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

An Ongoing Crisis

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been engulfed in conflict for over a decade and remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Years of economic and political decline and civil war led to extreme violence, population displacement, and widespread rape and abuse of women. Despite a 2002 peace agreement, a new constitution, elections in 2006, and planned elections in November 2011, armed conflict persists in eastern parts of the country. 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 900 staff members, most of them Congolese. The IRC provides hundreds of thousands of people with medicine, clean water, sanitation, education, economic development and support for survivors of sexual violence.



For 15 years, the IRC has been working in Congo to save lives, revive communities, and provide vital services and a sense of security in unstable surroundings.

- > The IRC helps meet the basic needs of people displaced by violence, providing water, sanitation, hygiene, medicine and other urgent supplies. In troubled South Kivu Province, the IRC Emergency Team responds to any outbreak of violence within 48 hours. In 2011, the IRC will provide emergency humanitarian assistance to more than 218,000 people.
- > We partner with the Ministry of Health to train health workers, repair and build health centers and supply them with equipment and drugs. The IRC works in 57 health zones covering 8.4 million people and is helping to implement a national health strategy by strengthening the overall health system.
- The IRC keeps children learning and teachers in the classroom. Working with leading educational institutions and the Ministry of Education, the IRC supports educational programs that reach nearly 500,000 boys and girls, young women and men. To improve the quality of classroom instruction, the IRC trains teachers and promotes community involvement in schools through parent and other grassroots groups.
- We are a leader in aiding and supporting the survivors of rape delivering emergency medical care,

- legal assistance, and economic support services, while working with communities to prevent sexual violence and improve programs for victims. The IRC has aided more than 400,000 survivors of sexual violence and their families.
- The IRC promotes long-term development through a communitydriven reconstruction program called Tuungane, which means "Let's Unite" in Swahili. Tunungane empowers

PHOTO LEFT: The Tuungane program helped nearly two million people living in eastern Congo rebuild villages and construct new clinics, wells, schools, bridges and roads. RIGHT: An IRC school for children displaced by the conflict in North Kivu.

local people to take decisions over development in their communities. It brings together community members and local government officials to identify, design, and build their own projects, including health clinics, wells, schools, and roads. Tuungane also exposes participants to the principles of democratic decision making, transparency and responsible management of development projects. To date, some 2.6 million people from 1,800 villages have participated in Tuungane projects.

A lesson in Tuungane

Participants in the IRC's Tuungane program are not just passive recipients of aid. Instead, Tuungane encourages villagers to elect local development committees that decide what reconstruction projects a village should pursue.

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.