



# Landscape Analysis of Community-Based Organizations:

Maniema, North Kivu, Orientale and South Kivu Provinces  
of Democratic Republic of the Congo

Full Report | May 2011



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Cover Image: A woman in North Kivu holds her baby during a break in class where she is learning to sew.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), one of the principal obstacles to delivering effective funding to community-based organizations (CBOs) is the lack of precision about which organizations are capable of meeting the most pressing needs in a particular geographic area.

With the generous support of USAID, Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI) conducted a landscape analysis in eastern DRC to fill this knowledge gap. Between January and May 2011, ECI deployed researchers to Maniema, North Kivu, Orientale, and South Kivu provinces to study development activities and to identify and assess CBOs. The researchers interviewed representatives from 292 organizations and visited 63 towns. The objective of the project was to provide much-needed insight and context to project partners about current conditions in eastern DRC, and to facilitate partnerships between funders and CBOs. This report is not a complete survey of all CBOs in eastern DRC; however, it profiles organizations engaged in particularly interesting and/or important work.

### **This research has five important findings:**

- There are many CBOs in eastern DRC with effective systems and controls in place to readily absorb funding and implement projects that meet important community needs, but even the best organizations could benefit from training in administrative, project, and financial management.
- There are many capable, small CBOs that implement projects with international funding that first passed through three, four, or five agencies. These groups have a difficult time increasing their capacities to get direct access to funding, and remain stuck at the bottom of the funding chain.
- Urban areas and war zones get the most attention and assistance from funders, while rural and post-conflict regions are comparatively neglected.
- The lack of transport and communications infrastructure severely limits the work of CBOs, particularly in rural areas.
- The focus of international assistance remains on meeting urgent humanitarian needs and helping rape survivors, but the structural and cultural roots of the problems in eastern DRC—including poor governance and marginalization of women—are getting insufficient attention.

### **Based on these findings, ECI makes the following recommendations to potential funders:**

- Build the capacities of CBOs in eastern DRC.
- Target small and medium-size CBOs for funding and training investments.
- Expand activities in underserved areas of eastern DRC.
- Help to improve transportation and communication infrastructures.
- Address the structural and cultural roots of gender inequality, persistent conflict, and poor governance.



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 Democratic Republic of Congo  
**Democratic Republic of Congo: Created for Eastern Congo Initiative: April 26, 2011**



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# FINDINGS

The mandate of this project was to evaluate the status of ten humanitarian and development sectors, and to identify capable community-based organizations (CBOs) working in those sectors. During the course of ECI's work—involving hundreds of interviews, reviews of hundreds of documents and reports, and observations in scores of towns across four provinces—several important themes emerged that cut across sectors and organizations. Following are five key findings from this project:

## 1. International funding supports a limited number of large CBOs, thereby limiting the growth of small and medium-sized groups and hindering competitiveness in the CBO sector.

Many international donors give money first to United Nations agencies, large international organizations, or large Congolese groups, which in turn subcontract work to another CBO, which may subcontract to yet another group, and so on. In this way, international funding may pass through three, four, or five agencies before reaching the group that actually builds the well, educates a community about HIV/AIDS, or delivers improved seeds to local farmers. The local groups at the bottom of the funding chain may only receive a small percentage of the original allocation, thereby limiting their ability to strengthen the organization's capacities and be able to compete for direct funding. Anecdotal and observational evidence suggests that current international funding patterns reinforce larger groups, while neglecting to support small and medium-sized CBOs,<sup>1a</sup> which limits development of a more robust and competitive CBO sector in eastern DRC.

## 2. Donors focus on urban centers and war zones, thereby neglecting large parts of eastern DRC.

In eastern DRC, international funding flows in greatest amounts to the Kivu provinces,<sup>1b</sup> the war zone in northern Orientale province, and to urban centers. Humanitarian groups necessarily follow the sound of gunfire or the movements of populations, but the Kivu and urban bias of development organizations is tied to several factors, including Congolese government priorities; the security and comfort of expatriate staff working for the major development agencies; the concentration of Congolese CBOs in cities and large towns; the availability of communication and banking infrastructures in urban areas; the relative difficulty of reaching many rural areas of eastern DRC due to poor transportation infrastructure; and the lack of strong implementing partners in many rural areas. As a result, a significant area of eastern DRC is comparatively neglected by programming and funding, including large parts of Orientale province (especially the Tchopo, Bas Uélé, and Haut Uélé districts), Walikale territory in North Kivu, Shabunda territory in South Kivu, and virtually the entire Maniema province.

## 3. The internal systems and controls of CBOs in eastern DRC need to be strengthened.

The CBOs highlighted in this report range from small groups that have never received international funding, to large groups with multi-million dollar budgets that have worked with various international donors. With very few exceptions, the CBOs ECI interviewed had some deficiencies in their internal systems and controls, such as lack of a computerized accounting system, lack of strategic

planning, or lack of strong procedures for staff management. In the context of eastern DRC, some of these shortcomings are to be expected, but groups that had serious shortcomings and/or no capacity or interest in changing their policies and practices were excluded from inclusion in this report. ECI found that most CBOs have effective systems and controls in place to readily absorb funding and implement projects that meet important community needs; yet even the best organizations could benefit from training in administrative, project, and financial management.

## 4. The lack of transport and communications infrastructures severely limits the work and growth of CBOs, particularly in rural areas.

In eastern DRC, it is difficult to travel due to the poor state of transportation infrastructure, and hard to communicate due to hit-or-miss cell phone coverage and slow, spotty Internet access. These limitations make it difficult for CBOs to visit prospective field sites, monitor projects, learn about funding opportunities, communicate with prospective and current donors, develop capacity of the organizations over time, and report on progress and outcomes in a timely way. Poor transport and communications infrastructure means that everything takes more time and costs more money than it would if a 50-mile trip took an hour instead of a day, or if sending off a project proposal took minutes instead of a multi-day trip to a town with electricity and a cyber café. The lack of infrastructure is particularly difficult on CBOs in rural areas, limiting their ability to attract international funding, and further reinforcing urban bias in project and organizational funding decisions.

## 5. The systemic and social roots of problems in eastern DRC receive insufficient attention from international donors.

The focus of international assistance in DRC remains on meeting urgent humanitarian needs, although the STAREC and ISSSS plans signal a desire to shift to a development phase.<sup>2</sup> Current assistance patterns reflect prioritization of urgent needs in food security, protection, and health, but are also a response to international interest in helping survivors of sexual violence. As a result, there is insufficient attention to the roots of persistent conflict, the perpetuation of poor governance, and the structural violence of gender inequality.

<sup>2</sup> STAREC stands for Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas, and is the Congolese government's plan for establishing security and supporting social, economic, and political development. ISSSS stands for International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, and is the plan by the United Nations and key partners to support STAREC. See province reports and the Security Sector Reform and Impunity sector report for more information.

<sup>1a</sup> For the purposes of this study, a small CBO is defined as a group having an annual budget less than \$100,000; a medium-sized group has a budget \$100,000 to \$500,000; and a large group has a budget over \$500,000.

<sup>1b</sup> See, e.g., OCHA, "Humanitarian Action Plan 2011," Kinshasa, 2011, pp. 9, 58; International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, "Quarterly Report, January to March 2011," p. 11.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**In addition to recommendations for projects in the organizational reports, ECI makes the following general recommendations:**

## **1. Target small and medium-size CBOs for funding and training investments.**

Several large CBOs have emerged in eastern DRC, mainly based in urban areas. These CBOs often receive international funding for projects and then subcontract smaller CBOs to do some or all of the work. To increase the competitiveness of the CBO sector, which could lead to better project implementation and service delivery, funders should facilitate trainings for small and medium-size CBOs to strengthen their administrative, financial, and project management capacities. ECI proposes to organize a series of training seminars in each province (Maniema, North Kivu, Orientale, and South Kivu) for smaller CBOs, particularly groups from underserved areas, in order to not only increase their abilities to absorb funding and implement projects, but also enable them to network and exchange ideas with other similar groups. See the Capacity-Building Training Programs section (Appendix 3) for more information

## **2. Expand activities in underserved areas of eastern DRC.**

Although there is a popular perception outside DRC that the entire country—or at the very least all of eastern DRC—is stuck in a state of violent chaos, active conflict is confined to about a third of the combined area of Maniema, North Kivu, Orientale, and South Kivu provinces. In many areas, people have been coping for several years in a post-conflict situation in which development funds and projects have passed them by. Paradoxically, the farther one gets from the metropolises and war zones of eastern DRC, the less help there is for health care, education, at-risk youth, human rights, and other vital humanitarian and development needs. While many rural areas lack strong CBOs, funders could address this problem by facilitating training for rural CBOs in accordance with the recommendations above. In addition, funders could increase their assistance to rural CBOs, including “umbrella” organizations that work with small associations, in order to reach isolated and neglected populations. Priority areas for investment include the Tshopo, Bas Uélé, and Haut Uélé districts of Orientale province; Walikale territory in North Kivu; Shabunda territory in South Kivu; and virtually the entire Maniema province.

## **3. Build the capacities of CBOs in eastern DRC.**

The 2011 Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) notes that one of the major challenges for humanitarian work in DRC is “to identify and mobilize partners having the required expertise to implement and monitor certain projects.”<sup>3a</sup> ECI has profiled numerous CBOs in this report that are already implementing partners for humanitarian and development work, or which have the capacity to become such partners. Many of the profiled CBOs submitted project proposals to ECI for specific capacity-

building needs, which could enable these groups to strengthen their internal systems and improve their abilities to meet vital community needs. Some of these needs focus on technical knowledge, such as refresher training for health workers and counselors, while other requests address organizational needs, such as provision of computerized accounting software and related training for staff. Support for capacity-building will be a high-leverage investment in CBOs in eastern DRC. See the Capacity-Building Training Programs section (Appendix 3) for more information.

## **4. Help to improve transportation and communications infrastructures.**

While there has been some progress in improving roads and bridges in eastern DRC, this work has been limited in scope (mainly rehabilitation of dirt roads and a few bridges) and scale (restricted to small parts of the Kivus and Orientale). Funders could dramatically accelerate the rebuilding of commercial networks, health-care systems, community security, and civil society throughout eastern DRC by paving roads and constructing built-to-last bridges to better link rural and underserved areas to regional metropolises. Improved transportation infrastructure will have the added benefit of making it easier and cheaper to improve communications infrastructure in underserved areas. Funders could explore ways to support the extension of cellular phone and Internet coverage into underserved areas, thereby giving isolated populations access to information about market prices, funding opportunities, legal rights, elections, and countless other issues that can help rural populations to improve their own lives.

## **5. Address the structural and societal roots of gender inequality, persistent conflict, and poor governance.**

Funders have a unique opportunity to address the underlying structure and societal roots of eastern DRC’s core problems through strategic grant making. For example, funders would be well served to mainstream gender analysis into their work and strategically engage with social, political and religious leaders in order to transform the systemic marginalization of girls and women in eastern DRC. Funders could also assess the extent to which current patterns of assistance directly or indirectly support elite networks that perpetuate instability and concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a few. As part of such an effort, funders could review their support of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programs in eastern DRC to determine how and why recently integrated forces have benefited from the recent mining ban, retaining parallel command structures and spheres of influence in eastern DRC (see North Kivu report for more information). Funders could also evaluate how to better integrate and strengthen properly vetted government agencies and agents into strategies to improve the health and education sectors. While international funders have significantly helped the Congolese government and people through interventions on judicial reform and health, greater attention needs to be paid to the role of international funding as a tool to address the structural and societal barriers to further progress in eastern DRC.

<sup>3a</sup>OCHA, “Humanitarian Action Plan 2011,” Kinshasa, 2011, p. 6.