



INTERNATIONAL
RESCUE
COMMITTEE

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



PHOTO BY PETER BIRRO

Villagers discuss their community's current projects with the local development committee during a public meeting in Kalehe, South Kivu.

Recover and Rebuild

Since 1996 the IRC has helped the Democratic Republic of Congo to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of conflict and civil war. Today the IRC is one of the largest providers of humanitarian aid in the country, with more than 750 staff members (most of them Congolese) serving over 4,000,000 people in seven provinces. In addition to providing healthcare, education, and programs for women and girls, the IRC brings community-driven reconstruction initiatives to thousands of conflict-affected villages through an innovative program called *Tuungane* ("Let's Unite"). Our work emphasizes creating partnerships with local communities and providing the training, tools, and resources they need to build a prosperous and peaceful Congo.

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How the IRC helps

Empowering millions to unite and rebuild

Launched in 2007, the Tuungane program is an innovative approach to community-driven reconstruction in areas affected by conflict. Just as important, Tuungane—which means “Let’s Unite” in Kiswahili—introduces participatory methods to people who previously had little influence over their own communities. Rather than just being passive recipients of aid, Tuungane encourages villagers to nominate and elect local development committees that decide what reconstruction projects a village should pursue.

- ▶ To date, Tuungane has helped some 1.8 million community members build or rehabilitate 1,120 classrooms, 170 clinics, 400 wells and water systems, 130 markets and mills, and more than 240 km of roads.
- ▶ By 2014 more than 5,500 additional projects will be completed in the provinces of Maniema, Katanga, North Kivu, and South Kivu—reaching 2.6 million people across an area more than twice the size of the United Kingdom.
- ▶ Each reconstruction or development project is overseen by a democratically elected local committee that acts on the community’s behalf, providing a hands-on opportunity for community members to see the principles of good governance in action.

Good governance through development

Through the Tuungane program, the IRC and its partner organization, CARE, bring together community members and local government officials to rebuild infrastructure and improve basic services using principles of good governance. Community members discuss and decide their needs and priorities, such as building clinics, schools, and roads, and the IRC provides the training, funding, and support to bring the projects to fruition. Tuungane puts decision-making power in the hands of local people and fosters civic engagement, transparency, accountability and trust—key factors in maintaining peace and stability.

Learning what works

The IRC is conducting a study of Tuungane’s effectiveness, a review that is one of the largest and most sophisticated of its kind. Working with researchers from the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the study will look at how Tuungane affects social cohesion, good governance, and socioeconomic conditions. The study will also help determine which aspects of Tuungane can be expanded or replicated in other countries. The findings will not only help shape the future of Tuungane in Congo but will inform the growing international community-driven reconstruction movement as well.

A lesson in Tuungane

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The people of Makaka, a village participating in Tuungane, decided to rehabilitate a local elementary school by providing new doors, desks, and windows. “The community’s decision was a blessing,” says headmaster Jean-Baptiste Fikirini Miango, who studied in the school himself as a child. “After we got new desks, the children’s writing improved considerably,” says

Remy Lukelwa, a third grade teacher in the school. The school’s administrators were so impressed by the democratic and transparent manner by which community members made decisions and managed the project’s funds that they decided to follow suit by posting details of school activities, improvement projects, and deadlines on a public bulletin board each month.