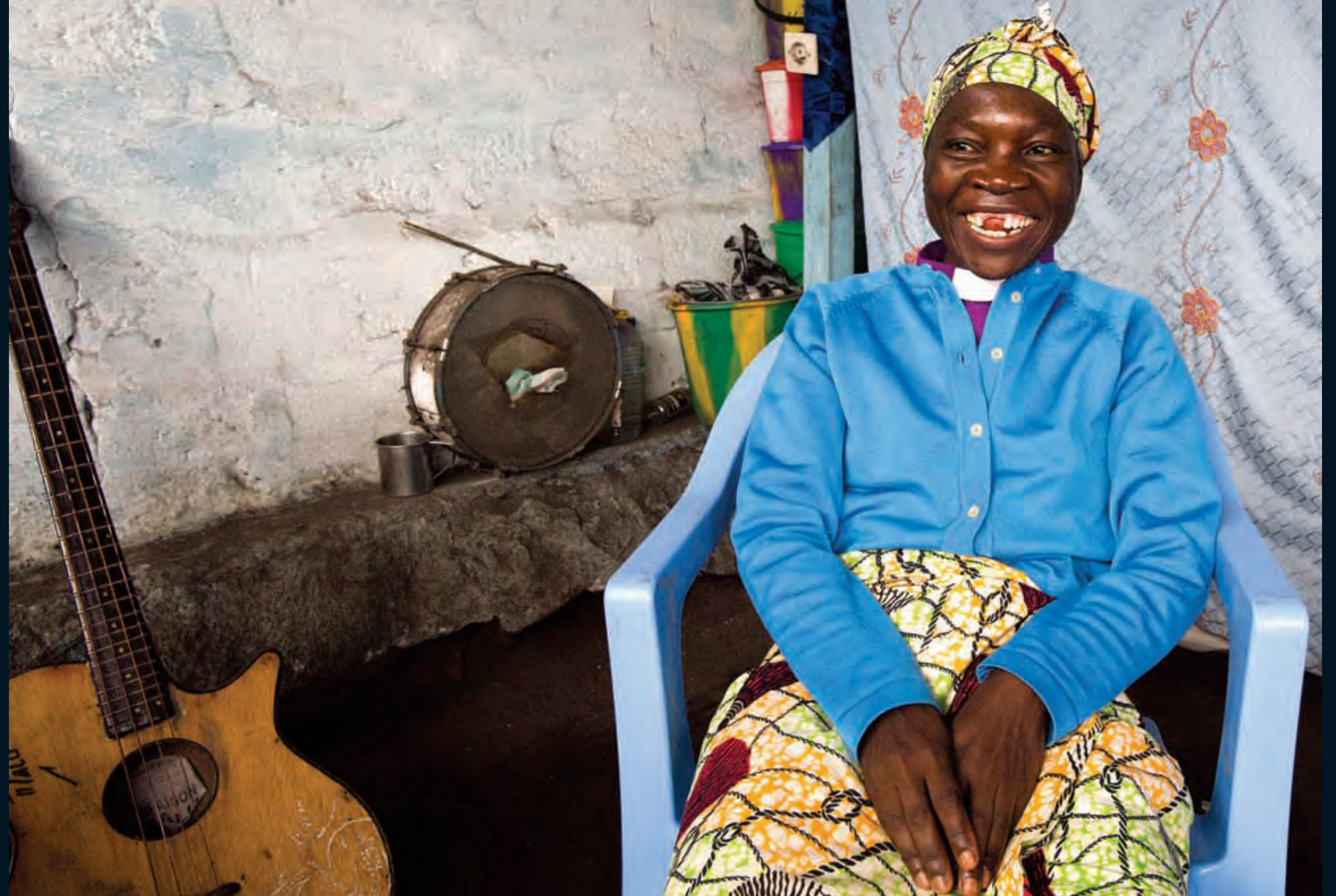
Her Majesty's Ambassador
Neil Wigan

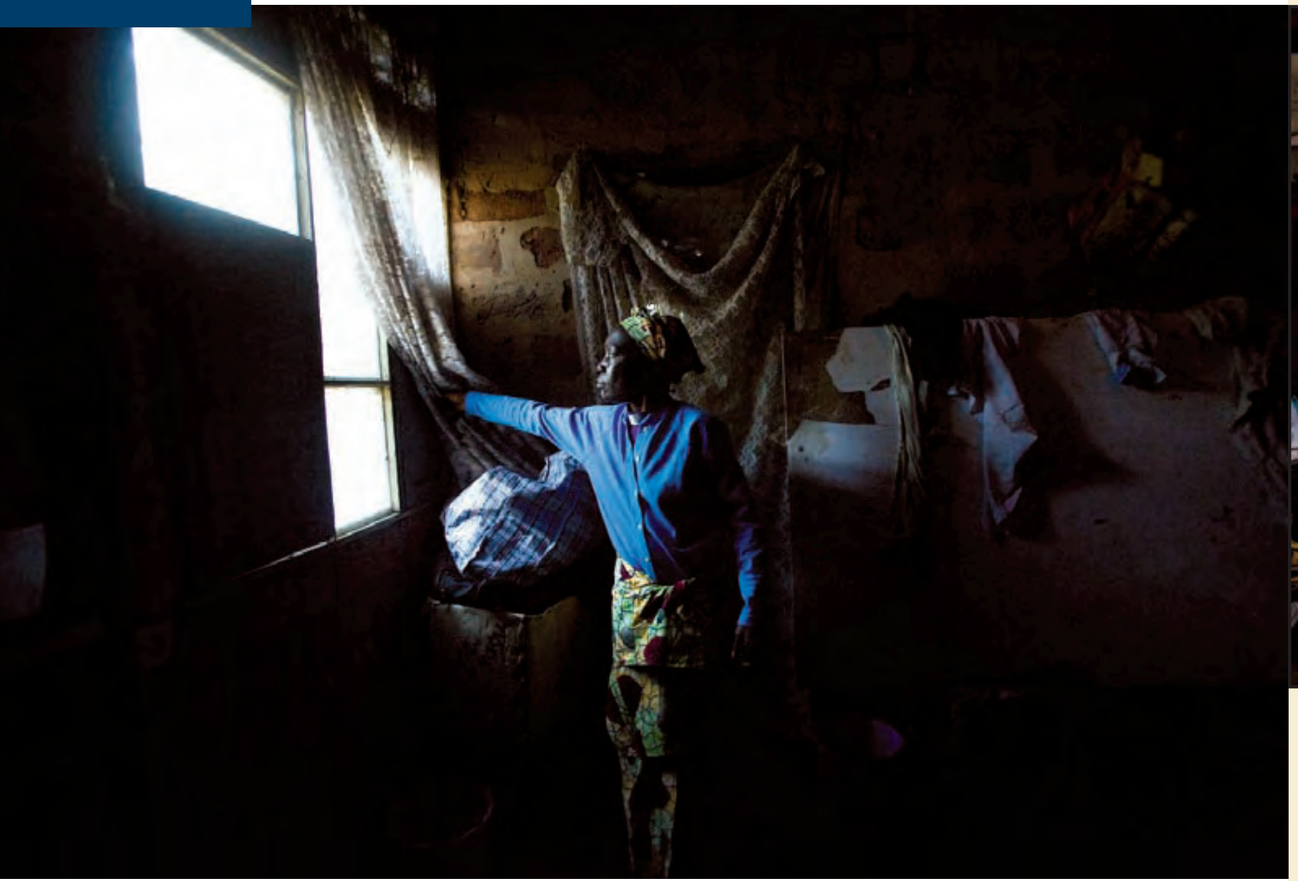
Phil Evans,
Head of DFID DRC

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Woodman MBE RLC
British Defence Attaché, Kinshasa

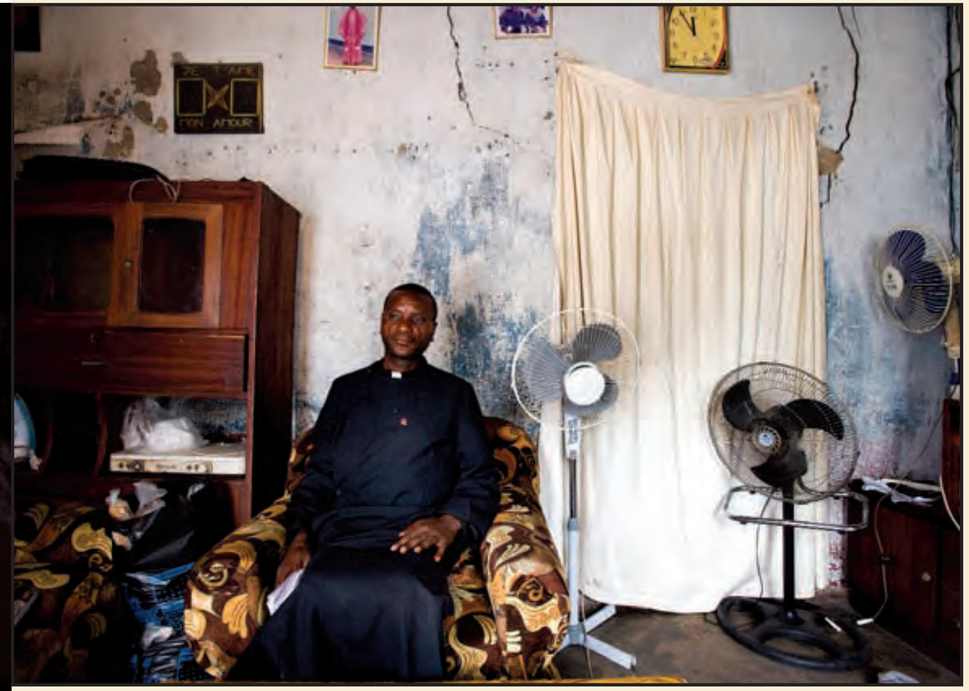
CONGO 50

Department for International Development (DFID)





Above, Reverend Nadine at her brother's house
Previous page, Reverend Nadine, with VORSI



The DRC is at a critical stage with regard to AIDS. The first case of AIDS was identified in 1983 and the DRC now faces a growing HIV & AIDS epidemic. Factors caused by the conflict, including widespread rape and sexual violence, continue to increase the population's vulnerability to HIV. The stigma of being HIV positive in DRC remains strong.

Nowhere is this truer than in the clergy, where reasons for infection potentially carry an additional moral indictment. After being unwell for an extended period, Reverend Nadine discovered she was HIV positive. It came as a complete shock. She took the news badly. 'When the doctor told me that I was HIV positive, I didn't even know a single other person who had it. I had no idea how I got it. I didn't live a chaotic life: I lived a good life. I had never had a blood transfusion. I'd only ever had injections given to me in pharmacies. I was desolate.'

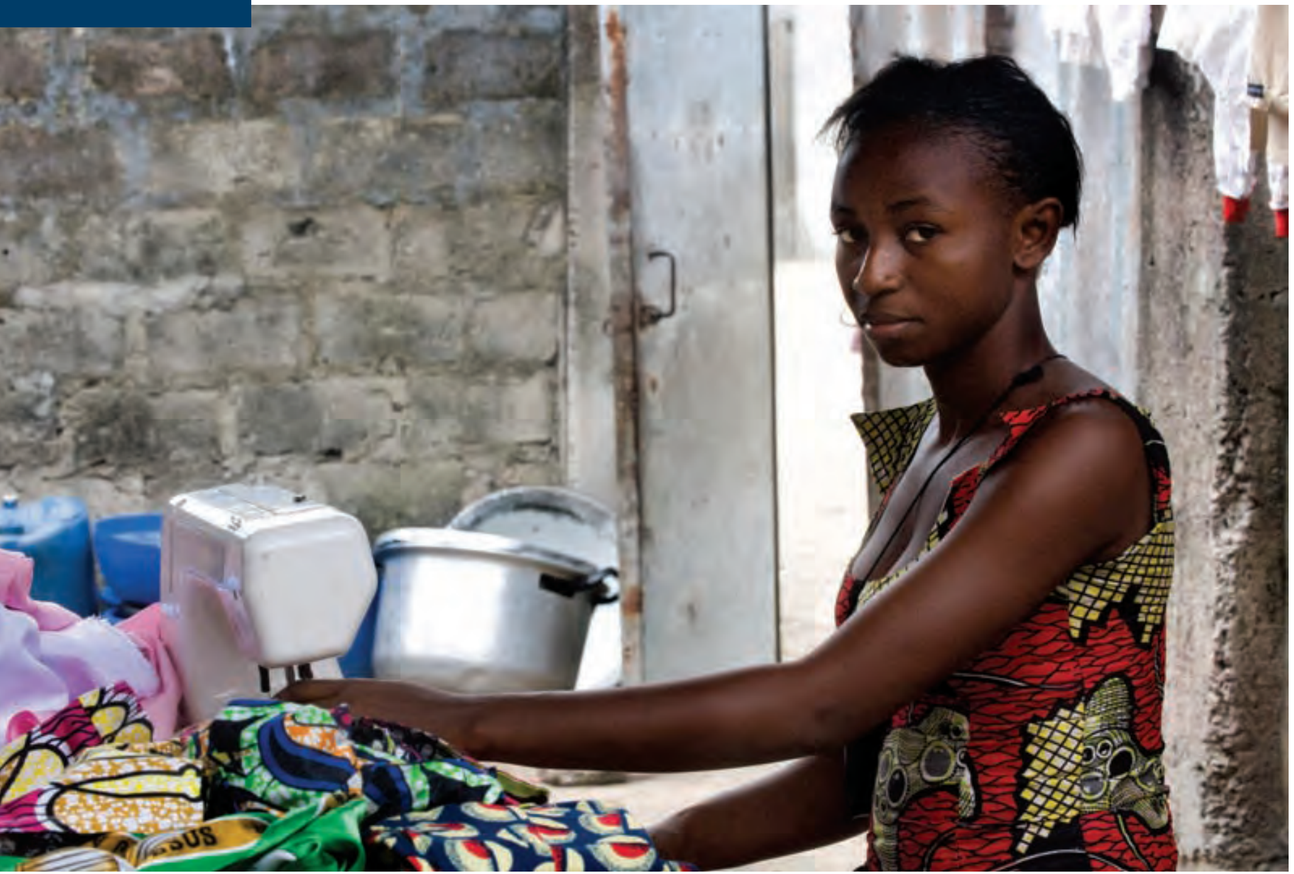
Nadine had been working at a hospital. She lost her position and went to live with her brother. Her brother, however, viewed her as a pariah. He put her in a little concrete room at the back of his house. 'Right up until now, my big brother will not allow him or his children to even come near me. Even today, when I live in the same house as him, I am not allowed to touch anything, I am not allowed to sit in their chairs, or to use a spoon. I have my own – and I am not allowed to touch anything else. It has been like this since the beginning. It is like torture. It is so, so upsetting.' Tears come to her eyes as she relates her story. Her 'room' is a separate, dark dank ground level cellar.

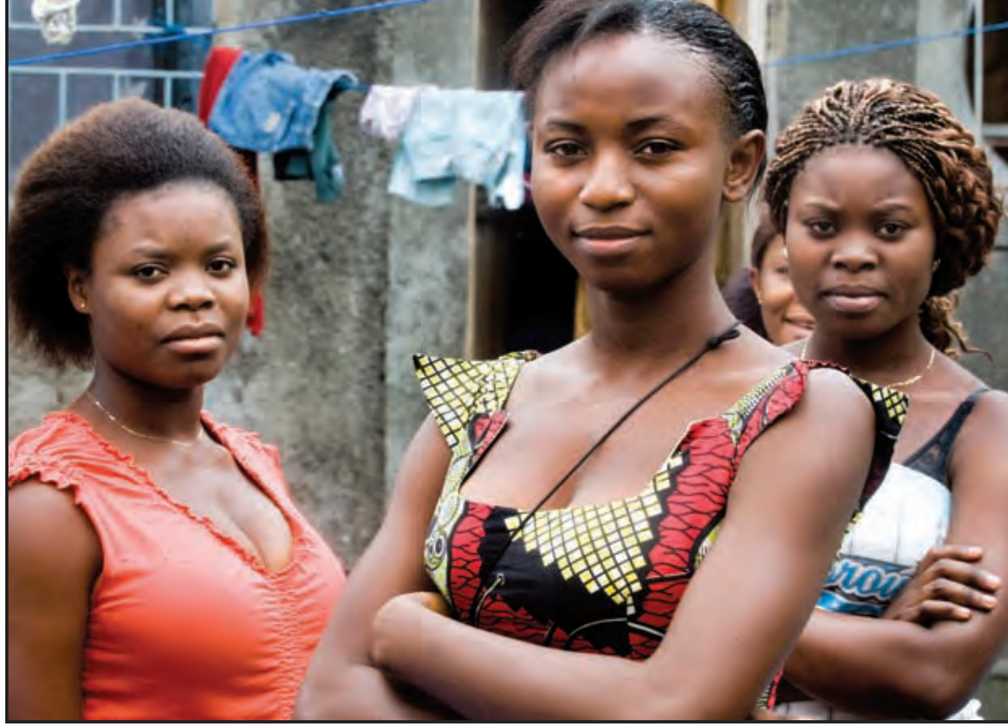
Pastor Edward was married with three children when he was diagnosed as HIV positive. His wife was then tested and proved positive too. 'I was suicidal. I asked my God how he could do this to me' he says. He lost his position. 'After I found out I was positive, it was very difficult. Many would neither pray nor eat with me. They questioned my very morality, asking how can you be a pastor and have HIV. The stigma was very intense. I had been forced to leave my parish. They thought I was an adulterer. They wouldn't accept me. I had to leave.'

VORSI, the DFID funded programme carried out by Christian Aid, aims to help at least 22,000 families and communities affected by HIV & AIDS. Nadine says, 'I had no money, I was ill; I had nowhere to turn, nothing to live for. But then I was put in touch with VORSI. They saved me. They have given me hope. I can really say that when I am here, I feel among family. I am at ease – I feel they are my real family. They have given me back my life'. Pastor Edward says, 'VORSI Congo has motivated us to want to live. It has made a huge difference. When my family learned that I was HIV positive, they rejected me completely. Now, my cousins have come to some of the VORSI meetings to learn a bit more, and this seems to be helping. And after many workshops, and education, I have learned to live with and accept being HIV positive. I have learned too to speak with other brothers and church members. And now, because of VORSI, I am part of the campaign to talk to others in our community who have HIV and AIDS.'

Nadine is still a pastor. 'I take medicines now and am very healthy. I also had training – and now I help others, teach them how to avoid getting HIV, and when people have it, how to look after them.' Nadine also hosts a radio programme on 'Parolles D'Eternelle', which VORSI helped make happen.

VORSI is now trying to find a posting for me as a pastor. I am optimistic that a posting can be found as I want nothing more than to resume my life as a pastor. I was rejected by my family, but thank goodness someone was there to look after me, to help me. VORSI has truly given me back my life.'



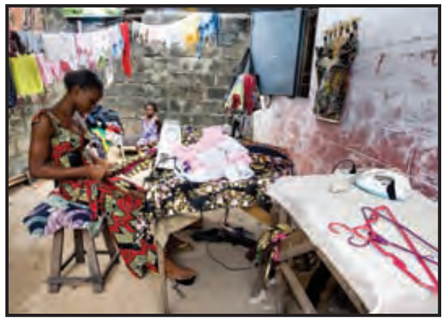


DFID funded Amacongo, administered by Christian Aid, helps HIV & AIDS widows and orphans. It is essential aid to those who would otherwise be left with no means of support, and overlooked by society at large.

Niclette Batoyande is 20. Both her parents died from HIV three years earlier, leaving her and her five siblings orphaned. 'After our mother died, my father became unwell too. After a while, he couldn't work anymore and then he died too. My mother died in January; my father died that November. I was so sad. And even though my older brother has money, he refused to help us, so it was all even worse as no one would take care of us, and we felt so alone and rejected.'

'The only good thing was that before dying, my father had been involved with AIDS NGO Amacongo, so when he died, they took me in, they took me to their sewing centre where I could learn to sew. I don't know what I would have done without them. They have made such a difference to my life.'

'They gave us classes there and training to make clothing, to sew. After I finished the first level of training, they gave me a sewing machine. I began sewing clothes. So many people are surprised to see such a young girl making such beautiful clothes! And I am doing very well. With the money I am earning, I have already bought a second sewing machine. I am also building myself a stall, so I can have a proper shop. I have already paid the security deposit on the location. I really want to finish building my little shop so I can get even more clients.'



Niclette works with three others from Amacongo. 'Together, we want to develop a big business. If I didn't have Amacongo, I don't know what would have happened to me. I probably would have become a prostitute as I would have had no other way of making money. That is what has happened to my cousin, who didn't have any help at all. She now works as a prostitute. She didn't have any choice. That would have been me, had Amacongo not been there. It has made such a huge difference to my life.'

DFID is funding Christian Aid £4,624,631 from April 2006 to March 2011 to reduce the transmission of HIV & AIDS in 10 provinces of DRC.

Police

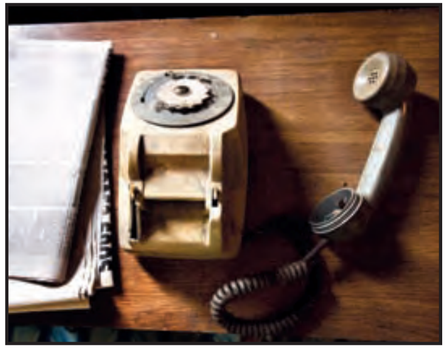
The police station in Gombe, Kinshasa is situated in a derelict building. There is no glass in the windows, no door, no reception, only a huge pile of rubbish, squatters and some police officers. Barely distinguishable in the dim light, chalked letters on the wall accompanied by an arrow point the way to the police headquarters. A single light bulb barely illuminates the way up a dank, filthy stairwell. This is the headquarters tasked with bringing law and order to the unruly city of Kinshasa.

Major Jules Bwanandeke sits in an office, lit only by a dim light bulb. A broken telephone, its receiver smashed, sits in bits on his desk. A sentimental poster brings the only life to the room. There are no computers in sight and stacks of yellowing papers sit on a shelf.

Major Bwanandeke describes the conditions and the challenges. 'You can see the conditions – we have no toilets, no water, no machines, no tables even. The tables are ones we ourselves have bought. We have no telephones, no furniture, no televisions, no computers. For electricity, we have taken a wire from the street and brought it in. If the electricity company knew they'd rip it out! But even so, it's not enough for computers, or for a fridge – it's just a little wire which can only give us the dim light bulbs you see.'

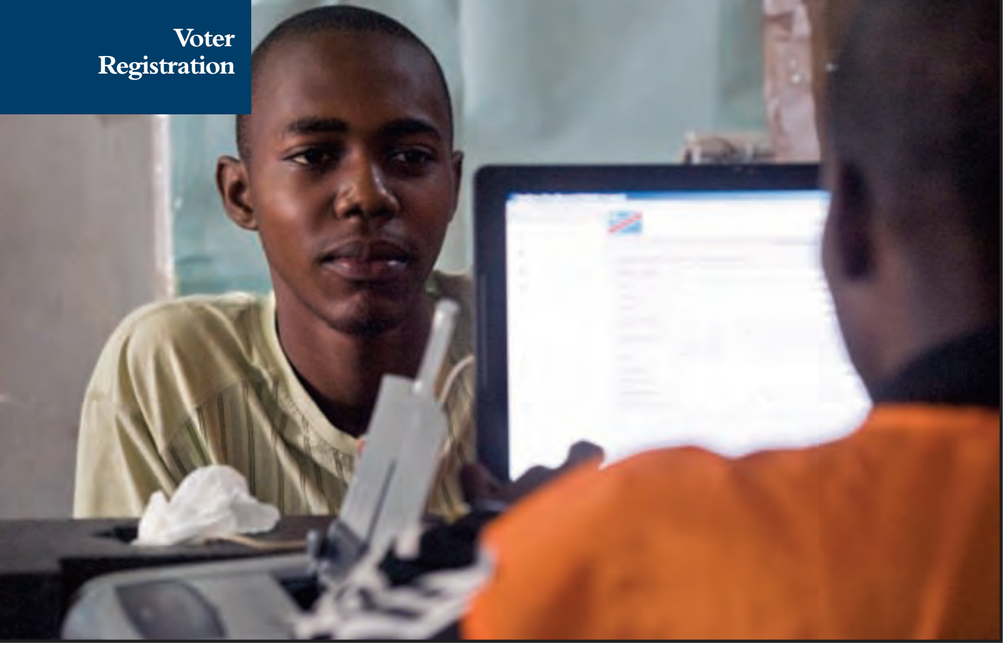
'We have no taps, no water, no air con. And we don't even have any toilets here – we have to go find somewhere to go when we need to – which is why it smells so bad in here. It is very difficult. We have walkie-talkies – but we have no batteries for them so they are useless. We can only communicate with our officers on the street using our private phones. And we have no transport. If there is a problem, we have to grab a taxi – or a private vehicle and get them to take us. We have no jeeps. And without vehicles, we arrive late, so we can't avert much.'

'And our men haven't been paid. So when we call them to come to an emergency, they have to walk – and they haven't been paid, so they get there late. It is impossible to work effectively under these conditions.'



In 2009, DFID launched a £60m security sector accountability and police reform programme over five years which will, amongst other things, strengthen executive and civilian oversight of security sector institutions and support the development of a police service that protects ordinary and poor people.

Voter Registration



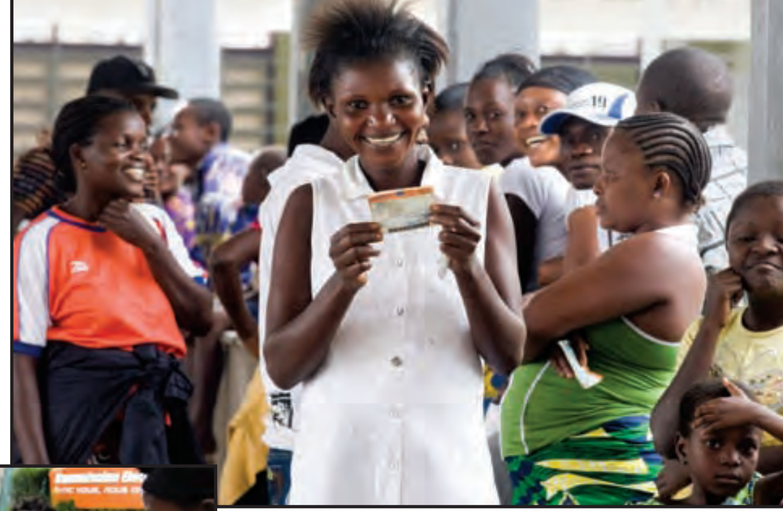
Salomon Salumu Makonga

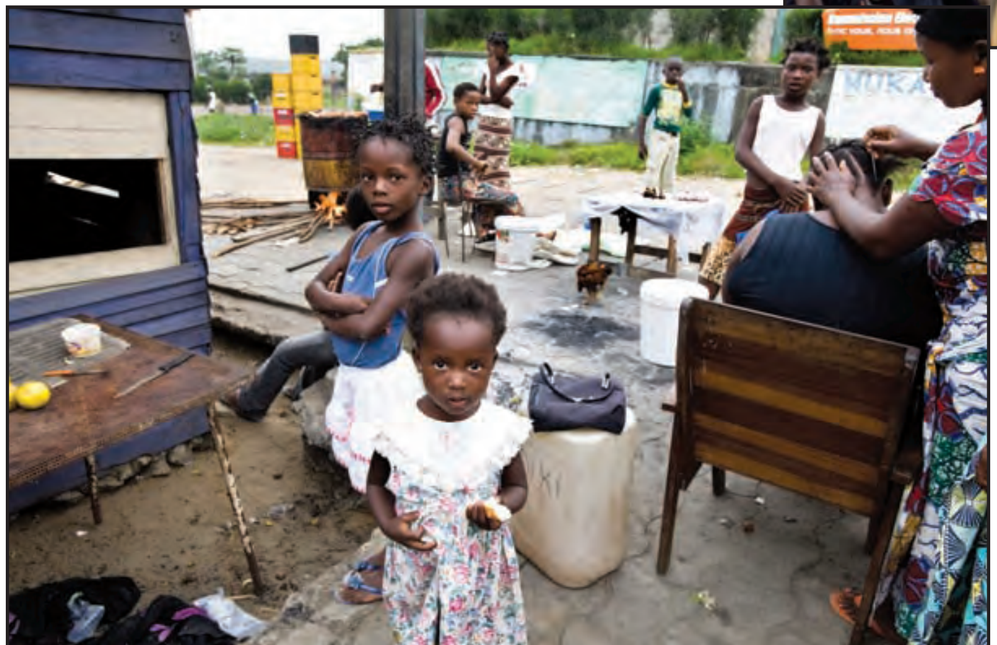
At Kinshasa University students queued to register to vote – many for the very first time. Broken windows and battered plasterwork, grace the building housing the registration centre. But if the ruined promise of buildings once built with care betrayed the country's turbulent history, the voter registration within heralded hope for the new and better future. Salomon Salumu Makonga, 17, is a student at the College of Notre Dame. He wants to be a magistrate. For him, the funding DFID has provided for voter registration and the coming elections offers the opportunity for essential change. He expressed the hopes, dreams and optimism of his fellow registering students.

'For me, the vote is important. It is important as it allows me the right to choose who will lead the country, what direction the country will go in, and to have a hand in the future.'

In a distant suburb of Kinshasa, decayed concrete blocks strung with laundry house the inhabitants of this depressed complex. Unemployed men mill about. The voter registration takes place in a classroom. Cables from generators crisscross the room to provide power to the registration equipment. The registration process is efficient. People of all ages wait – patient and eager: Mothers with babies; confident youth; the aged, timid due to the novelty of voting technology. They gather in excitement to collect the finished cards. They express dissatisfaction with current circumstances and an overwhelming sense of the need for change. Francine, 28, speaks for all when she says, 'The vote gives us hope for change, hope for a better future.'

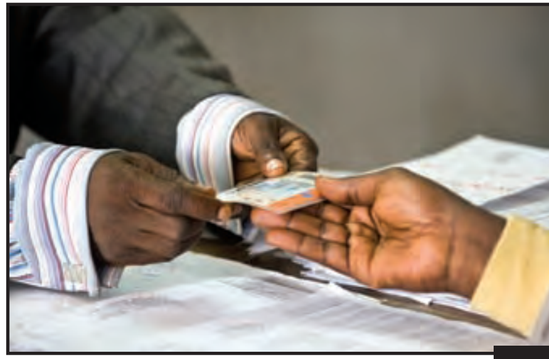
Back in central Kinshasa, Salomon, who will be voting for the first time in the upcoming elections, sums up the feeling expressed at all the centres. 'Right now, there is no justice in my country and I want it to have justice – justice for everyone in the whole country. I think that the vote can bring us peace in the country.' With the idealism and purpose expressed by the students we spoke to, Salomon adds, 'I have a lot of hope that things can change. It is important to never become discouraged. If my brothers and sister get it into their heads not to simply elect a figurehead, the vote can work. I want to do a lot in my life. I want to construct schools, hospitals, roads.'





The UK was the biggest bilateral donor to the elections process in 2006 providing £35m over three years. The UK continues to be the largest bilateral donor to electoral processes in DRC providing over £22.5m.

DFID is contributing £58.8 million over five years (2008-12) to the DRC's Government programme, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme. This will help by building the capacity of parliaments (national and provincial) and political parties, continuing support to the electoral commission, supporting decentralisation and capacity building of the external audit institution.



Roads

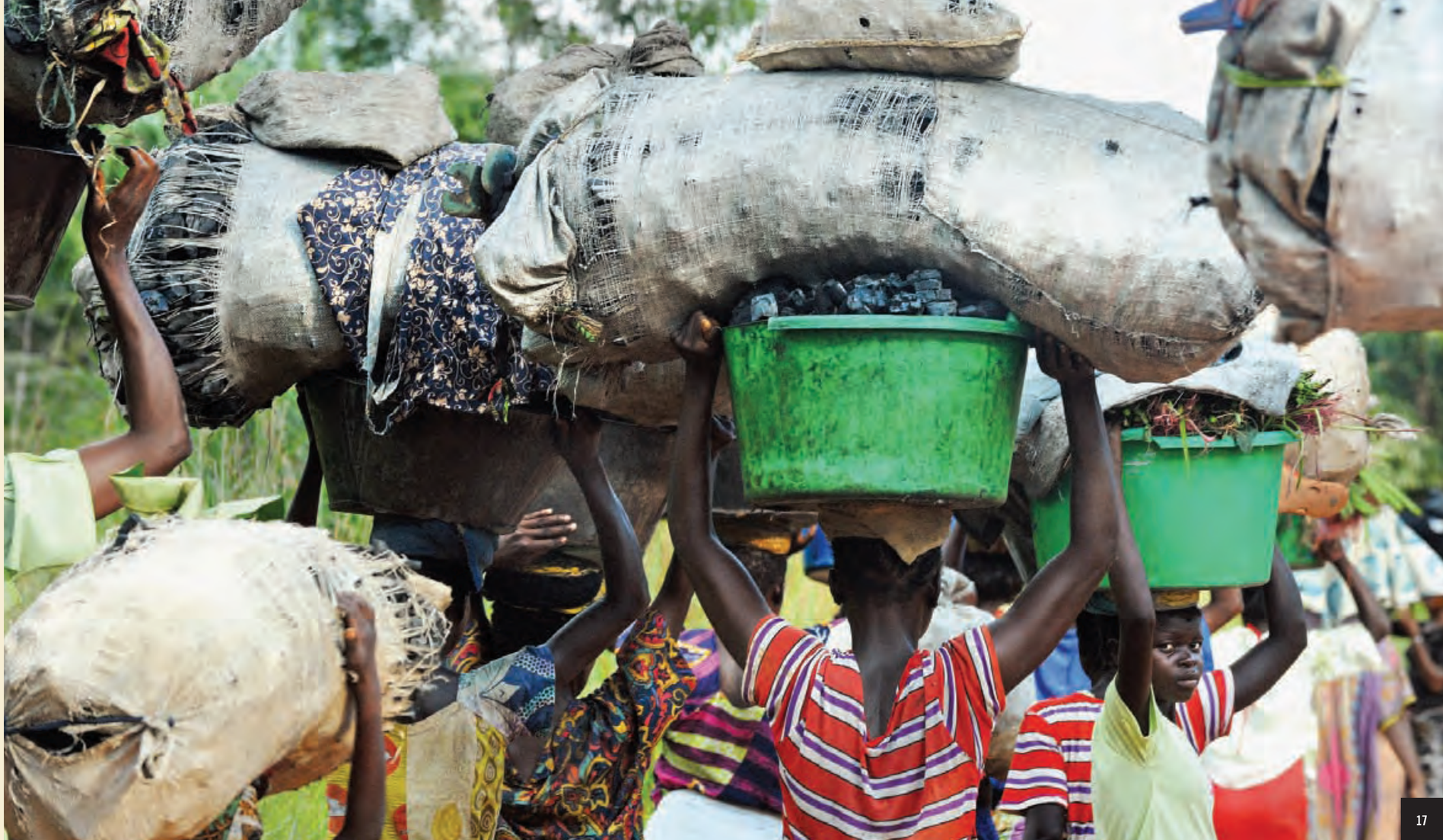
Route Nationale 1 connects Kinshasa with Lubumbashi, passing through Mbuji Mayi, a city of about three million inhabitants. Its name, Route Nationale 1, reflects its importance as a route of commerce connecting the country's rich resources with international markets.

However, its reality is different. The journey to Kinshasa takes a week at the best of times, much longer when the rainy season turns it into mud. Lorries frequently slide off the track, ending up in the deep ravines alongside. As the Pastor of Tshibombo explains, 'Without a proper road it is very difficult to get our products to market. And, as most of the people in this area are farmers, this creates big difficulties. It prevents our development and keeps us poor.'

Women pass, carrying huge sacks of charcoal on their heads. With each heavily laden step, they sink into the sand. 'Look at these women,' the Pastor adds. 'They will carry these sacks to Mbuji Mayi, where they will sell the contents. It is a distance of 22 kilometres. It is extremely difficult for them. It is even worse in the rainy season, when the road turns to deep mud. A lot of people fall and get injured.'

Tshi Bwa Bwa, 35 years old and mother of 10, says the consequences can be a matter of life and death. 'Our only source of water here comes from a two hour walk down the mountain. It is not good. A lot of people fall ill from the worms, which live in it. My little brother got very ill from it. His belly swelled and he was very ill. However, there is no way an ambulance can get here. We have to carry the ill 22 kilometres to hospital in Mbuji Mayi. I had to rent a bicycle to take my brother to hospital. It cost 5,000 francs. For me, that is extremely expensive. I had to sell clothing and plates in order to raise the money. It took time. We finally got him to hospital but it was too late and he died. He has left seven children and a wife with no way to support themselves. If we had a road here and transport, he would have lived.'

DFID has begun a major programme of road rehabilitation and maintenance with the Ministry of Public Works and the World Bank called "Pro-Routes". DFID funding will help rehabilitate 1,800km of roads driving economic growth and improving access to services by contributing £76 million over five years from 2008.

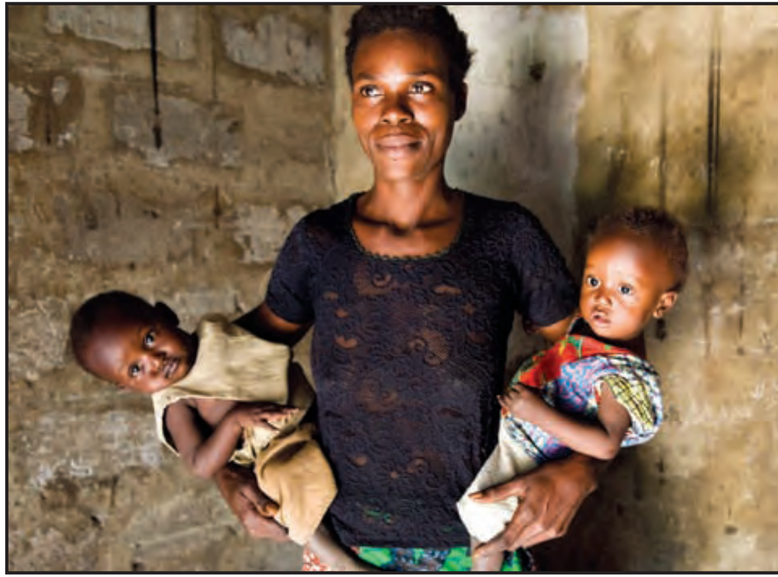


Clean Water

On the outskirts of Kinshasa, the population of Ngomba-Kinkusa has expanded rapidly. Scarce resources are strained and poverty has increased. In January and March of 2008, typhoid killed 40 people in this area. 'It was caused by the lack of potable water and the lack of hygiene created by the lack of safe water. The water distribution system from Kinshasa doesn't reach here. And the explosion of population we have seen in this area just exacerbates the problem,' explains the village chief.

The DFID funded Healthy Village, Healthy School project was begun after that epidemic. A safe water supply, a hand washing system and slabs and covers for the latrines were supplied, and distributed by the villagers themselves. A young girl proudly shows us the family's new toilet, giving its neat dirt floor an additional flourish with her broom.

Shiny spigots grace the clean concrete structure of the protected water supply. The area is crowded as children and women fetch water, wash clothing nearby, shower in the fresh and clean water. The Chief tells us, 'It has made an enormous difference. There have been no problems with typhoid since these improvements were instated.'



Mme Calala Caricu, 38 has eight children. She lost her husband to the typhoid epidemic. 'When the typhoid epidemic came, my husband got sick and died. With no resources to fall back on, it has left us in a terrible situation, which is even worse, as we have no one here to take care of us. My children have all had to leave school as there is simply no way to afford to send them anymore. The epidemic has devastated our lives.'

'I was five months pregnant (with twins) when my husband died. Three of my children also got very ill, but luckily they survived. They were all very sick in the stomach. We didn't know why this was happening – but at the time we would get our water from the river. It was dirty but we had no choice but to drink it, as that was the only water available. A lot of people got ill. A lot died. Now, things are very good. Now, they are never ill. The water is clean now and it makes such a difference.'

DFID is providing £25m over four years to a project with UNICEF to improve rural water supply using the well established provincial health system. It will provide access to clean water, improved sanitation and hygiene education for 3.5 million people from 2008.

Clean Water

You don't have to go far from the major town of Mbuji Mayi with about three million inhabitants to feel the city centre is far behind. In less than twenty minutes deeply pitted and stony tracks turn to dirt. The track fills with women and children carrying jerry cans, basins, and buckets of water on their heads. They are coming from a DFID funded water system, which is creating an extensive water network in the area.

This is the first time these people have had easy access to safe drinking water. And, as the community itself maintains the network, on the basis of revenue charged for the water – at a price also set by the community – it is a source of great pride in the community. People crowd around the fountain. It is hard to even see through them as they vie for one of the six spouts. The woman in charge takes the money and helps to lift the filled heavy buckets onto heads.

Joleen is a farmer. She is a mother of seven. She explains the difference it has made to her. 'Before we had to travel such a long way to get water from the river. You could only carry one jerry can at a time, but as it was so far away, we could only make one trip a day. We never had enough for our needs. We had to choose what to use it for – drinking, cooking or cleaning. And the worst of it was, the water wasn't even clean. The children were always ill – with diarrhoea, terrible skin rashes, fevers, dysentery. I myself was sick with dysentery for a month. It was very bad.'

Elidou interjects, 'It is so much better now. We have no problems – no one gets sick and we always have enough, as it is easy to send the children as often as is needed, which was impossible before.' As Joleen observes, 'Having safe water so close has made such a huge difference in our lives. My family is so much healthier; everyone is.'

DFID is co-funding a water project with the European Union in Mbuji Mayi, which is implemented by the Belgian Technical Cooperation. The project will improve living conditions and health of 310,000 people (about 10% of the population of Mbuji Mayi) in the city by building eleven community managed networks that will provide safe drinking water. The very poorest will receive water for free.

Education

On the outskirts of Goma, Ecole Catholique de Shaba has three thousand students, in both primary and secondary education. Headmaster Burume Bisimwa has been at the school for 14 years. His own children attend the school. For him, the benefits of aid received over the years have been tremendous. Teachers have been well trained, there are more school buildings and performance has improved increasing student numbers.

However, despite these gains, the main problem for parents and their children remains the cost of education. At Shaba, only eighteen of the twenty-seven teachers receive pay from the state. Education remains mostly paid for by the parents but for many parents the cost can be impossible to meet. Parent Daniel Mahyuhya, who struggles to keep his two young children in school, says, 'It is so hard to pay - hard for all the parents to even be able to send the children to school. Maybe if you have one child, you stand a chance, but if you have more it simply becomes impossible'.

It makes for a terrible choice as parents have to decide amongst their families who will go to school and who will not. Joelle Buhenda tells us about her choice, 'I have eleven children. I can only find occasional work. There is no way I can afford to send all of my children to school. Two of my children couldn't go and I had to choose which. They are at home now.'

In the school year 2007–8, the school fees were $47. In 2008-9, they were raised to $56. Joelle says, 'When I heard the prices were rising, I just cried and cried. It hurt me so much but I realised I didn't want my children to become street children, so I just have to try and keep the ones who are in school there. I continue to hope I will one day afford to send the others. If the prices would come down, I would be able to'. This is the same with many of the other families. Only two of Nicole Bigabwa's seven children go to school. 'It is the situation of Congo,' she observes. The cost is high. It rocks families. Joelle says that her two children at home, a 12 year old boy and a 16 year old girl feel discriminated against in the family. 'They feel very bad, they react, they disobey, they rebel.'

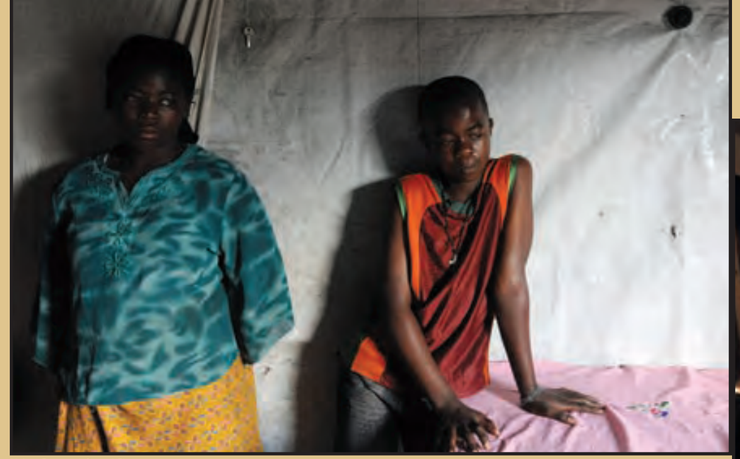
The family lives in a small tidy house, with two bedrooms: the five boys share one bed, top to tail; the girls the other. The contrast of the demeanour of the two not attending school to their vibrant siblings is immediately apparent.

Eloterre, Joelle's 12 year old, had showed up at school eighteen days running, waiting at the gates each and every day only to be chased away by the head teacher as his fees had not been paid in full. He seems detached, depressed. He says, 'When I see the others going to school, I feel my family has abandoned me and I suffer a lot. I always wanted to be a pilot. Now I am worried that will never happen. I don't feel good inside. I do nothing but domestic chores. I fight with my mother sometimes, and just hope I can go back to school'.

Older sister Naime Engene, 16, struggles to speak, the weight of her depression evident. 'I really want to go back to school. I suffer a lot watching the others go – and I have forgotten everything I ever learned. I dream of being a nurse. I understand that my parents don't have money but I feel abandoned and I try not to rebel. The thing I fear the most is the contempt of the world which will mock me forever for not being able to read and write. I have no hope unless my parents get money and I can go to school.'

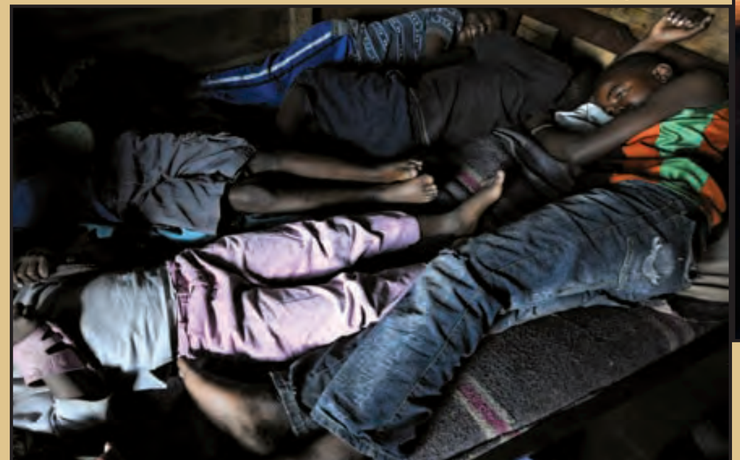
'If the prices would just stay the same, that would be a gift,' Nicole says. 'If school could be free, though, that would be a dream,' Joelle adds, 'Education is very important to us. We all want all our children to be educated'.

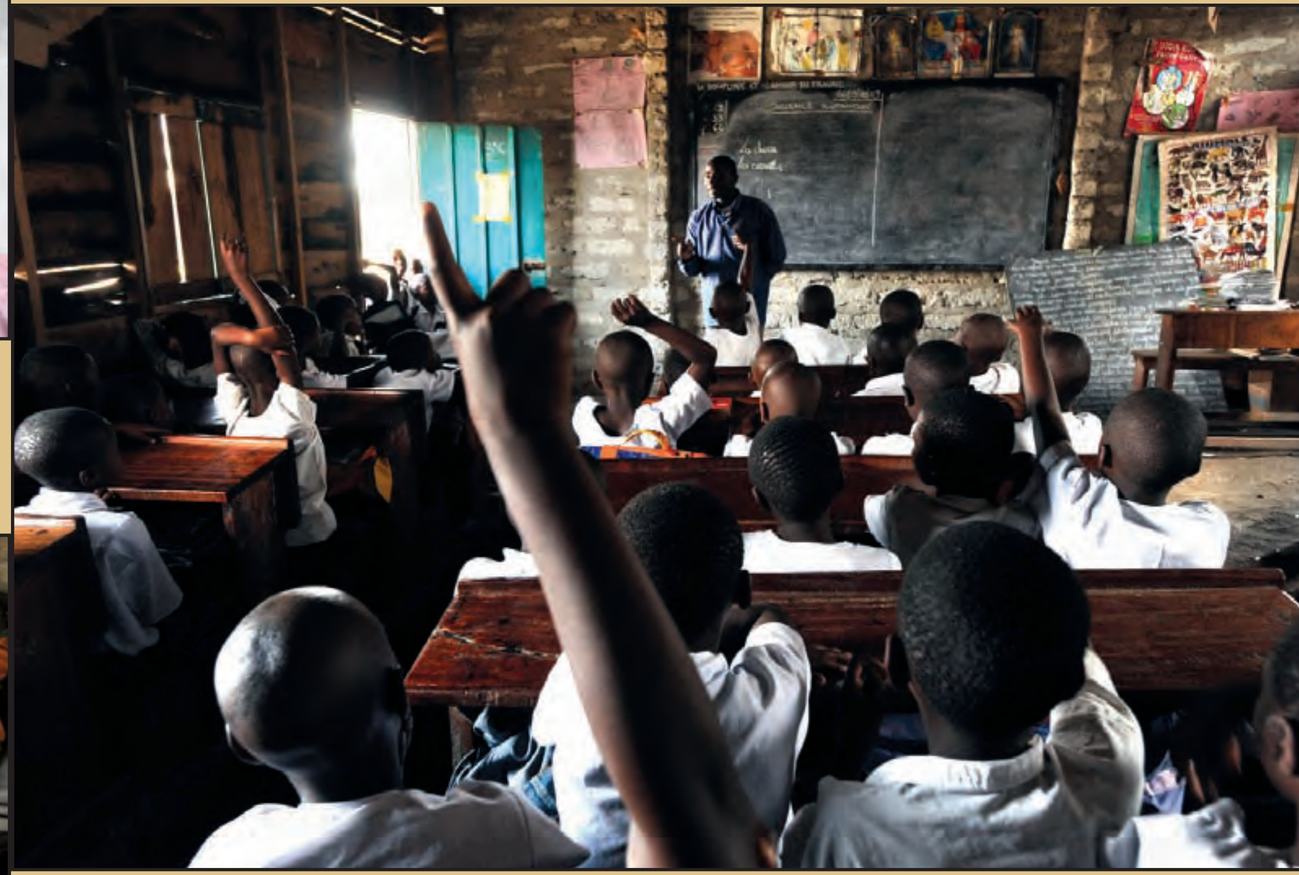
Less than one quarter of Congolese children finish primary school. DFID is working with others to develop and support an education strategy and action plans for education. The central priority of this strategy is the progressive abolition of primary school fees starting in September 2010. A major project to gather more reliable data for the education sector is also being prepared.



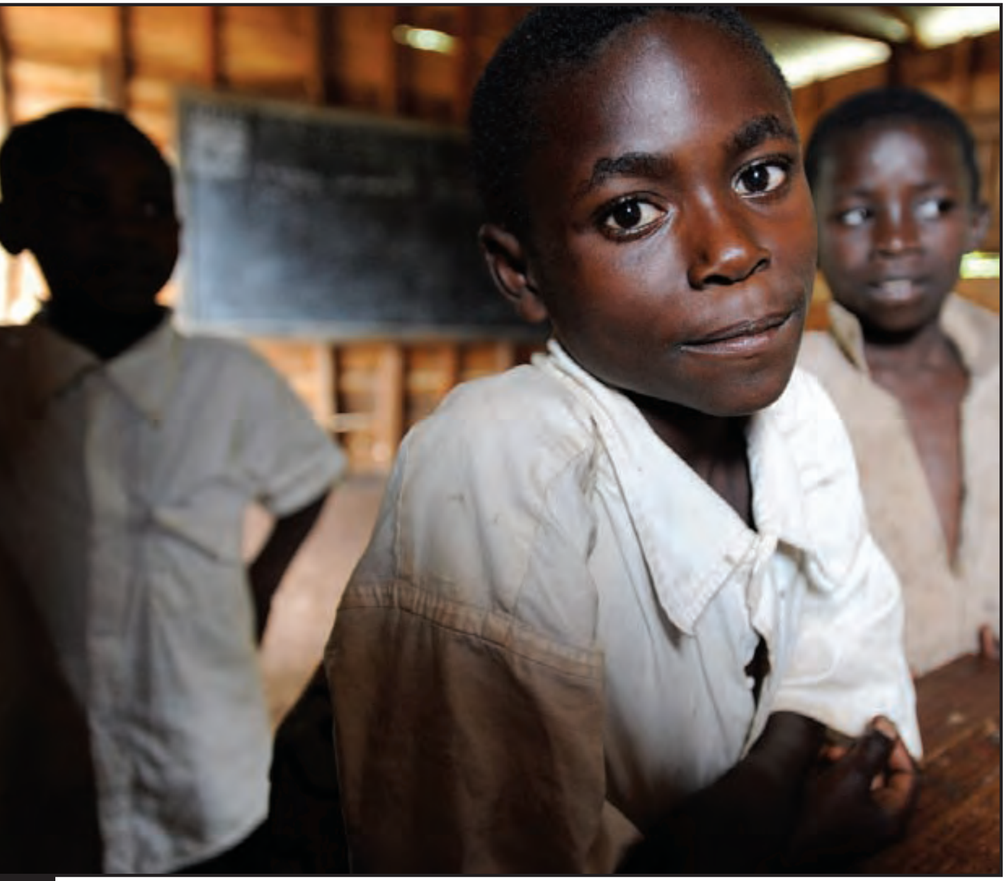
Naime Engene, left, and Eloterre

Sleeping 5 to a bed





Community Reconstruction



The road up to Monaria village seems endless. It twists and turns in uninterrupted ascent, offering stunning views across the valley. The village is perched at the very top, sheltered in a cloister of trees. A single storey building made of planks of wood sits alongside the covered open frame of a single room wood building. This is the community school, decided on and built together by the whole community as part of the DFID funded Tuungane Project. There are only a handful of school benches and tables inside. They swim in the empty space.

Marta Mwhuma, 64, describes what it was like before Tuungane. 'Before the project, the school was way down the valley. It was very difficult for the children to go to school: the hill is very steep and it took a long time to get down – and even longer to get back up'. The pitch is extreme. 'Even worse was when it rained. The hill turned into mud, and there were mudslides. It was very dangerous.'

Matengo Denga, 15, a student who went to the school in the valley before this one was built, tells us that many children fell and were injured, some badly, like himself. 'I was in the third grade – about 9 years old and it was raining. It was so difficult to get down the hill in the rain with all the mud and rain. A lot of children just didn't go to school when it rained. That day, it was so muddy, I slipped and fell straight onto a stone. It was so painful. My knee was broken and I had to spend a whole year in bed recovering. I fell behind in my studies because of this – and my knee still hurts. I guess it always will.'

Marta explains that this is why the community chose to build a school with the Tuungane project. 'Many children had had to abandon school because of it; many fell behind from missing out on so many days of school when it rained. It was a pain in our hearts as it was so important for us that our children got an education.' Matengo adds, 'So many people mocked our village for not having a school or water but now we are so proud. And I now have time to rest and do my homework too'.

When we learned Tuungane was coming here, we were so excited,' Marta says, 'What was so good was that the project responded to the needs of our community – not the other way around, where it is decided for you. This was completely different. The community has responsibility for it all.' Daniel points out, 'It is not like other times where you have no idea what is happening, where the money is going. Here we control everything and we know exactly how all is being spent. And the entire community has participated.'

The first thing the community did after being approached for Tuungane was to hold a community meeting. While there were many problems to address, the community discussed them all and together decided the most urgent was the need for a school. Everyone in the community participated in the construction, providing wood planks or whatever was needed. Not only has Tuungane changed the lives by allowing the children education, it has also had a positive effect on the community itself, bringing it together. Before, less than 100 children could go to school. Now there are over 300 students.

This building is the pride of the community', says Daniel. There are students who study here, but the adults also use it to learn to read and write. We also hold our community meetings here, so it is used by the entire community. We are so very proud of it, and very proud of our community. Tuungane has made a huge difference on our lives. It has brought us pride'.

Christian, 11, is bursting to tell us what it has meant to him. 'Before, I never went to the school in the valley as my parents wouldn t let me go down the hill. Instead I had to walk two hours in the morning and two hours back every evening to reach another school. I had no time to study, I was so tired at the end of the day. Now I go to school every day and it only takes me 10 minutes to get there. Now, I am top of my class. I want to be a doctor.'

DFID is supporting a major community driven reconstruction programme in approximately 2,481 villages implemented by the International Rescue Committee and CARE which will benefit 3.2 million people in eastern DRC. So far 2,060 projects have been implemented, such as the construction and equipping of classrooms and health centres.

Bora Kadaho, 28, is from the village of Chibanga, which is about five kilometres from the hospital. She is in hospital with her 14 day old baby boy, who she has named Kabila. Born prematurely at only 23 weeks, Kabila weighed in at only 1.5kg. He quickly developed a serious infection, but to the surprise and pride of the hospital staff, he triumphed, emerging a bit lighter at 1kg. Too weak to suck, Kabila had a tiny, thin straw running into his nose, through which his mother's milk was fed to him. However, his mother's milk dried up and she had to buy milk for him.

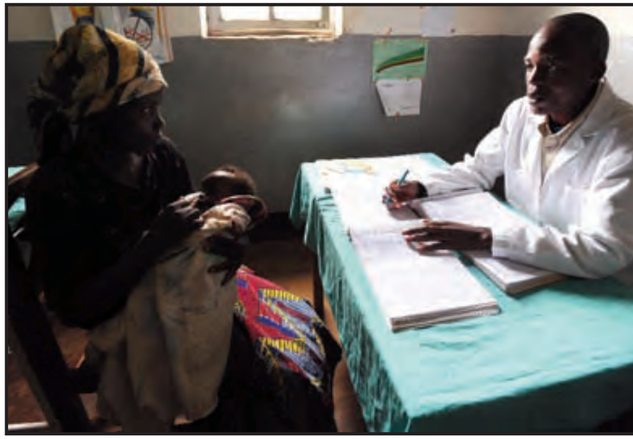
Bora explained that her husband left her a few weeks before Kabila's birth. Then she began bleeding. Her placenta had separated. An emergency c-section saved her and Kabila's lives. 'I owe $30 for the c-section,' Bora explains, 'I don't have money to pay for that. They gave my baby medicines and antibiotics – and now I also owe $18 for the care of my baby. I can't pay that either. They said now I need powered milk, as I don't have any more, but I can't pay for that either.' It had been three days since Kabila had eaten. Bora continued, 'I don't have any money to buy the milk. I am afraid that if he doesn't eat he will die.'

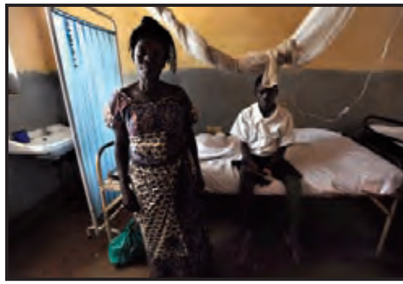
Kabila and his mother were fortunate. They received help. Most, however, will see life and death choices decided by cost, as this story is repeated every day in hospitals throughout the country.

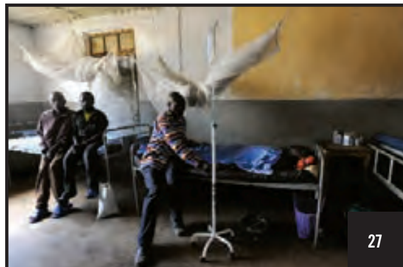
Contrast Jolie's experience with the DFID funded affordable health programme: 'Here, it is so good. If any of my children are ill, I bring them immediately. They are so much healthier because of this. It has made an enormous difference to our lives.'

Jolie, 18, has two children. Her 15 month old daughter is unwell. Jolie has brought her to her local clinic, supported by DFID's affordable health care programme. DFID funding has meant that clinics like these have been able to reduce fees. Before moving to this area two months ago, she would try to avoid going to the doctor until it was unavoidable. 'Before,' Jolie says, 'it cost 500 francs, just to see the doctor. Everything else, medicines everything cost extra on top of that. It was very difficult to pay. And every time we had to see the doctor, we fell into debt. My family's health suffered because of this. Now, it is completely different. Everything, including medicines, costs only 200 francs. As I can afford that, I bring the children as soon as they fall ill.'

DFID is providing increasingly affordable health care in 20 Health Zones across four provinces – Maniema, Orientale, Kasai Occidental and South Kivu – and is on track to serve an estimated 2.15 million people by the end of 2011. The implementation partners, Merlin and International Rescue Committee, have begun reducing fees and health care is now highly subsidised across the DFID-supported health zones for all patients. Those identified as the very poorest are treated free of charge.

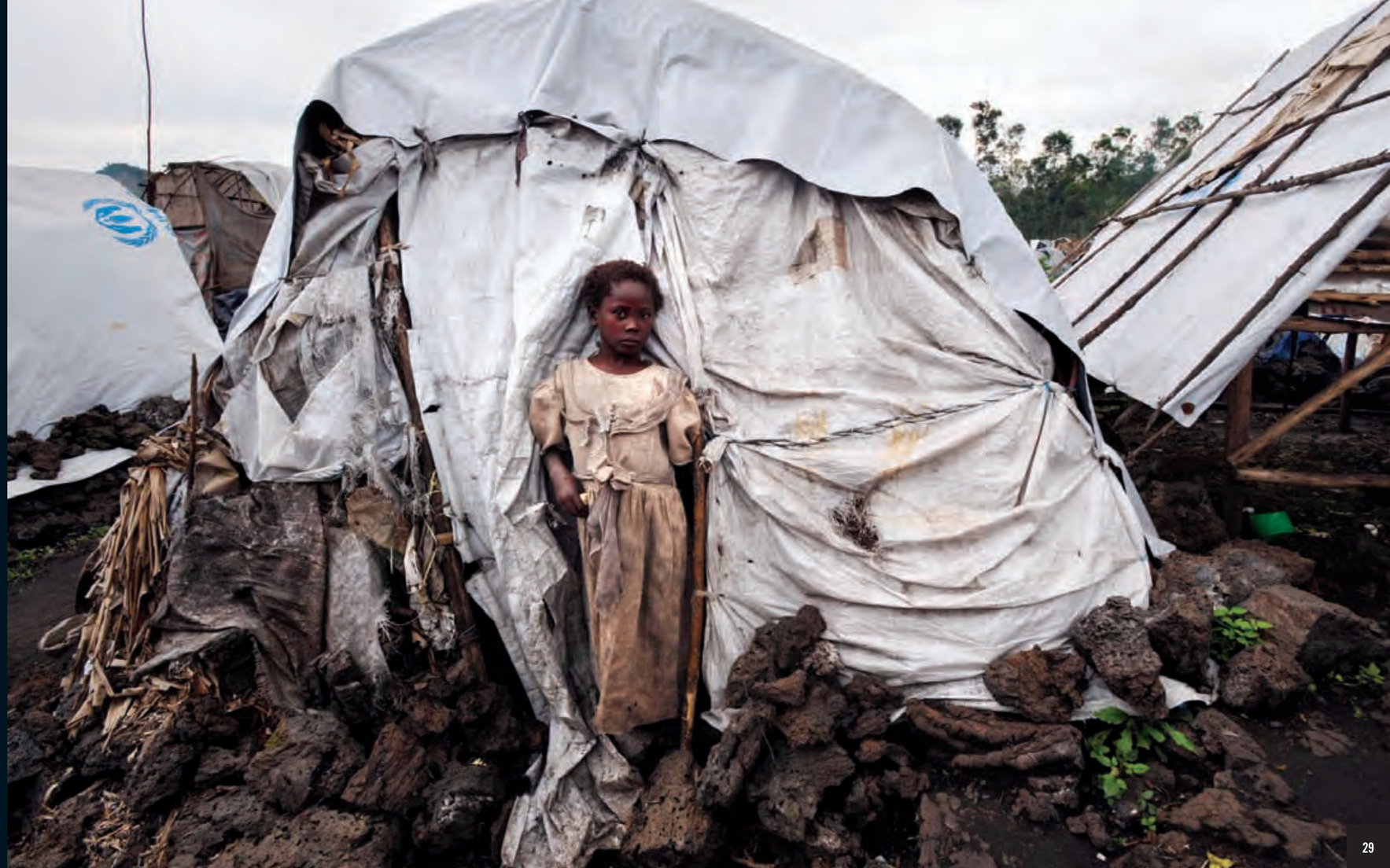






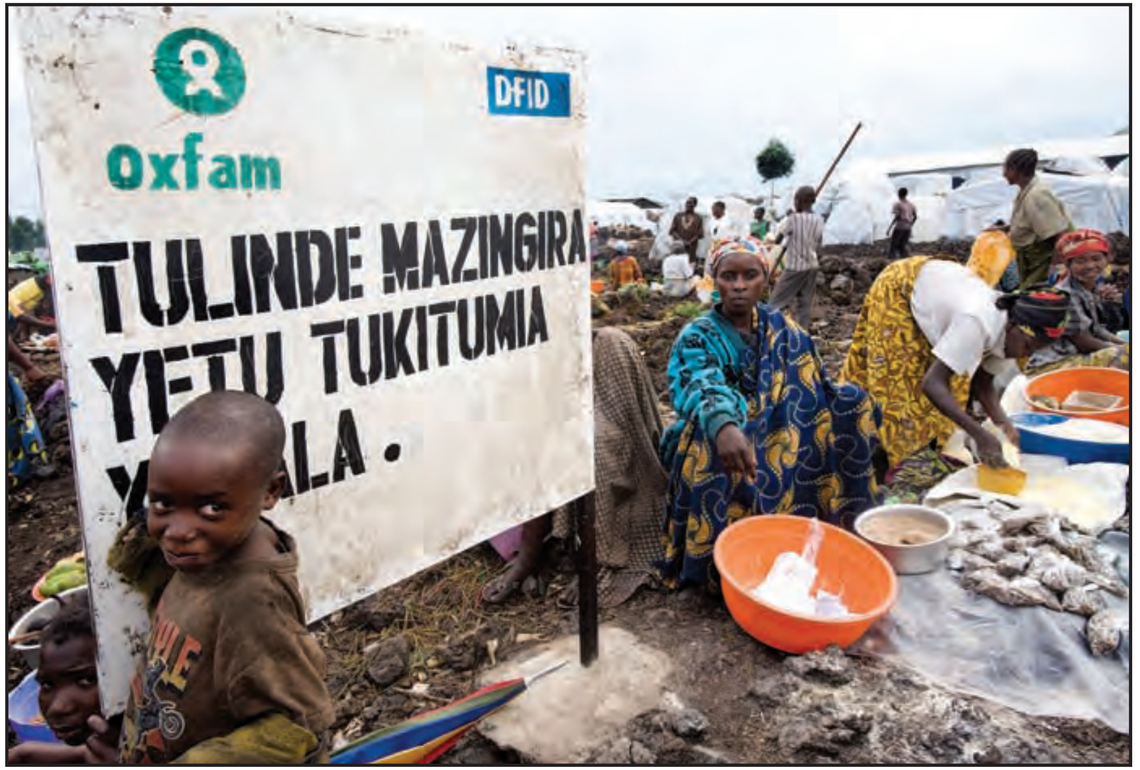
Bora Kadaho and Kabila, left.
Jolie, top right

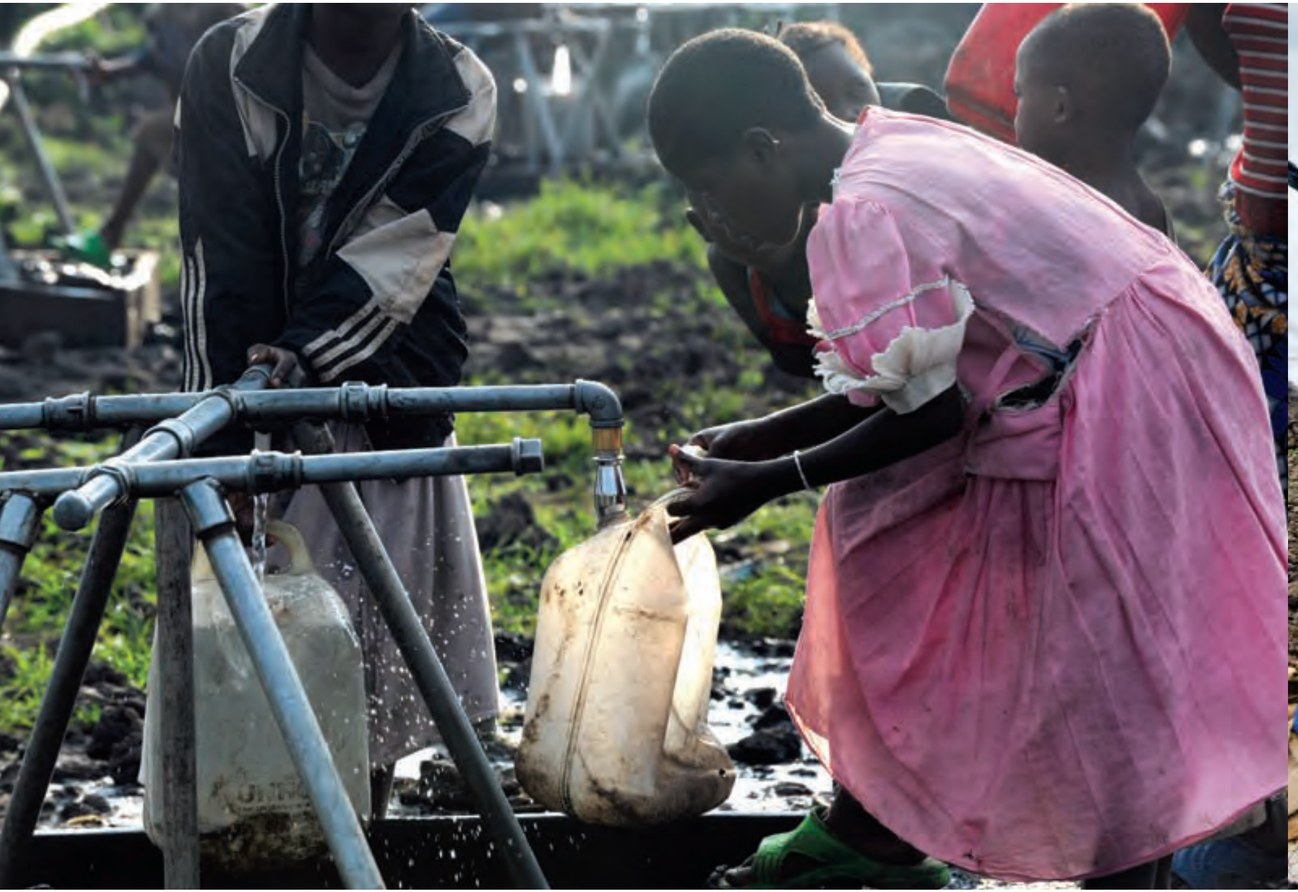
Decades of misrule and two civil wars have devastated DRC. As many as five million people are thought to have died unnecessarily since the start of DRC's civil wars in the late 1990s. Ongoing conflict in the east continues to claim lives and perpetuate a humanitarian disaster in which rape, used as a weapon of war, destroys women's lives and the very fabric of society.

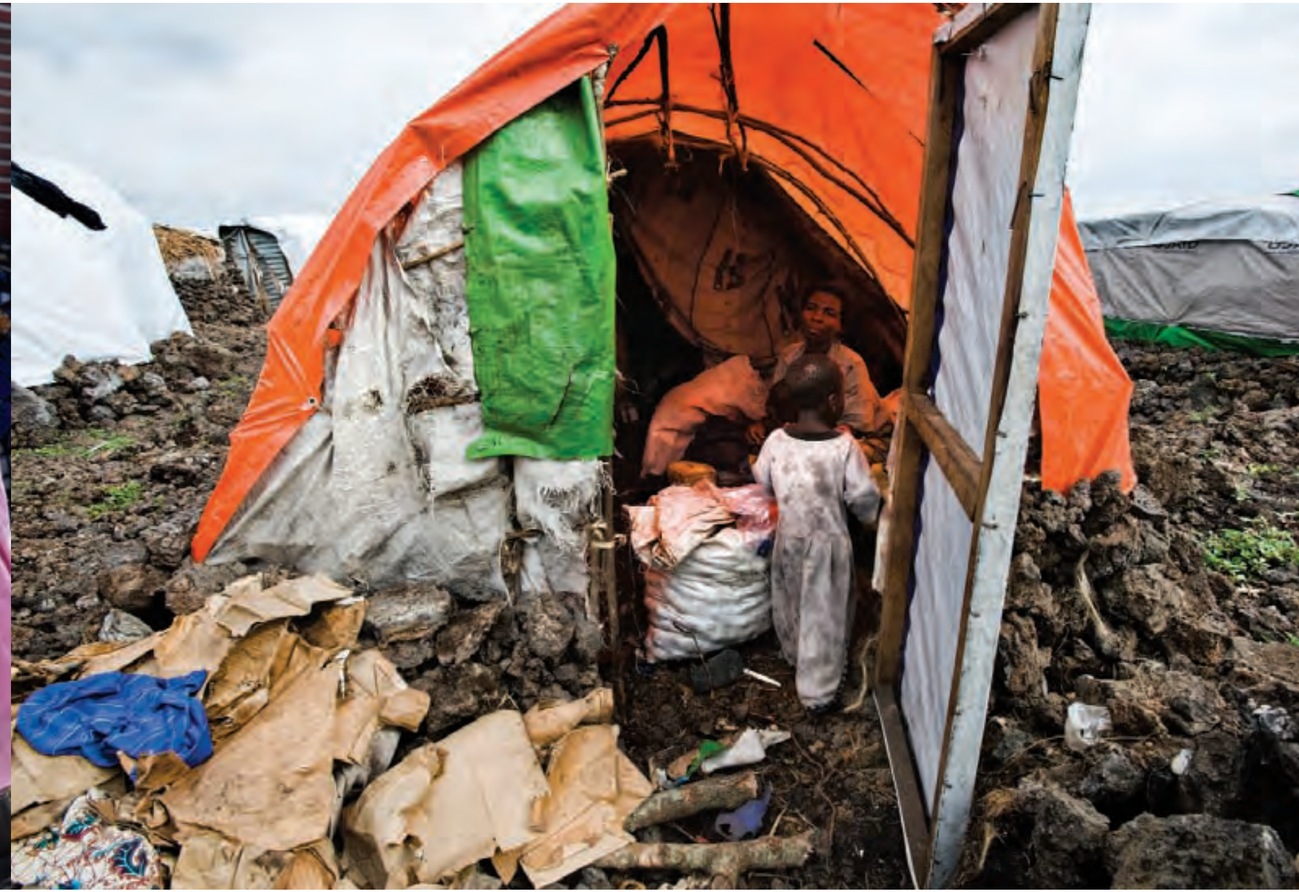


An estimated 1.5 million people have been displaced by conflict in eastern DRC. At least 200,000 cases of brutal sexual violence have been recorded. And the numbers continue to grow. People continue to arrive daily at camps for the displaced, telling of the unimaginable horrors they have endured. Profoundly traumatised, separated from their homes, and the crops on which they depend for income and food, their only lifeline is the humanitarian aid which provides them with food, shelter, support and access to critical medical treatment. On the following pages, we glimpse their world.

DRC has made major strides towards peace and stability in recent years but still faces enormous challenges.

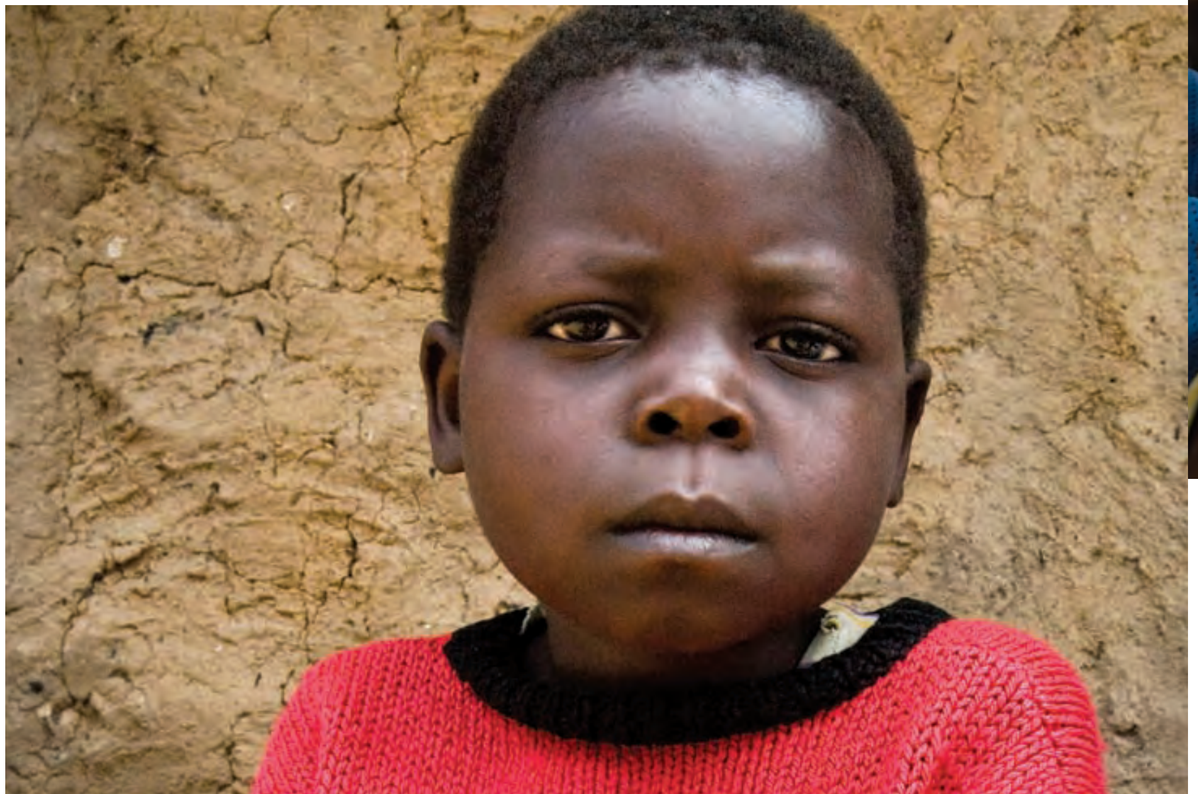






The operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) were launched in January 2009. In June 2009, the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) tackled the FDLR in South Kivu. Those displaced in the intense fighting fled to Bunyakiri.

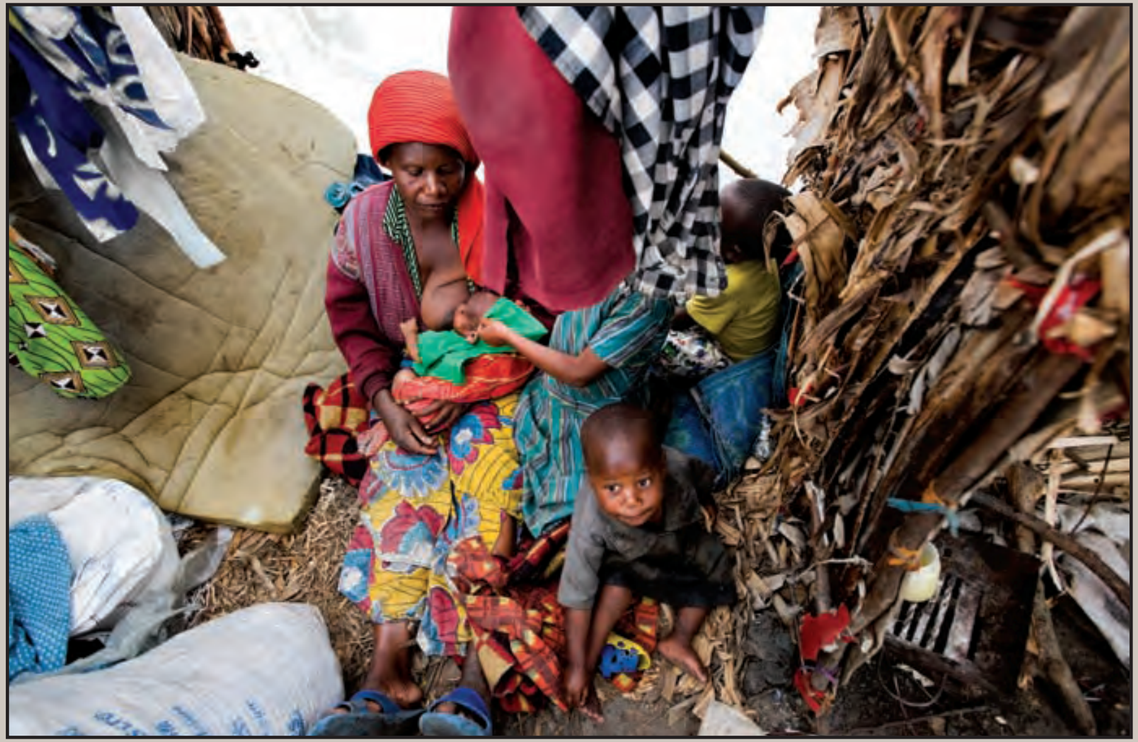
The head of the health centre in Bunyakiri explained, 'There are about 15,000 displaced here already and about 26,000 displaced people on the road from Hombo on their way here. These are all people who have fled without anything at all.' Those who have arrived are living with host families. Up to 15 families are sleeping crowded on the dirt floors of tiny rooms. There is not enough food, nor latrines. There are no blankets. Newborn infants and the old suffer most in the harsh conditions. Many have suffered extreme trauma.



Tabitha is eight years old. She comes from Bukanda village. She is here alone, with no idea where her family is. She looks forlorn and terribly sad. Her words come slowly, 'I have six sisters and brothers. I live with my mother and father and all my sisters and brothers in Bukanga. But on the 25th June, I heard the shots of guns. I was alone in the house. It was mid-day and everyone in my family was out at the fields – and they came shooting and everyone just ran away. I was so scared. I ran into the bush, and finally I ran here. But I don't know where my family is, I don't know what has happened to them.'

Lwabauma Mwenyezi, 20, from Chiriba recounts the horrors she experienced. 'The FDLR arrived at midnight. They came into the village firing their guns and entered the houses. Four entered my house – one took me by the hand – another took my money. I was desperately trying to get away. My twins are 19 months old. I had one of them on my chest, one of them on my back. They grabbed the baby off my chest – I tried so hard to hold her – but I just couldn't. They pulled her off me and threw her into the house and then set it alight. They burned the house with my baby daughter in it. Burned her alive. Her name was Chitito. She was only 19 months old.'

A huge crowd looms on the main dirt road running through Bunyakiri. Hundreds congregate. They are all displaced people. As many as there are, this is but a small fraction of the total number. The conditions they live in are dire. Tulinabi, from Museni village, says, 'We can't even count the numbers of people who have been killed by the FDLR and raped. And right now, we just don't know what to do. I am lucky as I am here with all my family – others don't know where others in their families are. But here it is very difficult. We are living in bad conditions. We sleep in the houses of others on the floor. We have no covers, we have no food. 30 people squeeze in here every night. We can't go to the fields – it is too dangerous. The children are terrified, they can't sleep – some are depressed. Some are still in the bush and we haven't found them yet.' The International Rescue Committee (IRC) had come to Bunyakiri to assess the need so that they can quickly provide the most appropriate help.



Kanninyra, from Mpunga village, Rutshuru

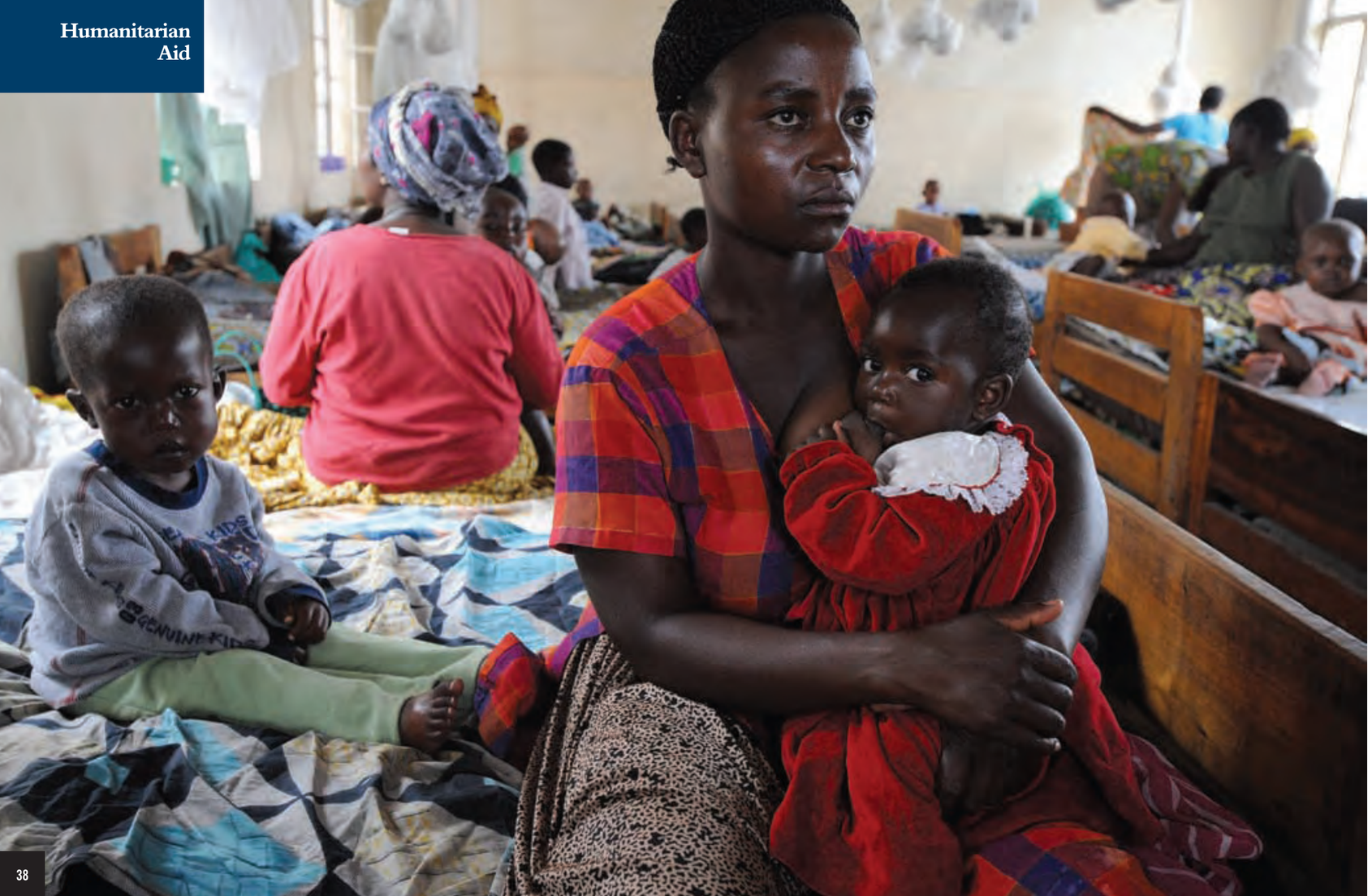
Slowly, slowly, we could hear the shooting moving towards us. We grabbed the children and our families and fled.

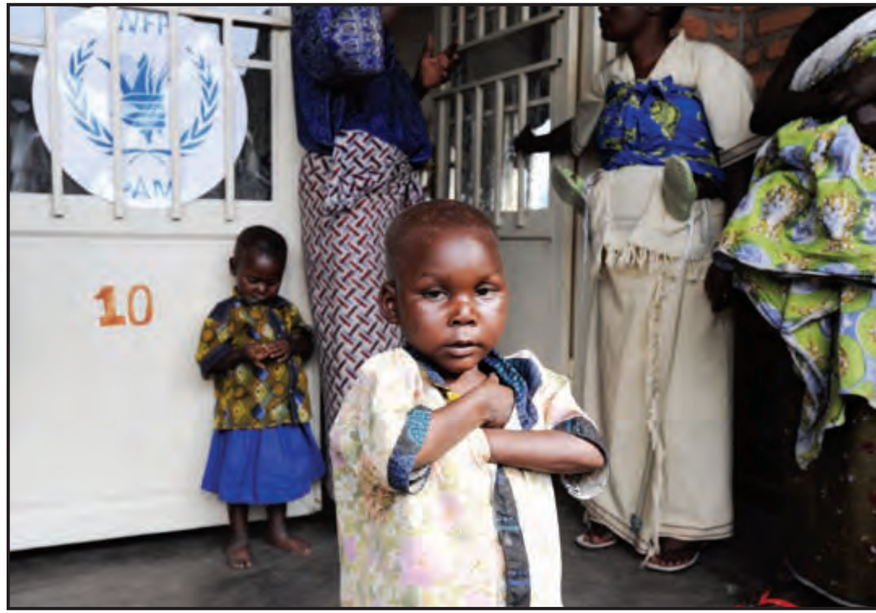
We kept going until finally we arrived in Rugari. We stayed in Rugari for a couple of months. Then we were told that all internally displaces person (IDPs) had to go to Kibumba. We stayed there for four months. Then more fighting broke out and we were forced to leave Kibumba and flee again. There was nowhere to go. We stayed where we could – school grounds, churches, all over. We have suffered a lot. When we had to flee for the first time the young ones could hardly walk. It was all I could do to take them. We could take nothing else. And now we are here. My baby was born here. He is four days old.

Elidou, from Brazza Village, Walikale.

We had to flee because the Interahamwe (another name for Hutu paramilitary groups) was attacking and burning all the villages. But they kept coming after us even after we fled. They were raping women. They tied you to a tree, raped you and just left you there.

The men would be taken away, beaten and then they wouldn't come back. We were fleeing for three and a half months. We were never in any one place for more than two days before they attacked us. We didn't dare to light a fire. We never ate anything cooked the whole time. It was as if they were following us wherever we went. In one village they set a house on fire. Two children were burned alive. Then they started hunting people. If they found you they would slash your arms and legs. Or pierce your eyes and leave you blind. We had to leave the injured behind. You just had to pull your children by the arm to keep them going. That was the only way to survive. Every day people are arriving here and telling us the same things are happening.



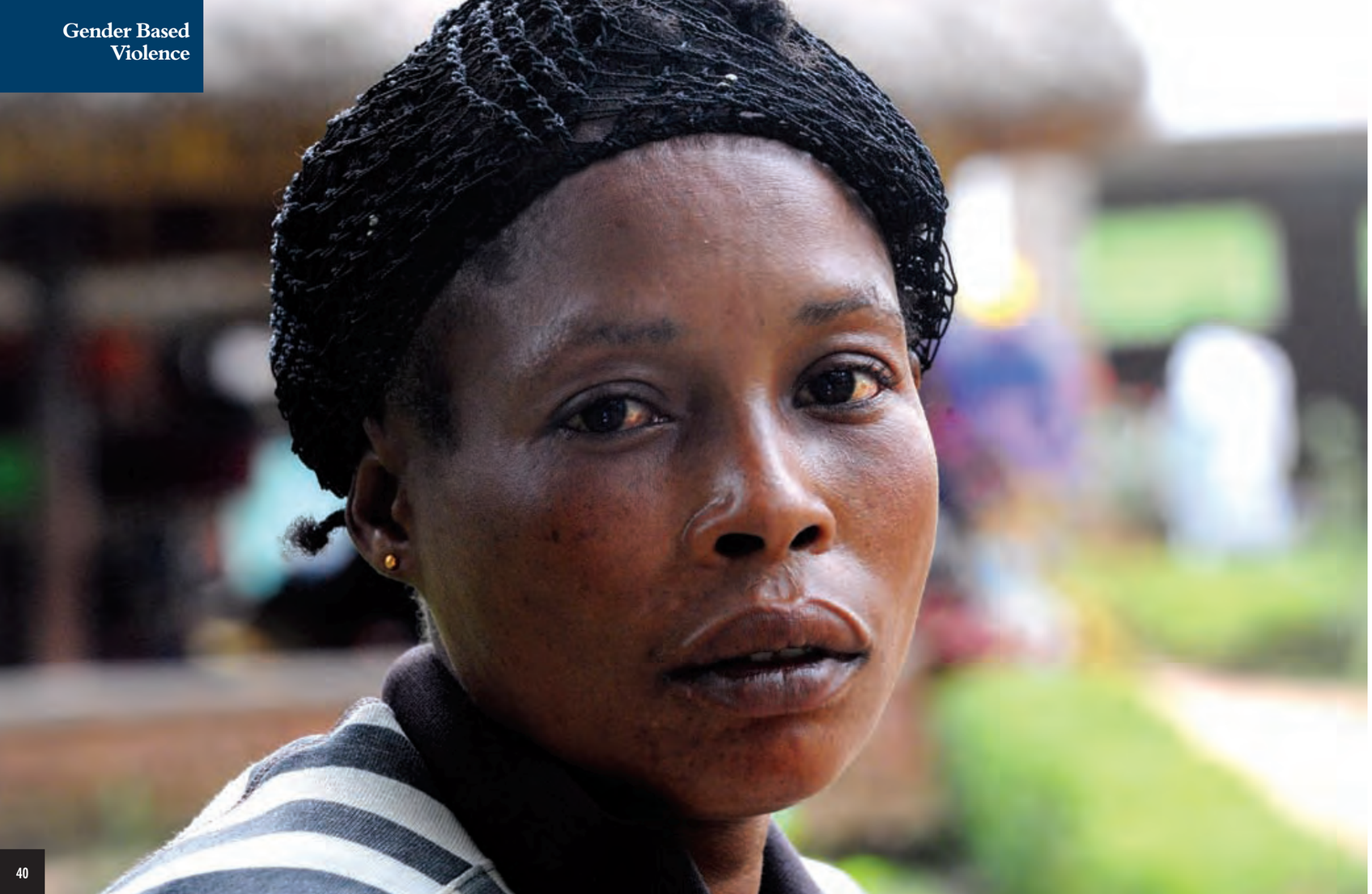


A nutritional centre in a Goma neighbourhood is crowded with mothers and their malnourished babies. They are receiving life-saving help and feeding.

Little Higanima is roughly 10 months old. It is impossible to know with certainty. Found amongst the Rwandan refugees who emerged from the bush during the military operations, he is an orphan. He weighed only three kgs – hard to imagine now with such chubby, rosy cheeks. The nurses named him 'Higanima.' It means 'God Who Protects'.

Marco, six years old, has come from Masisi, brought by his aunt. He was by his mother's side when she was killed when their village was attacked in 2005. Deeply traumatised, he still speaks only occasionally. He arrived at the centre weighing only five kgs. He couldn't walk. Just a month later, Marco weighed 10 kgs and had hesitantly begun walking. He wrings his little hands and tries to smile. Aunt Mashanga says, 'I don't know what would have happened if it were not for this aid. I fear Marco would have died.' The mothers' voices echo her sentiments.

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors to the DRC and plays a leading role in co-ordinating and improving the humanitarian response. The bulk of DFID humanitarian assistance is through the Humanitarian Pooled Fund. This is managed and implemented by the UN and funds UN agency and NGO activities, including the IRC, under the Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP).



My name is Beatrice Masirika. I am 25 years old and am from the village of Nyabibwe, in Kalehe district. The Interhamwe came and took me into the forest, where I became their slave. It was a terrible life in the forest, they were always beating me. One time the beating was so savage it broke my leg. Another time my ribs were broken. Everyday they raped me, every day they beat me. I gave birth in the forest to three children. This pregnancy is my fourth. Finally, I found a way to escape with my children, three, two and 18 months old.

When I got back to my community one month ago, it was the first time I'd been back since my abduction. I found out that both my mother and my father had been killed by the Interhamwe. But the stigma has been terrible, especially for my children – the whole community shouting at me because the condition of my children was so poor, because their father was the Interhamwe and they can't accept that. I was so upset. I was shouting back that it hadn't been only me this had happened to. But it hasn't changed anything – my children are being excluded. Everyone refuses to give them food – they say why should we give food to the children of rapists. My family said the children could stay there but they said they didn't know how they would eat, as no one including them would give them food.

I feel really upset when I see my children being mistreated like that. Everyone shuns me too, they insult me, but I try not to reply. They tell me I am the wife of the Interhamwe and that I should go back into the forest. I just start crying. I can't take it. My baby is due in two months. I came here to see if Panzi hospital could help me find a way to feed my children and myself. I wish I could just stay here in the hospital forever but I can't. I am afraid the Interhamwe will come back. And I don't know how I will survive with my children in my village. I don't know how we will eat. I just wish they would stop ill-treating my children. They are so tiny and only children. I don't know what to do.

I am not well. I have a terrible belly-ache and water just pours down my legs. I am so grateful to be here. Panzi has given me some medicine. They are looking after me.

Panzi Hospital was established in 1999, initially to help women during childbirth. However, it soon developed a specialist facility for the treatment of victims of fistula, caused by complications in childbirth and sexual violence. A UK-funded wing of Panzi hospital, significantly increasing the hospital's capacity, was opened in 2007.

The UK also provided support for the specialist training for doctors and nurses and an outreach programme with health centres in the area. The funding was agreed in 2004, when the hospital was still little known. Since then Dr Mukwege himself has won international acclaim and the profile of the hospital has risen dramatically. Currently the service receives on average 10 women per day and 30% of those will undergo a major surgery.

I was in the fields with my husband when the Interhamwe came. They tied up my husband and shot him. They started beating me, broke my fingers. Then they raped me. One after the other. I counted three but after that, I don't know how many others, as I lost count and fell unconscious. I spent the night in the fields. The next day, someone from my church came and found me and my husband's dead body. I was barely breathing. They organised my husband's burial and after the burial ceremony, took me to Bunyakiri hospital. I went home still feeling very unwell. I had terrible stomach aches, and terrible pain in my genitals. Finally a local NGO brought me to Panzi. The rape happened 15 months ago. I arrived here one week ago.

In my community, there is no stigma because this has happened to so many in my community. Even the father-in-law of my daughter was killed with his friend in the fields. But before they killed them, they tortured them and cut off their sexual organs. They even punctured their eyes with their machetes. In my village no one can shun it, as it happens too much. Because every three days at most we are visited by the FDLR. If one week goes by without a visit from them, we consider it a year's holiday.

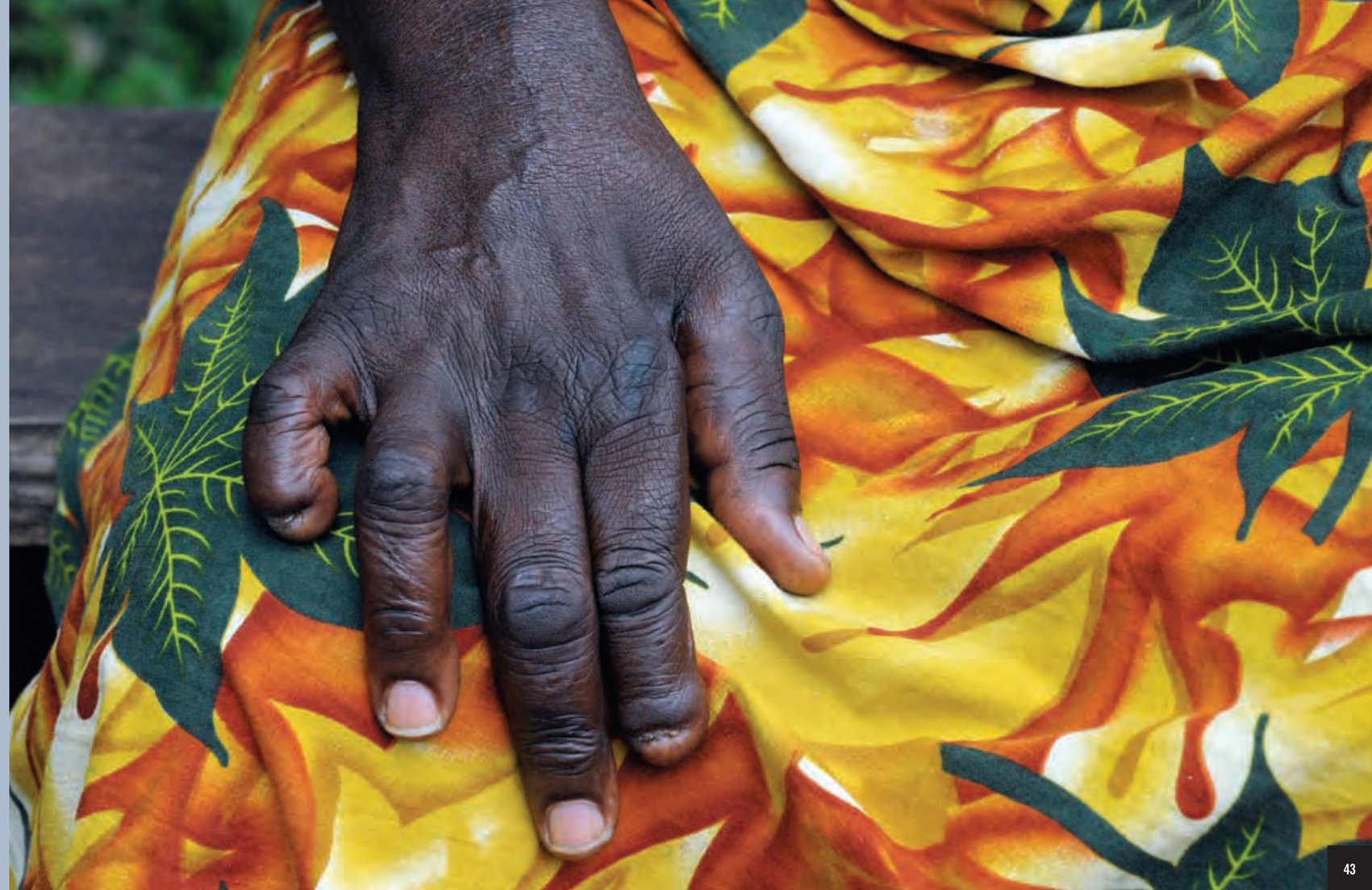
We have become bush-men, as we don't sleep in our houses. While we are here, at the hospital, we can sleep. But I am worried about finding my children when I go back. This continues to this day, with the FDLR coming every few days to attack us. So, it has become a routine. In the morning everyone is in his compound, but in the evening, everyone has gone to the bush to sleep. It is difficult to live. Now and then an NGO helps us with food but a day or two later, we are attacked and it is all stolen. Others are suffering from malnutrition. This has been going on for a very long time now. If they were only stealing and not raping and torturing and killing, we could tolerate it.

My children have become orphans. I am a cripple. Life is difficult now. I can no longer pay school fees for the little ones. And it just breaks my heart when I see them passing the night without eating. But I don't have the strength or means to find something to eat. And, it is not just my children but all the children in my village who have undergone the same thing. There are so many others. Around 100 women in Karasi, Kahumi, Kibiriro, Lwana have been raped and lost their husbands. These are all women and children in the same position as I am.

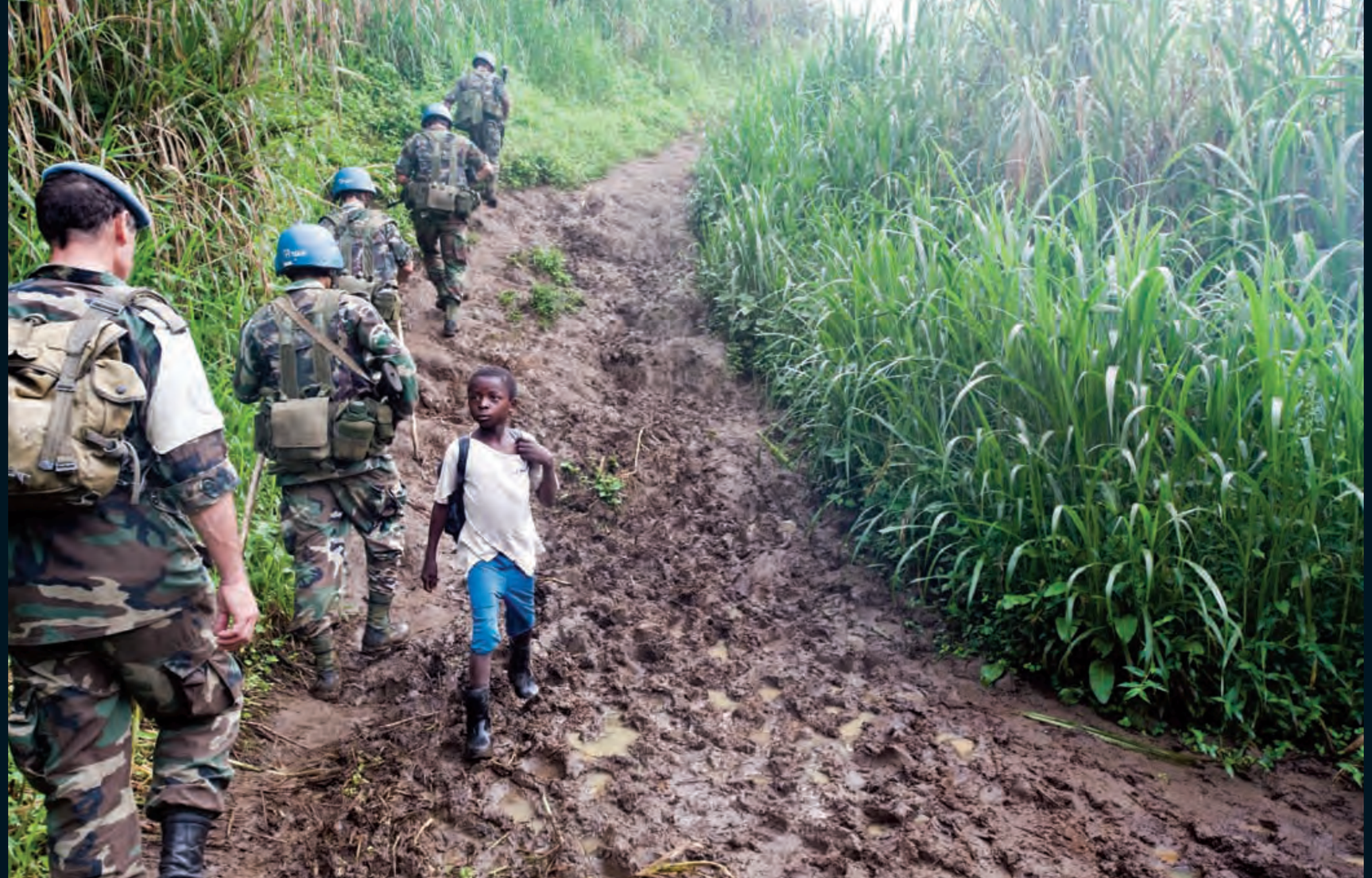
Feza Ntakwinja, 54, Kando, Bunyakiri.

A UK DRC Sexual violence strategy has been developed and focuses action on four levels:

- *Prevention through provision of human rights training for elements within the FARDC; awareness raising of provincial authorities on sexual violence issues and implementation of the new DRC Sexual violence legislation (law passed in 2006).*
- *A medical and psychosocial response mainly through humanitarian partners. Provision of post exposure (PEP) kits and surgical interventions for those in need. The Humanitarian Pooled Fund helped treat more than 23,000 victims in 2007.*
- *Judicial response through the provision of legal support to victims and support for accompaniment through the* criminal justice process.
- *Advocacy to generate political action by the Government of DRC. The issue of sexual violence is raised on a regular basis by the Ambassador and others to senior members of the government to generate political will to tackle the issue.*



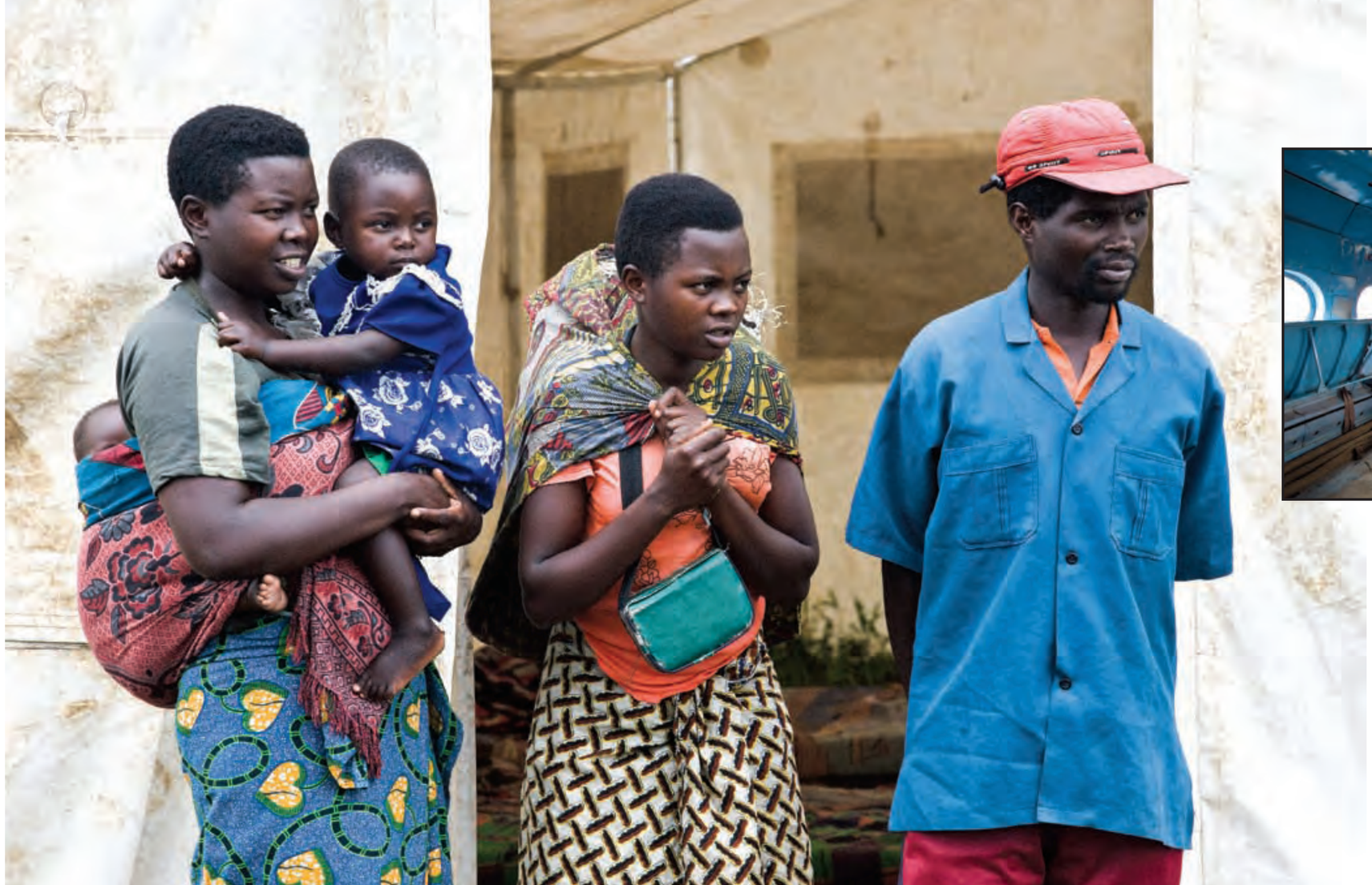
Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Repatriation, and Resettlement Programme (DDRRR)

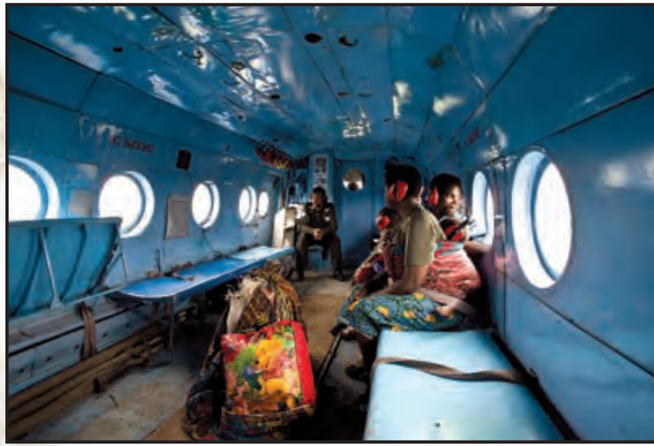


MONUC troops on DDRRR operations in Kimua, Walikale

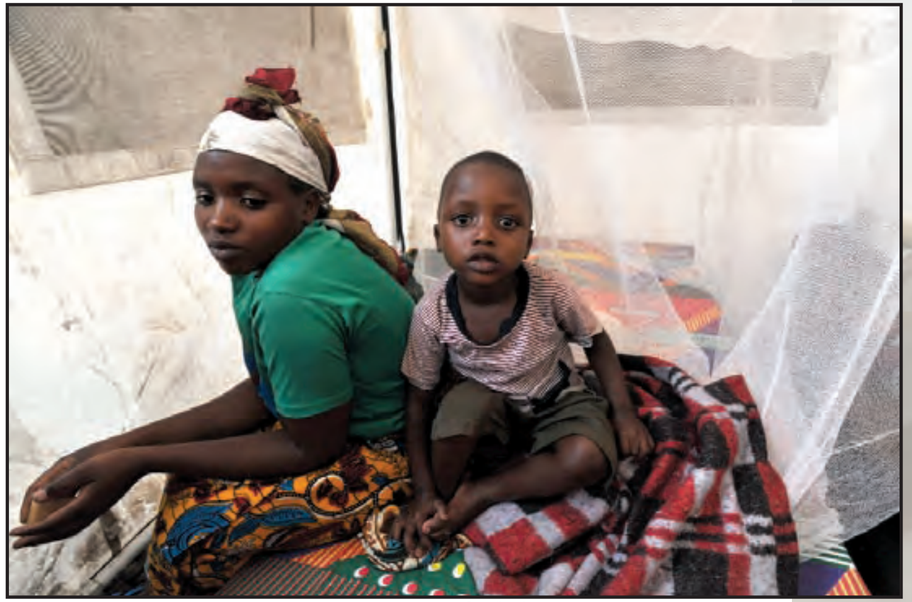
The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) have plagued eastern Congo since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Amongst the thousands who sought safe refuge in Congo were those responsible for the genocide itself. These groups rearmed and have remained in strength in the bush of eastern Congo, where they have brutalised the population, exploited the rich resources and contributed to the ongoing insecurity which has terrorised the region and its inhabitants since that time.

January 2009 brought significant change. DRC and Rwanda announced a new alliance against the FDLR which allowed the existing UN's DDRRR programme to repatriate willing FDLR ex-combatants and their dependents back to Rwanda in increasing numbers. The programme prioritises reintegration and acknowledges that many FDLR combatants, although willing to go back to Rwanda, find it very difficult – both because they fear the consequences and because they are prevented from leaving.





MONUC base in Kimua, Walikale. FDLR family, newly out of the bush, await transport to the Goma transit camp and repatriation.

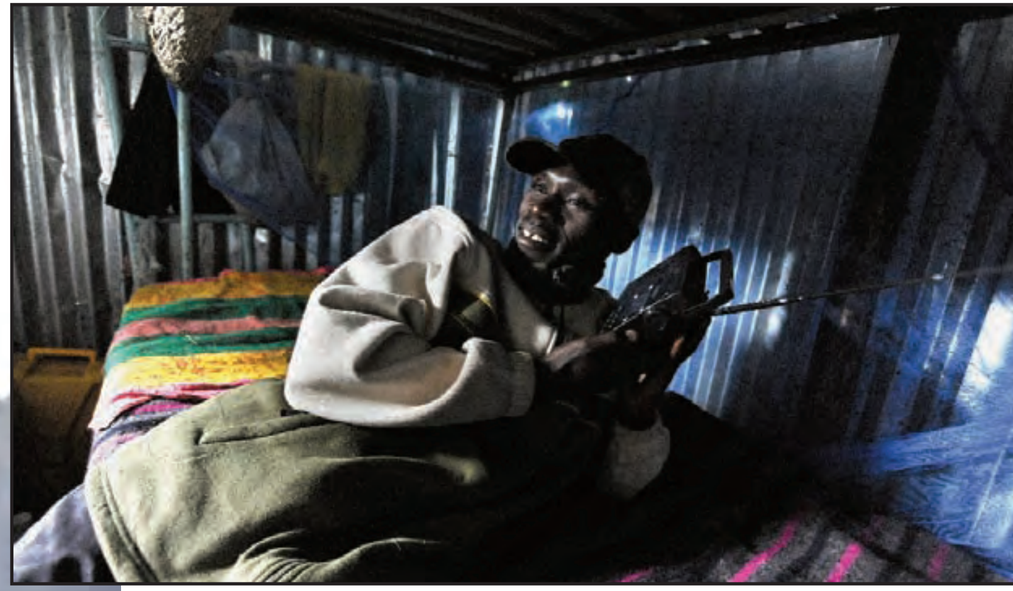


Evangeline, above

At the transit camp in Goma there are thirteen ex-combatants and thirty-five dependents. They have newly arrived from the bush and will stay only briefly before returning to Rwanda. Children born in the bush goggle at their first sight of electricity and beds. The ex-combatants seem relaxed. Women and their children are in the dormitory. Evangeline's older child bounces on the bed, hiding himself shyly in the mosquito net.

'I came to DRC as a refugee in 1994, when I was only nine years old. My family had all been killed and I had no one. I first went to the refugee camp but ended up in Kashabere, where I met my husband. It never occurred to me to go back to Rwanda as without any more family there, there was little hope for me there. But life in the bush was very difficult and with the operations it got worse.' The ex-combatants all confirm that they had been told that they would all be shot upon returning and that those who had already tried were now dead. This discouraged return. Why then did Evangeline decide to return?

'Every Saturday there was a broadcast on the radio that we all listened to – of names, of people in Rwanda looking for their relatives' family, saying they were home. One day I was listening and there was a message from my family. I was overjoyed. I never imagined I had any left – but there they are, in Rwanda and looking for me. We decided to go home immediately.'

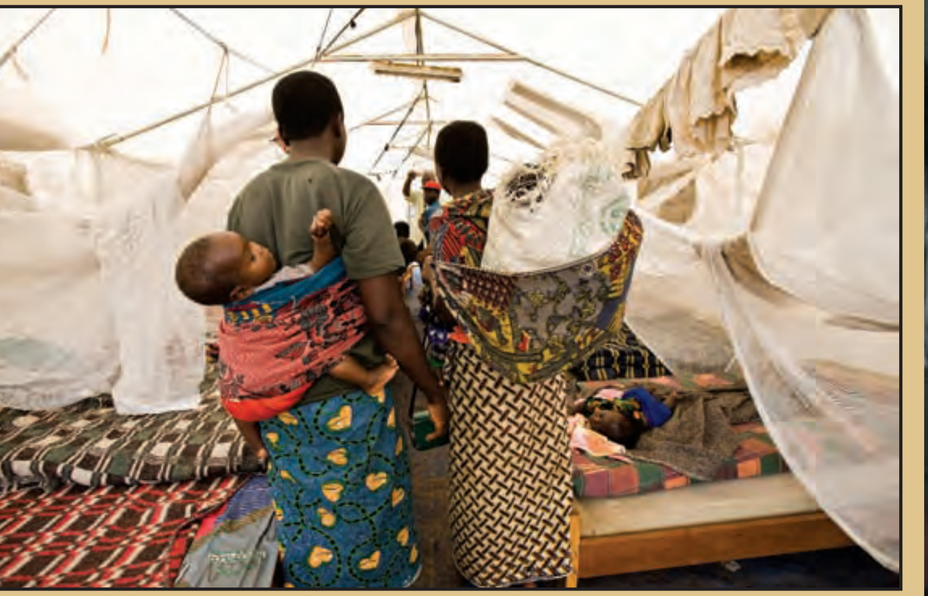


Arriving at the reintegration camp at Mutobo, Rwanda, the first surprise is the absence of any fences. It is completely open. There are no guards. Cows wander across the grounds. There are no classes today, but a look at the syllabus gives an idea of the approach. It covers classes in the history of the country, including the history of the genocide, and practical education on the services available in Rwanda. It mixes understanding of the context, with an understanding of how to negotiate modern life.

One of the centre's teachers explains, 'The ex-combatants do a two to three month programme. There are ones who left the country in 1994. When they left at that time, Rwanda had a lot of problems. But they don't know the Rwanda of today. We give lessons in history, security, development, so they better understand the Rwanda of today. When they leave Congo, they think, as they have been told, that all Hutus have been killed – but when they go home, they see their families, they see it has all been lies.'

The ex-combatants have taken refuge from the heavy rain in the dormitories. A few are sleeping; others break into song and dance. Quickly they are joined by the others. An ex combatant holds a radio to his ear. He tells me how he listened to the DDRRR radio broadcast while he was in the bush. It made him decide to return to Rwanda when he heard the broadcast of his former colleague, reassuring him that the FDLR story that they would be murdered if they returned to Rwanda was false. All agree how at ease they all feel and how good it is to be home after so many years.

Mutobo, Rwanda



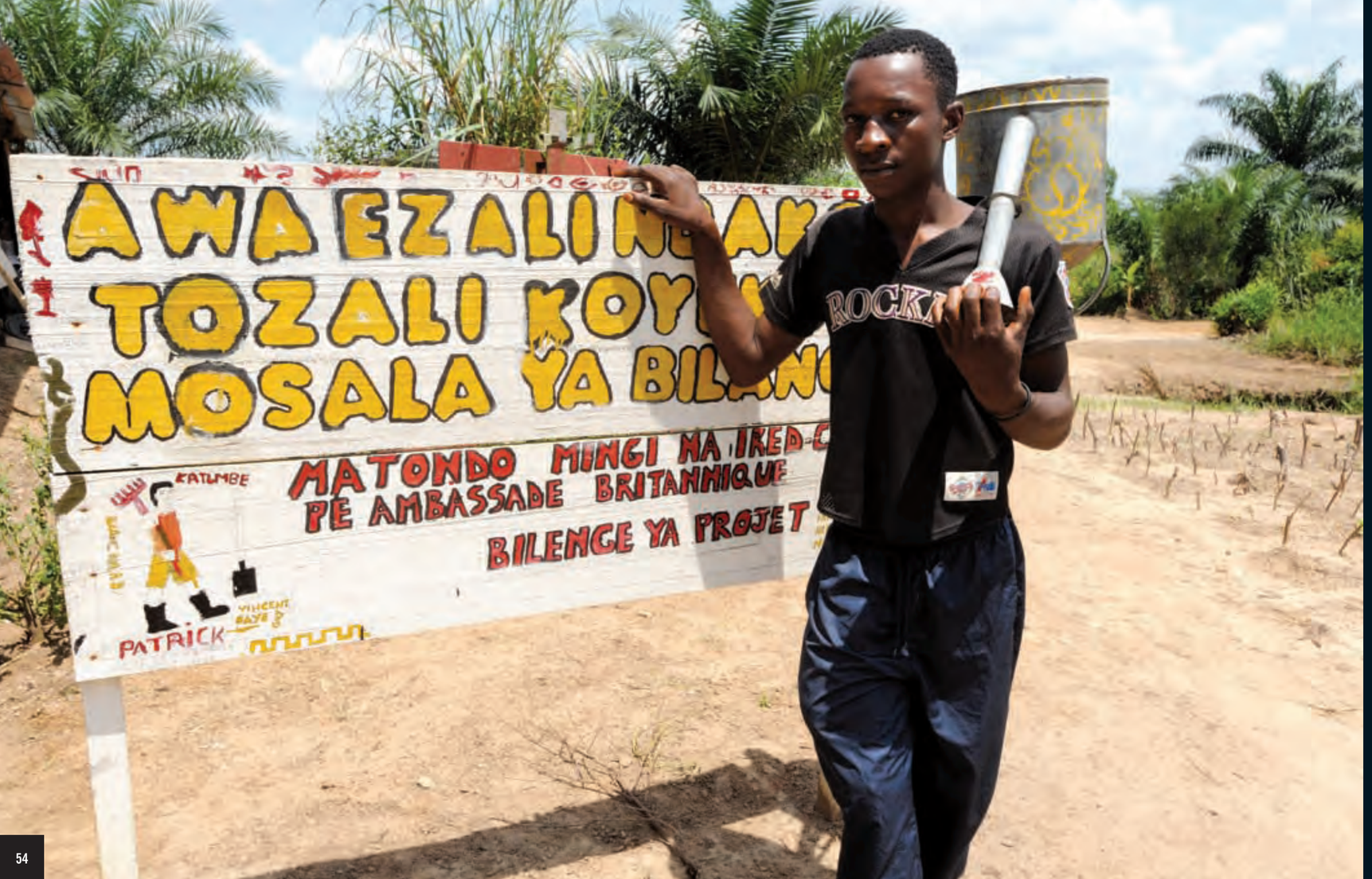
FDLR family arrive at the Goma transit camp. Their next stop will be home to Rwanda, for the first time in 14 years.

Vincent Munyaziboneye is a newly returned FDLR ex-combatant. He left Rwanda in 1994. His village is Kinigi. Lush crops-filled fields sit in the shadow of the mountain behind. Vincent's and his wife have a well tended garden surrounding concrete house. A cow is tethered out back. Children dash about merrily. Vincent had sent his wife home with their children 15 months earlier. Their delight at being together again is evident. They can t stop canoodling.

Vincent talks us about his time in the bush, and his belief that all the Hutus had been killed. Of his decision to return to Rwanda, Vincent says, 'You had to choose. On behalf of the children, I chose for them that it was time to return. But returning is a suicide mission. The FDLR tries to prevent it. And they will kill you if they find out. And I was nervous. We were told we would be shot the moment we arrived in Rwanda. But it feels so good to be home, I feel so at ease.' The family murmurs agreement. We are so happy to have him home.' Vincent's brother adds, 'We never knew where he was, or if we would ever see him again.'

When asked about the years fighting with the FDLR in Congo, Vincent says' 'Now,' 'I think it was a just a waste of time'.

The UK is providing funding of approximately £276,000 for the disarmament, demobilisation and repatriation of former FDLR combatants that will ensure better communications, a more efficient processing system and temporary accommodation facilities. This has already helped the UN (MONUC) to repatriate over 1,000 FDLR and their dependents to Rwanda. Decreasing the presence of foreign armed groups is a key element in the stabilisation of the DRC.


AWA EZALI
TOZALI KOY
MOSALA YA BIL
MATONDO MINGI MA
PE AMBASSADE BRITANNIQUE
BILENGE YA PROJET
KATUMBE
PATRICK
ROCK

Gender Based Violence

It was the 8th of April 2007. We were at home sleeping when at 4 am someone knocked on the door. When we opened the door, we found soldiers speaking Kinyarwanda: Interhamwe.

They came into the house without saying anything. They took my 18 year old son, tied him and cut him from throat to belly. They took my husband and with their machetes cut him to bits until he died. I was three months pregnant at the time. They took a cord and tied it tightly around me and pulled me into the forest. When we were in the forest, five of them raped me.

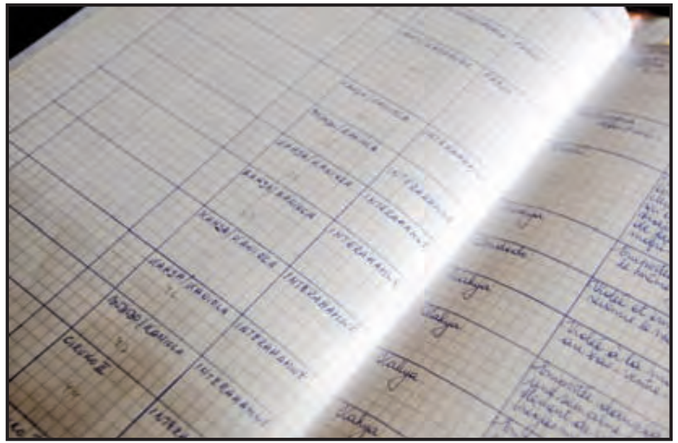
I had been held three weeks in the forest with them when they told my community they would trade me for two cows. Although they had stolen everything of mine, clothing, animals, everything, my neighbours gave them two cows and came to free me. When I arrived at home, I had a miscarriage. I have been very sick since then. I can't work, I am always very tired. I don't know how to take care of my children, my husband is not there, nothing is going well. I have many genital infections that make me very unwell.

There are so many in my village, that this has happened to, but they don't get assistance as the village is quite far from here – 3-4 hours walk.

In my village, I am not stigmatised as so many others have been raped too. A lot of my neighbours have the same problem I do. A lot of women in my village have been raped and can't work and are ill. The village will become poor. To find money so we can eat, we try to cultivate for people, but when we are too ill to do this, we can't afford to eat. I can't say if I will eat today or not. There is no one to help or look after us. The men in the village don't stigmatise us either as a lot of them have been beaten and a lot crippled by the FDLR as well.

I had seven children, but my 18 year old was killed so now I have six, between the ages of four and 16. All the others watched as this happened to us, some were eight and nine at the time – they watched as their father and brother were tortured and killed and their mother raped. I was so angry at the time but there was nothing I could do about it. But the children have been badly traumatised. They are saying no one can ever help us again, as they killed my father and my brother and now we can't go to school. We sleep in the bush because of the Interhamwe. Every night we go there. We have no choice. The Interhamwe come and attack us frequently.

This is my first time coming to the salle d'ecoute (counselling room). My neighbours told me about it. They told me that they help people with this problem. I don't know what to expect. I need medicines which I don't have. I need to go to hospital. I am very relieved to know there is someone who can help me. It has been so very difficult.



Janine Ngatiya

The underdeveloped interior of eastern Congo leaves most of the victims of sexual and gender-based violence cut off from support of any kind. Providing a lifeline to these communities, Abbe Justin and his teams travel into the remote heartland, to provide help and support where it is most needed. FCO support helped Abbe Justin and his organisation – La Commission Diocesaine Justice et Paix – to build two 'bureaux d'ecoute' – where victims of SGBV could seek legal help, medical treatment and counselling.

FCO support: Funding two 'bureaux d'ecoute' – providing psychological, legal and medical assistance to victims of sexual violence in South Kivu.

Partner: La Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix; a Congolese Catholic NGO concerned with human rights issues.

Deforestation

FCO provided funding to CEDECOM, a Congolese environmental NGO working to reduce deforestation around the capital city, Kinshasa.

Deforestation and environmental degradation are a growing problem in Congo, as the struggle to survive in the absence of jobs forces reliance on readily available natural resources. The consequences to the environment are devastating, as swathes of lush green forest are razed, turned into charcoal and sold. This is adversely affecting the environment, as the trees are not replaced, thus such deforestation results in exposing the soil to the adverse effects of the weather, making it prone to erosion.

CEDECOM is working to fight deforestation around Kinshasa by educating the local population about the importance of protecting the environment, encouraging them to plant new trees, and providing them with alternative livelihoods such as beekeeping which are less damaging to the environment.

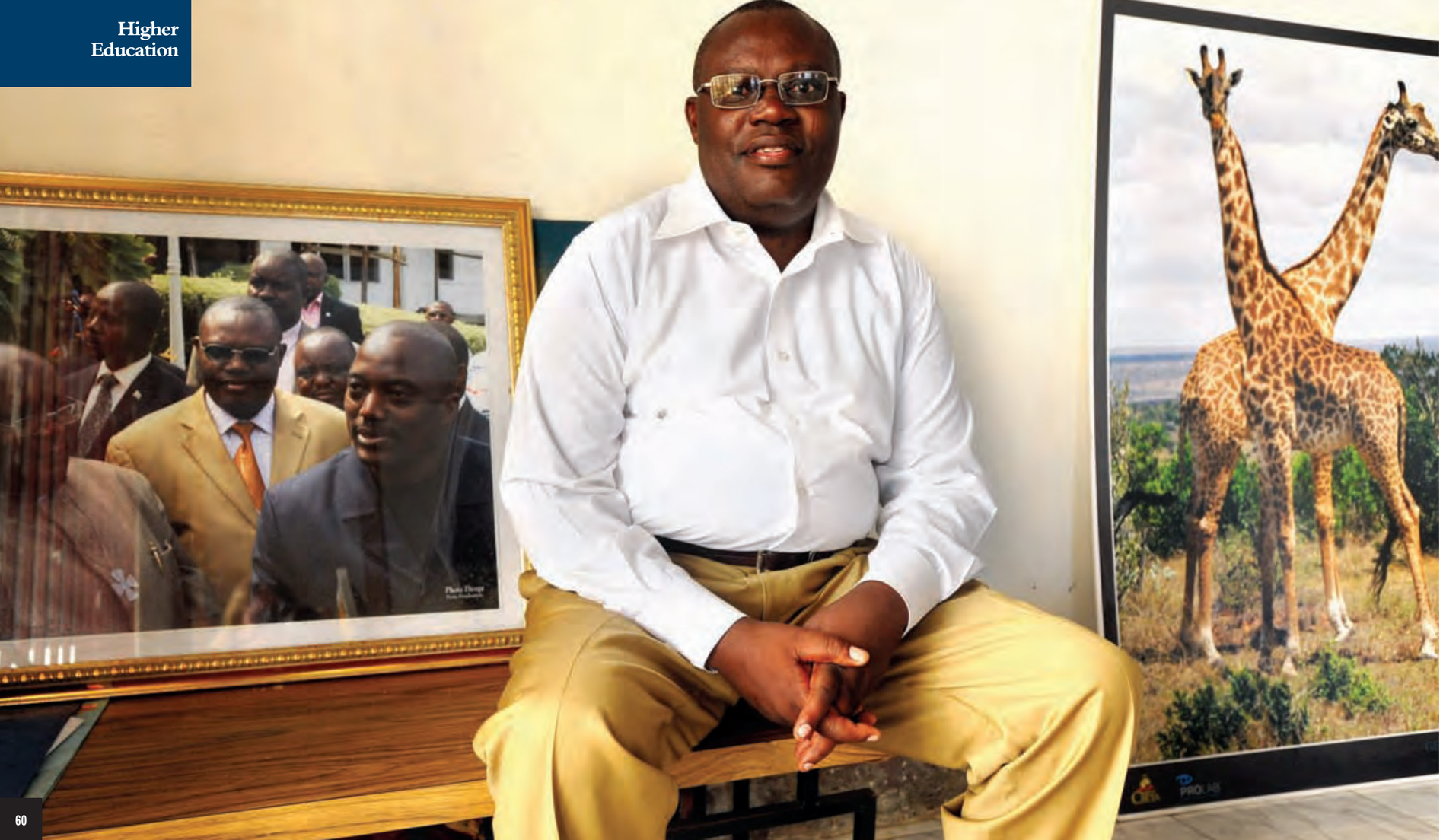
The British Embassy has funded the reforestation of 10 hectares with young acacia and eucalyptus trees, beekeeping, and training on biodiversity for 125 people in the area to reinforce messages about protection of forested areas. Fabrice Malundama, CEDECOM project leader, explains how support from the FCO has helped him and his community: 'The plantation of acacia and eucalyptus trees has helped more than one person by not only protecting environment then threatened by cutting down all that was growing naturally but also provided a living for more than 275 families from bee keeping. Today, parents are able to pay for education and health care of their children with the benefit they get by selling honey'.

Speaking of one of the beneficiaries, Fabrice says, 'Mama Nzuzi Dieu Bénit, a widow, 56, who was then selling wood to charcoal makers, could not make a living out of it without begging. She received five hives from the project and is now making enough profit from selling honey to pay for school fees and health care for her three children .

Today, Fabrice is going around the forest, raising awareness amongst young people burning trees for charcoal. We arrive at a charcoal oven, smoking in a bare patch of earth. Before long, machete-bearing youths appear to check on their charcoal oven. Fabrice offers them new trees to plant in place of those they have razed. The youths listen with great interest and agree to plant the new trees.

FCO support: Funding to fight deforestation around Kinshasa caused by charcoal trade by reforesting, providing alternative livelihoods in beekeeping, and raising awareness on environmental issues.

Partner: CEDECOM, a Congolese NGO working in the areas of agriculture, health and child rights.



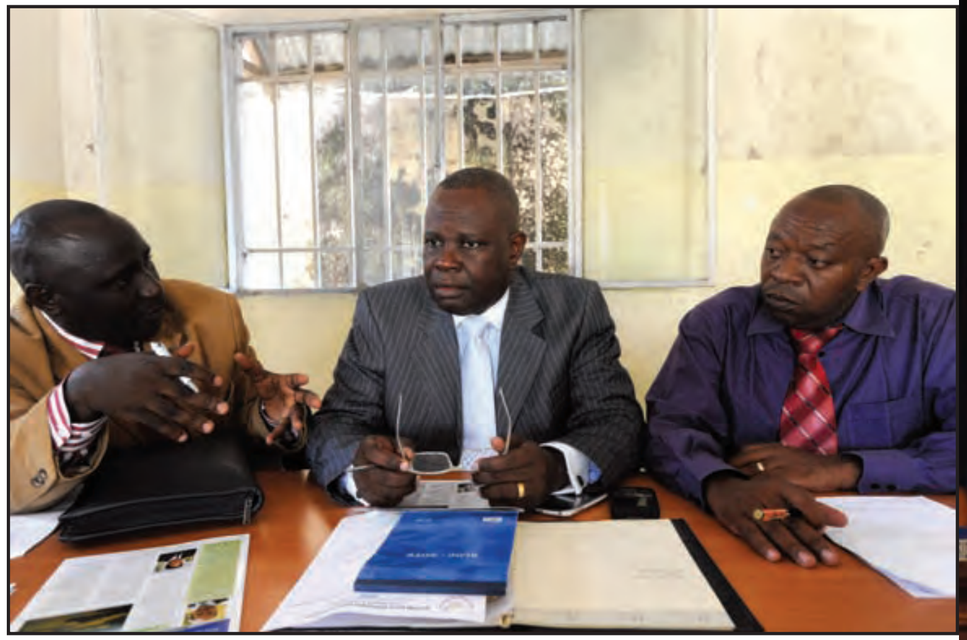
Estras Bahekwa, 57, is from North Kivu province. A lecturer at Kinshasa University, he received a scholarship from the UK government in 1980 to study for a masters degree in London. After receiving his MA in 1982 from the University of London, he returned to Congo to bring home the benefit of his education.

He taught English for seven years, before working in government. 'From 2003-2007, I was Deputy President of the High Authority of Media,'says Estras. 'In 2007, I became the Minister of Culture until February 2010.'

Estras attributes his success and the positive impact he has brought to Congo to the education abroad enabled by his Chevening scholarship, 'When I began my schooling, I never imagined I would be a minister,' he says.

Chevening Scholarships are offered every year by the UK government to postgraduate students and researchers that will be future leaders in their country. The programme has run since 1982 and is a prestigious worldwide scholarship that is offered to around 2,000 students around the world. So far, 37,000 people have benefited from the Chevening programme.

'The environment is of global importance. And, as the second lung of the world, Congo has special significance,' observed MP Dunia Bitakuya, President of the National Assembly (DRC's Parliament) Commission for the Environment and Natural Resources. 'Yet, we have seen it deteriorate little by little over the years. We who have grown up admiring the environment around us are now worried.'

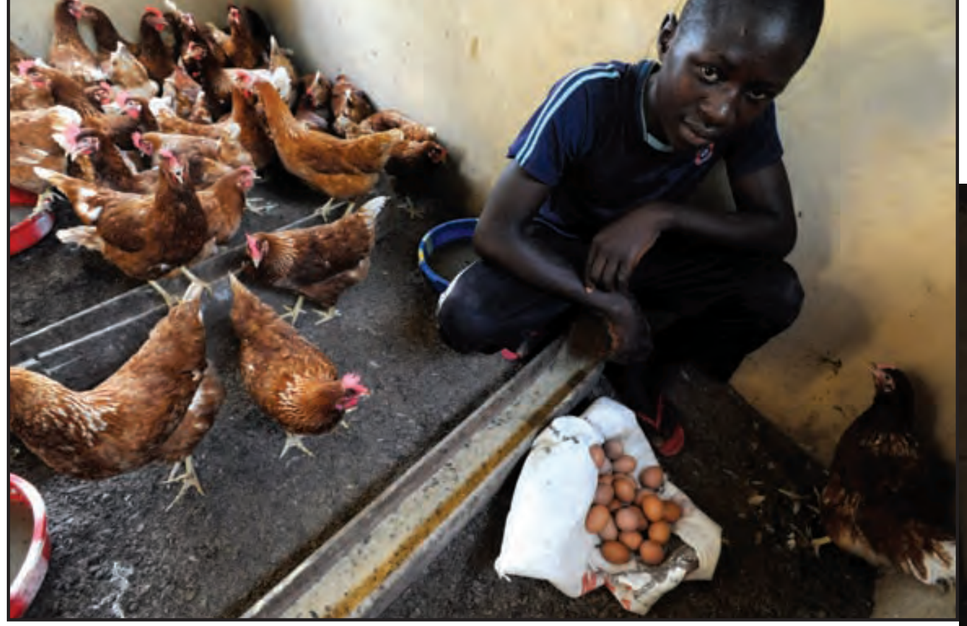


The Congo basin forest, the second largest in the world after the Amazon, is famed for its rich biodiversity but also has a huge role to play in tackling climate change. Population growth, poverty and conflict have all served to put the forest at risk. 'For us, we cannot decouple the destruction of man with the destruction of the environment', says MP Roger Mpanano. 'But the population do things according to tradition. It is critical that we make our populations understand. It is a huge task.' With UK support, the Commission was able to receive training to help legislators to enhance protection of the environment by introducing laws on environmental protection and sustainable forestry.

Commission President Dunia Bitakuya says it has made a huge difference. 'Before, the environment was an unknown issue. It was neglected. It was the preserve of a few scientists, but not known beyond that, not by politicians nor the public. Now, people are beginning to understand how their lives depend on the environment. Things are changing.'

FCO support: Capacity building for DRC National Assembly Commission for the Environment and Natural Resources Commission (CERNT) to enable them to better understand and manage the legal protection of DRC's environment and natural resources.

Partner: The Environment and Natural Resources commission of the DRC's National Assembly.



Abandoned by their parents, harassed by the authorities, street children in Kinshasa face a brutal existence.

Cedrick 'Barabas' Matondo is 18 and from Kinshasa. 'I was nine years old when I decided to go onto the street. My mother had died and I didn't like what my father did. He was very violent.' Time has not dimmed the trauma. He visibly chokes up. 'I was on the streets for nine years. I only ever thought about survival. It was very violent on the streets. I saw some things…' His voice trails off.

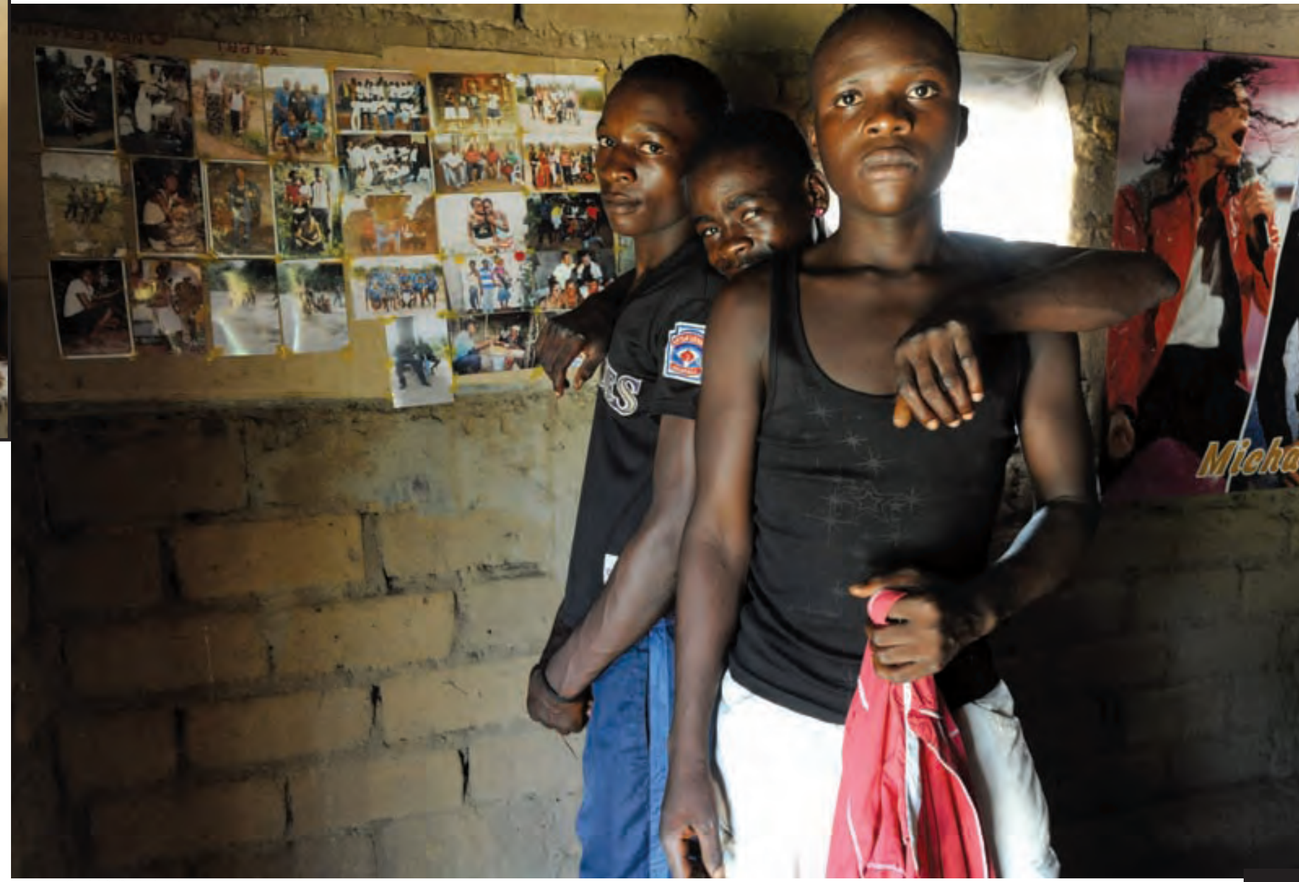
A two-hour drive outside of Kinshasa, FCO-funded Village Nganda has become home and hope to street children. The project, managed by Italian NGO CESVI, provides agricultural training to street children – enabling them to make a living as farmers. Here, far from the violence of their Kinshasa street lives, they raise and tend to their own crops, which they can sell at market. It is a far cry from what they have known.
'Everyone here has a nickname. Mine is 'Barabas.' I chose it because Barabas was the one who went to kill Jesus. He was very violent. I wanted it as it inspires fear. The change coming here has been huge. Here, for the first time I could be calm and feel at ease. There are so many things which have completely changed my life. I am now selling produce and eventually hope to be able to save enough money to open some shops.'

Guy Nseka, 18, has chosen the nickname of Rase. 'It means cut,' he explains. 'That means I am very powerful and can do anything.' Guy was only seven when he found himself on the streets. 'My father was very violent. And my mother couldn't feed us. The biggest danger on the streets was the military. They would come and round us up for nothing. They would beat us, and when the girls were released, they would tell us that they had been raped day and night. I wanted to get off the streets. When I heard about this programme, that people were coming and doing agricultural training, I wanted to be part of it.'

Now cultivating and selling his own produce, Guy tells us how the project has transformed his life. 'Being here, part of this, has changed everything for me. The images of the brutality of the street are gone. I am so at ease here, so relaxed. In the streets I had nothing: no dishes, no chair, no bed, no radio. Here, I have it all – and I have food to eat. And now I know that in the future I will be somebody. Now, for the first time, I have confidence in the future.'

FCO support: Funding agricultural training for 25 street children.

Partner: CESVI is an Italian NGO working in DRC since 2001 in different areas: health, rehabilitation, and child protection.



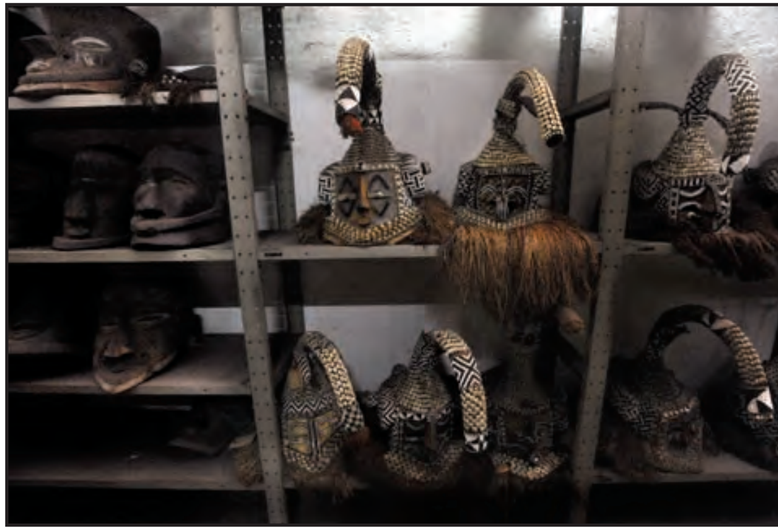
'Rase', left, 'Barabas', centre

Home to 250 ethnic groups, the DRC has a rich and diverse cultural tradition. In his early days, Mobutu recognised this. On 11 March 1970, he formed the Institute de Musee Nationaux du Congo. He despatched teams to all corners of the country to scour for art and to record traditional music. Today, the institute houses these 45,000 objects of art and 1,000 hours of music recordings collected during this period. The golden era, however, did not survive Mobutu's decline. Professor Joseph Ibongo, Director General at the museum notes, 'Although Mobutu wanted a big museum, now, some 40 years on, there is still no museum.'

Chief of Restoration Eugene Tu Zolan Massamba began working at the museum in 1973. He has remained there since, through good times – and bad. 'It is vocation,' he says. 'I love the whole collection. We must be encouraged to savour the works. These are the works of our ancestors, who left them for us. It is essential that we protect them for our children. Our ancestors created them, they hold our ceremonies, our rituals. They have been passed by hand from our ancestors. They are not just anything. They are us and it is necessary to respect them.' Professor Ibongo laughs, 'Eugene contaminated me with the passion for the objects! He transmitted the love for them. Eugene gave all his youth and whole life, as I have now, for the love of our heritage – and despite the difficult conditions, we retain the flame.'

The FCO supported the rehabilitation of the Institute de Musee Nationaux au Congo – enabling many of these precious artefacts to be put on display to the public for the first time. Professor Ibongo explains that it is significantly more than a simple matter of the preservation of objects. It is about state, nationhood and rebuilding the country.

'Before, I didn't know what this country was. I saw it as a vagabond. What are the pygmies for example? You come to the museum; you listen to their music; you see their art. Then you see they are a big people, an amazing people. You listen to their music and you fall in love.



'Voila, this is what makes the country. This is what confirms our identity. I think that in our many years of trouble there has been a loss of identity – a sense of floating. Our job is to restore the value of our African traditions and identity. We are trying to rebuild our country. Rebuilding our identity is an essential part of this. And this is why it is so important that Britain has built us an exhibition room and has given us support. There are still many obstacles. We worry about the deterioration of our artefacts, stored as they are with no humidity or temperature controls. But at last people can come and see some of their heritage. The support Britain has given us has given us hope, a corner has been turned.'

FCO support: Rehabilitation of the national museum's exhibition room – enabling exhibits to be displayed to the public for the first time.

Partner: L'Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo, IMNC ; a public institution in charge of cultural heritage of the country.

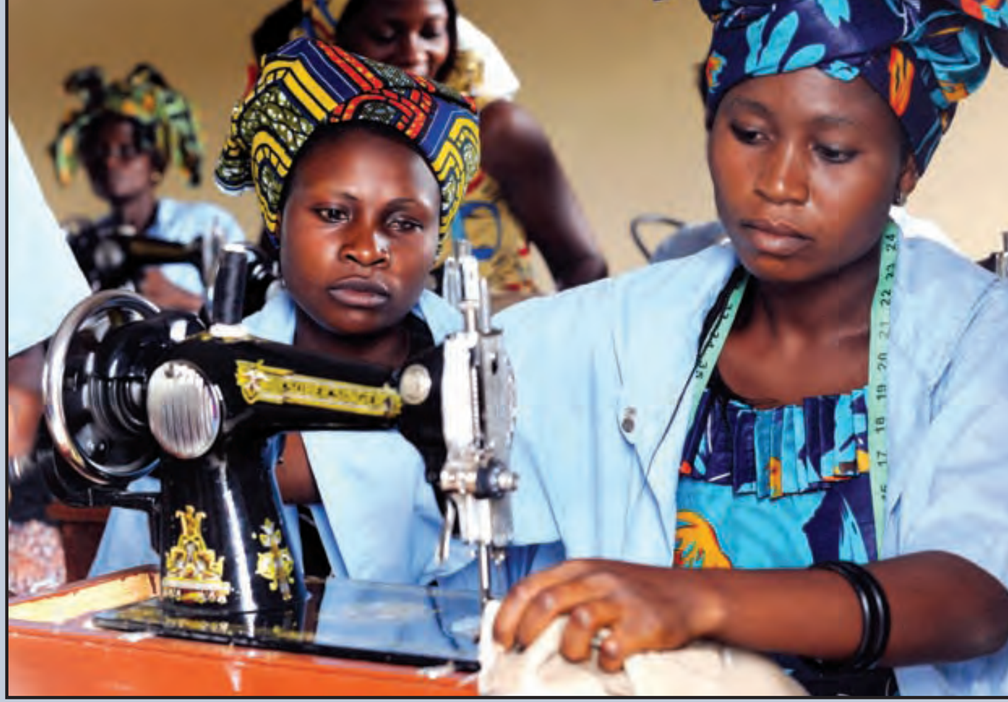
Vocational Skills

A heavily potholed dirt road connects the capital, Kinshasa, with the DRC's dense, underdeveloped interior. Communities along the road suffer extreme poverty and high rates of teen pregnancy. Mbankana, 150 kilometres along is an example. Mami Mafongo, 18, has a three year old son. She is not married.

'We had no money, and none for school fees. I had to abandon my studies, which made me really unhappy. I was 14. I had nothing to do and I needed money. So, I found a 'boyfriend' but then I got pregnant. My family have no money and they refused to look after my baby and me. I didn't know what to do. My future was gone.'

Mazozo Nku-Nziama, also 18, tells the same story. 'I had to leave school as there was no money to pay the fees. The only way was to have a boyfriend.' She had her first child at 14, and another two years later.

Lacking in skills, with no way to earn a living, the future for these young girls and their children was bleak. Recognising the problem, the FCO supported the creation of a vocational centre which would teach the young mothers to sew, giving them a means to support themselves. It has made a huge difference. Mami tells us, 'I had no way of looking after myself and my baby. Sometimes I could sell peanuts, but even when I could it wasn't enough for both of us. And then I heard about this course. I really wanted to do it, so I'd be able to make clothes and sell them. It is a big change. Now I go to school in the morning, and practice in the afternoon. But the best thing is, now, I have a future.'



The FCO funded the rehabilitation of a vocational centre for impoverished teenage mothers.

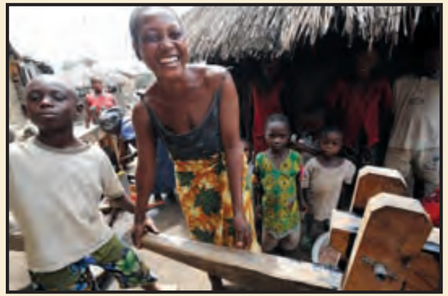
The centre has the objective of achieving social reintegration of vulnerable girls and single impoverished young mothers by providing them with training in tailoring.

Partner: Ensemble Luttons Contre le Sida, ELCOS, a Congolese NGO whose work is focused on women rights and fighting HIV & AIDS.

Created in 1925, Virunga Park is the second oldest national park in the world. It is famous for its biodiversity, as the home of the famed mountain gorillas. Yet it is now being threatened by deforestation. Local people here depend on firewood for fuel and sell it to make money. And this is not the only problem. Armed groups operating in the area use the charcoal trade to fund their activities which continues the cycle of violence and threatens the population.

At Virunga Park, Jean Bosco, in charge of energy production, enthusiastically and determinedly puts into action the innovative FCO-supported scheme of providing local people with a fuel alternative to charcoal. In this scheme, briquettes – constructed out of waste materials such as sawdust, dried leaves, and food residues – are easily made by the local population, using material they would have otherwise thrown out. The briquettes are then sold, providing the community with an income, while simultaneously reducing environmental damage. Jean Bosco explains, 'The park is endangered by making charcoal. Therefore, we needed an alternative. The briquettes can be made from all other material, for example, sawdust, dried leaves, residue of maize, rice. We actively work to bring it to communities. We have 12 trainers with teams of workers in the communities, training, setting up presses and all that is needed. As each briquette press is worked by six people, 3,000 people can be employed. They can then sell the briquettes – so they make money. That makes it a business for them. The idea is that by doing this, you both save the forest and overcome poverty.'

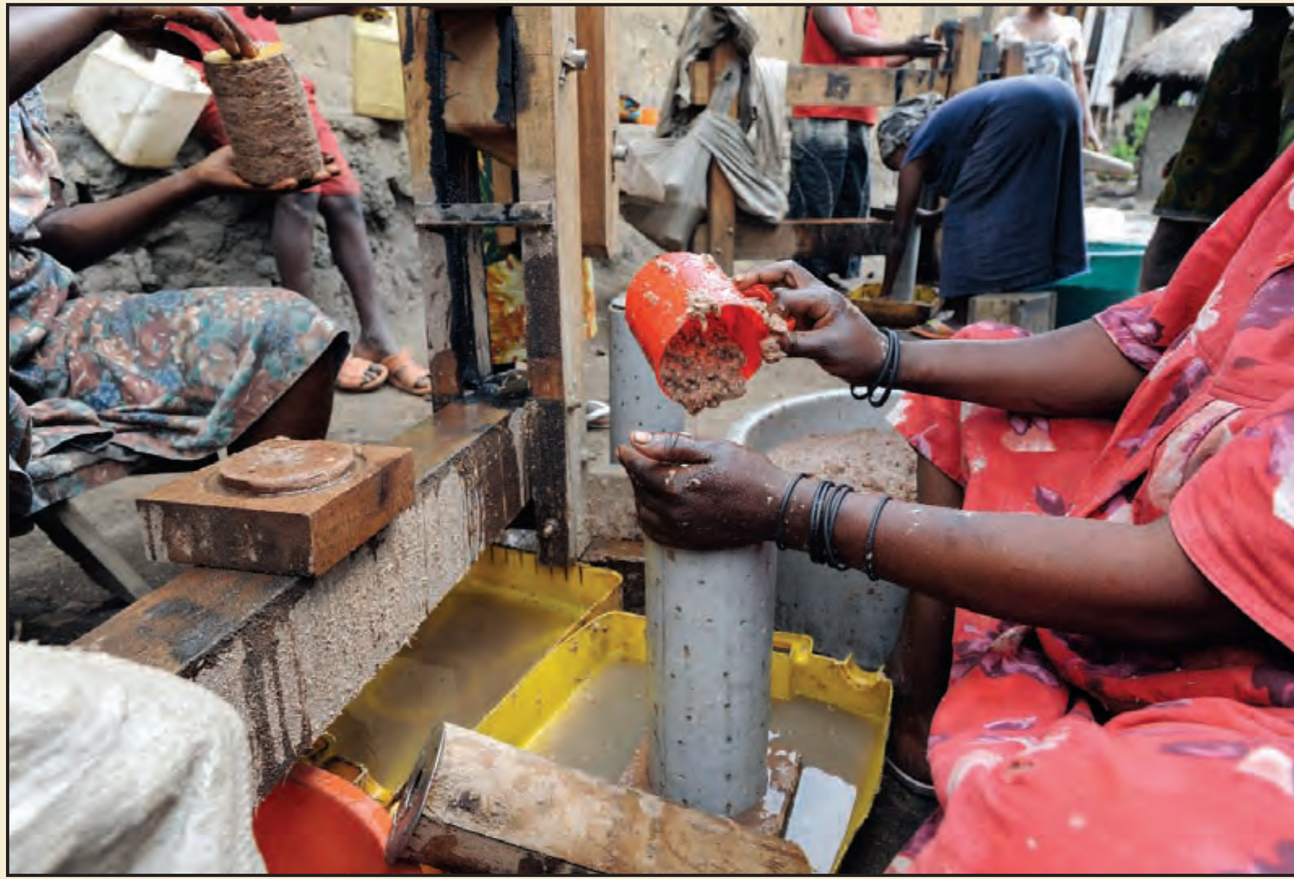
In Kiwanja village, community production is in action. Briquettes, with their distinctive donut shape are to be seen everywhere, drying in front of many of the village houses. It seems everyone is doing it. Women, smiles on their faces, babies on their backs, work the presses, children stir the mixture. Everyone is chipping in. The women take a break to explain what this has meant to them. 'We are all from around here. We have always worked the fields. But now our goal is to phase out working the fields entirely and just produce the briquettes.'



Jocelyne, one of the beneficiaries, explains, 'For three months of cultivation, we would normally produce 10 sacks. At $40 each, we would expect to earn $400 for three months. With the briquettes, we are making 72 sacks per three months, giving us an income of $504. And going to the fields is dangerous. Women are raped, men beaten, and killed. We want to expand our production so we don't need to go to the fields at all.' She adds, 'The briquettes have really changed our lives. It is a godsend. We no longer need to worry as we did before. It has increased our income, while also giving the whole community a stability that enables us to think of the future and build for it.'

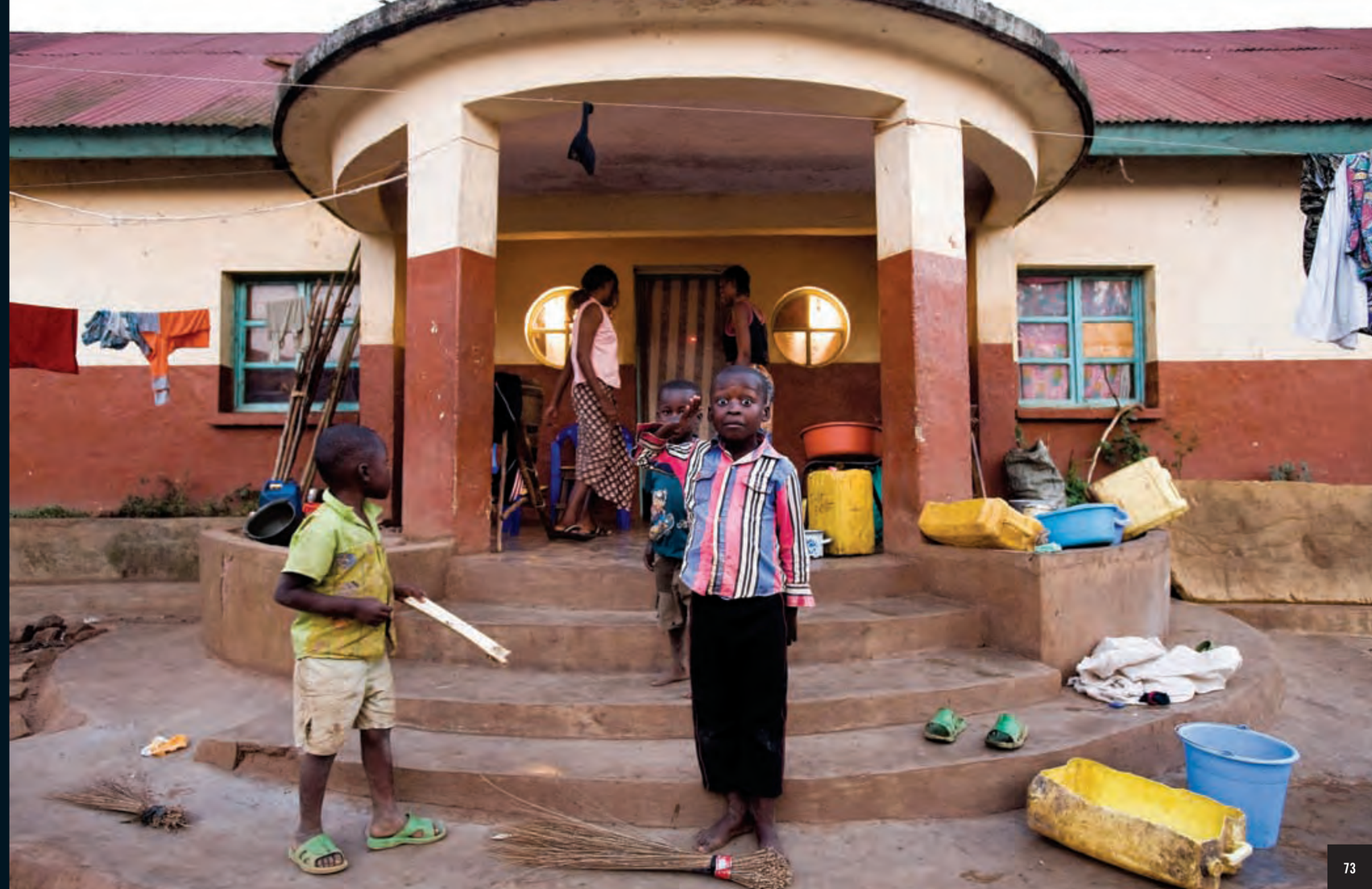
Protecting the Mountain Gorillas

Brigadier Innocent Mburanumwe is passionate about the forest. He has been a guardian in Virunga Park since 1997, remaining throughout the fighting. 'We worried if this bullet, this bomb, this attack was going to kill this gorilla or the other one.' All the gorillas and their families have names – given to them in honour of those guardians killed in the course of the job. 'Now', he says, 'the enemy is the FDLR. They control the charcoal trade. They cut down trees, make charcoal and destroy the forest.' He leads operations to rout the trade out of the forest. It is not easy. Trapped in the vice-grip of poverty, everyone in the area is dependent on the FDLR controlled trade. 'This makes our job very difficult,' Innocent says. 'This is also why what Jean Bosco offers is so important. He offers an alternative so that the population no longer needs to go into the forest.'



FCO support: Funding the expansion of briquettes production to provide a sustainable alternative to firewood and charcoal for rural populations in Virunga National Park.

Partner: The Africa Conservation Fund (ACF). In the DRC, ACF has been supporting park operations in Virunga National Park. It been undertaking research and viability assessments into alternative fuels since November 2007.

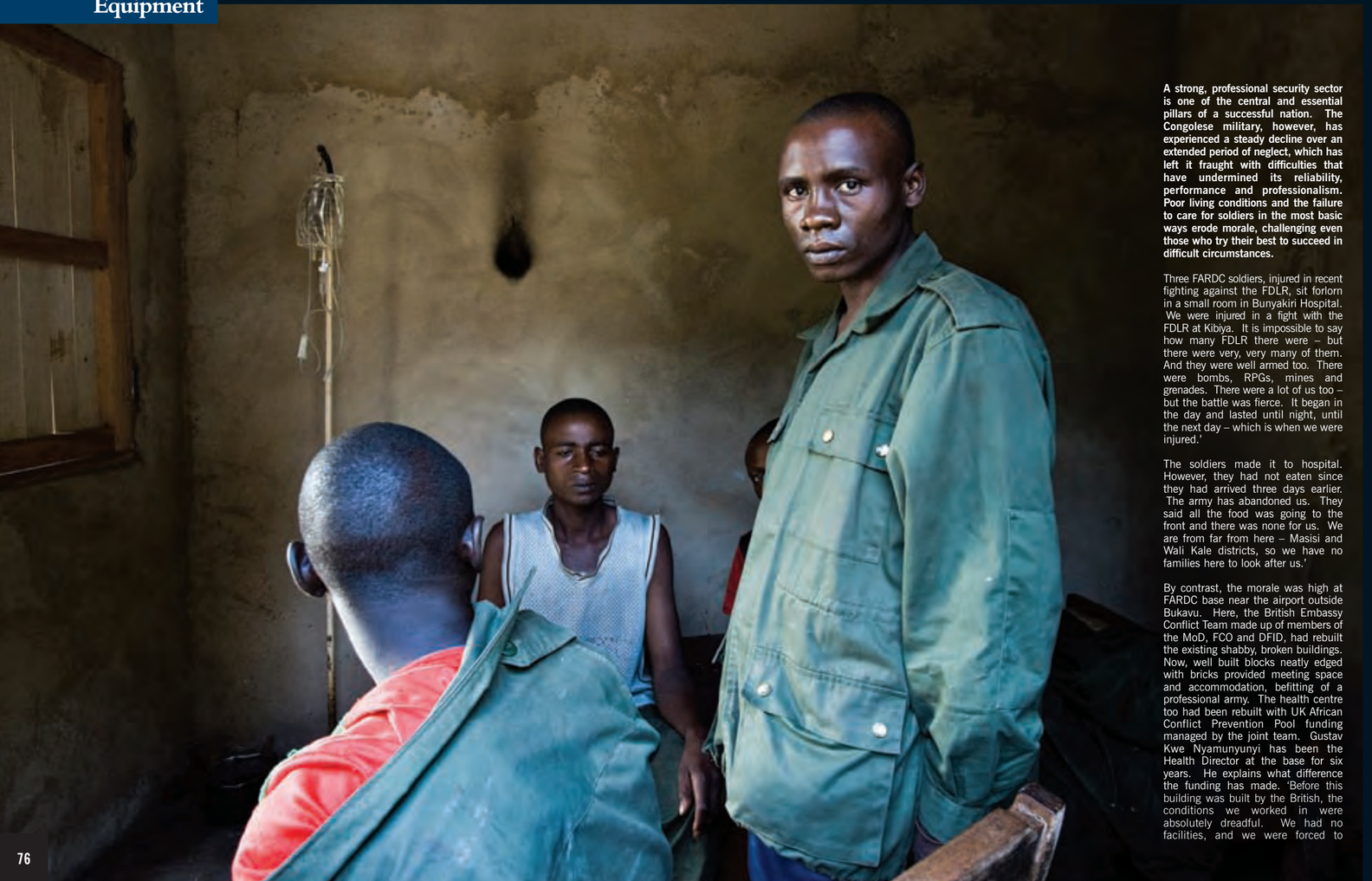


At Kinshasa's Centre Superior Militaire in Binza, FARDC troops are focusing on their English lessons 'Specialist English for Military', which concentrates on the language skills important to peacekeeping operations, in which African militaries play critical roles.

Major Elisabeth Kundenga began her military career at the Congo army's parachute regiment in 1966. Trained as a nurse, she spent three years in Belgium, where she specialised in blood transfusions. She has had numerous deployments since, some abroad. She remarks, 'English is very important to learn. It is the language of peacekeeping and business. I want to learn to speak very well. The English coming here to teach us is very important and has made a big difference to our learning.'

Lt Guy Isaac Mukaz was a student of Peacekeeping English. He is now an instructor. 'I was the Presidential unit, in charge of operations and training, when in 2007, I was sent here for the Peacekeeping English course. I arrived here speaking very little English – but I was interested to learn. Now I am an English user, capable of understanding various accents. It has been immensely interesting, and useful – not only for peace-keeping, but for me personally. It has expanded my horizons and improved my understanding of the English and English culture. It has made a huge difference in my life. It has made me what I am today.'

The MOD English Peacekeeping Project (PEP) is designed to teach members of the FARDC to speak English with a view to them becoming peace keepers in the future. To date over a thousand students have been trained and several are being used as interpreters by the FARDC in order to communicate with MONUC, the largest United Nation peacekeeping mission in the world.

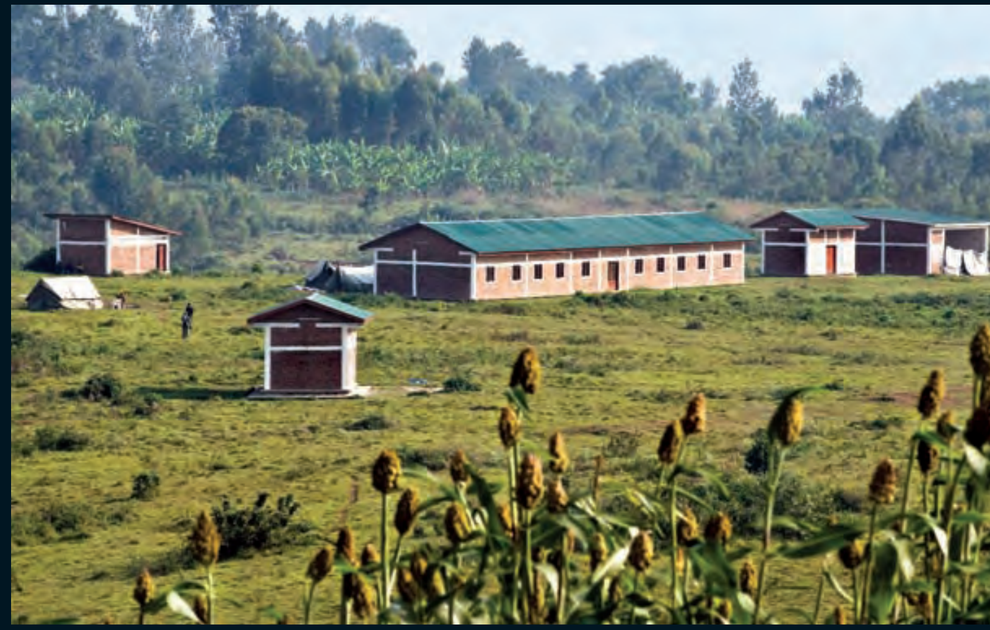


A strong, professional security sector is one of the central and essential pillars of a successful nation. The Congolese military, however, has experienced a steady decline over an extended period of neglect, which has left it fraught with difficulties that have undermined its reliability, performance and professionalism. Poor living conditions and the failure to care for soldiers in the most basic ways erode morale, challenging even those who try their best to succeed in difficult circumstances.

Three FARDC soldiers, injured in recent fighting against the FDLR, sit forlorn in a small room in Bunyakiri Hospital. 'We were injured in a fight with the FDLR at Kibiya. It is impossible to say how many FDLR there were – but there were very, very many of them. And they were well armed too. There were bombs, RPGs, mines and grenades. There were a lot of us too – but the battle was fierce. It began in the day and lasted until night, until the next day – which is when we were injured.'

The soldiers made it to hospital. However, they had not eaten since they had arrived three days earlier. 'The army has abandoned us. They said all the food was going to the front and there was none for us. We are from far from here – Masisi and Wali Kale districts, so we have no families here to look after us.'

By contrast, the morale was high at FARDC base near the airport outside Bukavu. Here, the British Embassy Conflict Team made up of members of the MoD, FCO and DFID, had rebuilt the existing shabby, broken buildings. Now, well built blocks neatly edged with bricks provided meeting space and accommodation, befitting of a professional army. The health centre too had been rebuilt with UK African Conflict Prevention Pool funding managed by the joint team. Gustav Kwe Nyamunyunyi has been the Health Director at the base for six years. He explains what difference the funding has made. 'Before this building was built by the British, the conditions we worked in were absolutely dreadful. We had no facilities, and we were forced to



actually look after people in their own accommodation, in their houses. This meant we couldn't effectively work with the sick. If people were ill, they often just didn't get better, due to the conditions. This is no longer the case. We thank the British so much as now we have excellent facilities. It has made a huge difference.' The benefits extend beyond the improvement of the health of the troops and their families. 'It has really also improved the morale of the troops, to be treated with professionalism.'

At the FARDC base, UK African Conflict Prevention Pool funding has been transformative. 'We can't thank Great Britain enough', exclaims Gustav Kwe Nyamunyunyi. *The Ministry of Defence has administered over £25m for training, equipment and camps for the army. DFID has provided funds of £6.49m to the UNDP since 2006 to provide basic emergency support (housing, medical care and water) to three integrated brigades in eastern DRC and supported interaction of FARDC with local communities through community recovery projects to reduce their impact on the local population.*

CONGO 50
AND BEYOND

PROGRAMME NATIONAL DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT PRIMAIRE
les civilisations du monde contemporain
CALCUL
Sixiè