



EASTERN CONGO INITIATIVE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDERS

In 2020, the ECI family will celebrate ten years of Congolese solutions to Congolese challenges. Ten years of advocacy for the limitless potential of the Congolese people. Ten years of building bridges between the abundance of Congolese farmers and the delight of global markets. Ten years of close partnership with the most courageous, brilliant and visionary community-based organizations in eastern Congo.

ECI has always believed that Congolese people create the best possible solutions to Congolese challenges. That's why our work has always focused on strengthening community-based organizations with grantmaking and support. But the two of us have always known ECI can and must do even more to help the people of the DRC realize their highest aspirations.

In October of 2019, on the brink of our ten-year anniversary, ECI took the most important step since our founding: We joined the **Alight** family of humanitarian organizations. As part of that relationship, we took stewardship of a transformative social enterprise called **Asili**.

People in Congo, just like people in America, need the kinds of civil institutions that only philanthropic giving can sustain. People in Congo, just like people in America, also need sustainable ways to provide basic goods and services to their communities — something philanthropy hasn't been able to accomplish. Our friends in eastern Congo need more than humanitarian gifts. They need durable, independent, world-class infrastructure for life. And as you'll see in this report, that's exactly what social enterprise can do.

As we write this, the coronavirus pandemic has swept the world, and it has not spared eastern Congo. Civil unrest in Hong Kong, the United States, and across the globe has shown the need for sweeping change to secure the rights and dignity of all people. We believe with all our hearts that the work of ECI can and will contribute to the global transformation we need — in partnership with our friends in Congo, in the United States, and around the world.

Ben Affleck, Founder

Whitney Williams, Founder

ALIGHT WELCOMES ECI INTO THE FAMILY



For the last decade, Alight has been on a journey to transform itself and humanitarian relief in the process. Our vision is to drive for even greater impact by co-creating with amazing people and organizations already doing incredible work on the world's toughest problems. In 2019, we took an important step in that journey. We welcomed Eastern Congo Initiative into the Alight family.

At Alight, we believe there is simple human justice in the chance to build a life. As important as caring for 1.5 million patients and supplying 7.3 billion liters of clean water each year, we help displaced people build lives filled with joy, dignity, connection and purpose. Lives that are Alight.

The spirit of Alight shines brightly in the people of ECI. Our Asili social enterprise team has been working side by side with ECI and its partner organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for years. We have always respected the humility and caring of their approach and the depth of their commitment to the ingenuity of the Congolese people — so much so that we wanted to encourage it in every way we could.

Together with ORAM, Questscope, and Kuja Kuja, ECI makes up the Alight family: a new kind of human institution, dedicated to doing the doable in a world abounding with human potential. ORAM is the only international organization devoted

solely to advocating for LGBTQ+ people who are fleeing persecution and violence. Questscope has a vast network of mentors and teachers who provide mentoring, alternative education and support for young people in Syria and Jordan. And Kuja Kuja provides a customer feedback system that elevates a refugee from simply being a recipient of services to a customer who defines what quality is and demands accountability.

Our work together has just begun. We really couldn't be more excited for the transformations ahead, and we look forward to sharing the future successes of this partnership.

Daniel Wordsworth
CEO, Alight



The Alight family of organizations



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For us, the merger between Eastern Congo Initiative and Alight was the biggest news of 2019. Through this single act of generosity between two organizations, we have realized the enormous benefit of collaboration. Most humanitarian organizations can only dream of the partnership we have achieved in reality.

Joining the Alight family has dramatically increased ECI's ability to be of service to the communities we serve. First, Alight's experienced and professional administrative platform is already making ECI's business processes more effective and efficient. More importantly, our stewardship of Alight's transformative Asili social enterprise has given ECI the opportunity to serve more people, much more effectively, than either organization could have done alone. **Our visions and mandates have grown.**

The Asili management team works out of the beautiful city of Bukavu, at the southernmost point of Lake Kivu — a long boat ride or a short flight from ECI's office in Goma, on the far northern shore of the lake. Asili social enterprises employ nearly 100 Congolese people as plumbers, nurses, retail agents, and more. Our teams in the DRC are supported by one ECI staff member in the U.S., and Alight's shared service team is based in Minneapolis.

Our membership in the Alight family has increased the opportunities for building meaningful relationships and attracting support. Thanks to work by the Asili team, ECI has built new partnerships with visionary investors, including **Nespresso** and the **Caterpillar Foundation**. And we are bringing renewed energy to existing ECI partnerships, including **Starbucks**, the **Panzi Foundation**, and many others — especially our grantees in the DRC. In 2019, ECI disbursed over \$300,000 in grants to the Congolese organizations who are doing the most vital work to build a nation worthy of their limitless potential.

We are proud to see the response to our fundraising efforts towards the end of the year. **We met our fundraising goals for 2019.**

We should all be proud and grateful to one another for these achievements. For my part, I am deeply grateful to our friends at Alight, and to the growing ECI family. Finally, I'm grateful to you — those who have had the vision to support the work of ECI and Asili from the start. Thanks to all of you, the future of the Congolese people looks brighter than ever.

Abraham Leno
Executive Director

OUR WORK IN 2019



A reporter for Radio Mama, a news network founded and run by Congolese women with ECI's support, interviews one of our partner coffee farmers in the Minova region. Photo: Gerry Kahashy

Grantmaking

Since 2010, ECI has provided more than \$10.5 million in grants to Congolese community-based organizations, or CBOs. In 2019, a year of transition to the next phase of our work as a member of the Alight family, we used a human-centered design process to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of our partnerships. Out of 19 compelling concept notes, we selected these seven stand-out ideas:

Economic development

IFCCA (Initiative for Congolese Women in Coffee and Cacao) — Promote local consumption of coffee and cocoa produced by women coffee growers

Un Jour Nouveau (A New Day) — Promote youth entrepreneurship in the city of Goma

ALPHAGED (Association of Literacy Teachers for Gender and Development) — Provide literacy and numeracy training for women around the village of Bweremana

Coffee cooperatives — Support a viable and structured specialty-coffee value chain

Health

HEAL Africa — Reinforce resilience mechanisms against Ebola in the Kirotshe health zone in 15 primary schools for 7,088 students and 255 teachers and principals

Access to justice

Dynamique des Femmes Juristes (Women Lawyers Movement) — Support victims of sexual and gender-based violence and other vulnerable children and women in Nyiragongo and Masisi Territories in North Kivu

Panzi Foundation — Advocate for land access for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Walungu and Kabare territories in South Kivu

Total 2019 grantmaking: \$300,000

What the women of Watalinga can do

In partnership with ECI, the ECOM Foundation and an array of local CBOs, women in the business of cocoa farming learned the skills of economic participation — numeracy and basic literacy. Across the farming region of Watalinga, in Beni territory, determined women studied reading, writing and arithmetic.

Fifty-eight women from the villages of M'Poku and Kamango persisted in their studies even as they fled from militia violence. Their intellect and grit are paying off. By the end of 2019, more than 150 women can now participate in household decision-making and financial planning, sell produce, and help their children with homework. Their husbands are even prouder than they are.

\$32,000
grant

53%
literacy among
women in DRC

167
women who learned
to read and write



*A student practices writing
Photo: ECI grant manager Masudi Katembela*

Strengthening Markets

ECI makes connections between Congolese farmers and global markets for their world-class products — introducing the abundance of DRC to consumers worldwide while enriching rural communities. To do that, we work side by side with people across the value chain — supporting gender-inclusive agriculture, strict environmental and human-rights standards, and ethical sourcing by importers.

Doing the work: Building the next great coffee region

In 2019, three coffee cooperatives on the shores of Lake Kivu — the Kalehe Coffee Growers' Cooperative (CCKa), the Kalehe Arabica Coffee Cooperative (KACCO), and the Kabare Cooperative of Coffee Planters (CPCK) — used an \$18,000 grant from ECI to open up a gigantic new market for their coffee: **Starbucks**.

The grant funded training, supplies and support for the cooperative's more than seven thousand member farmers, one in four of them women, to meet the stringent quality standards of the world's most famous coffee company: the Starbucks Coffee And Farmer Equity standards.



*One of our partner farmers harvests coffee cherries.
Photo: Gerry Kahashy*



Participants in one Farmer Field School. Here is where their coffee comes from: tiny seedlings in a coffee nursery (top right), and young coffee trees in a field (bottom right). Photos: ECI agronomist Faustin Munyi-Ogwarha

After years of partnership with ECI, these three coffee co-ops achieved a major milestone in 2019: they are now profitable enough to get funding on their own, to the tune of \$832,000. “These farmers worked hard to build their capacity,” says ECI grant coordinator Masudi Katembela. “Now they are able to get credit from banks.”

\$18,000
grant

32
Farmer Field Schools
established and
equipped

7,450
coffee farmers
in 3 cooperatives

Social Enterprise

In 2013, **Asili** began as a radical new approach to providing basic services in eastern Congo. Rather than parachuting in minimum standards of aid, the way most humanitarian agencies do, we wanted to find a way to deliver the services desired by our customers and worthy of our children — not just until humanitarian interest faded, but permanently, through self-sustaining local enterprise.



With USAID and IDEO.org, Alight and Congolese people designed the Asili model together. Today, every Asili business is operated exclusively by Congolese experts, from doctors to plumbers to community-outreach experts, who answer to the people in their own community for the price and the quality of the services they offer. Alight incubated Asili until this year, when ECI took over the management of the Asili platform and the stewardship of the Asili model.

That model of social enterprise is simple, but powerful. The Asili platform is a unified brand that communities can easily identify, a set of easy-to-use management tools and practices that local entrepreneurs can use, and a business model designed for radical accountability to individual customers — people who have limited resources, but limitless dignity.

Asili works in “zones,” areas that serve about 25,000 people. In each zone, Asili businesses provide basic services communities need — clean water and health care, so far — at prices they can truly afford, at a



The clinical team at the Asili health center in Mudusa. In back: nurse Georges Bahati, custodian Lyly Mpyoyo, nurse Rachel Nabintu, nurse Bienfait Fazili (kneeling), nurse Pascaline Cikuru, and medical coordinator Dr. Johnny Muhindo. Photo: Carly Lunden / Alight

world-class level of quality and service, without the need for ongoing philanthropic support. So far, Asili services are up and running in four zones. In 2019, we built out water systems in two more zones and identified sites for two more. By the end of our current partnership with USAID in 2023, Asili businesses should be providing world-class services in ten zones, serving well beyond 350,000 people.

Health

How do you convince someone who's never had a good medical experience to trust a new clinic with their hard-earned money — and their health? We studied the question this year, and what we learned changed our approach to marketing Asili's health clinic services. The spirit of our new strategy is simple: we're doubling down on earning the trust of every single member of our communities, one person at a time. One example: Now Asili nurses spent time at Asili water points on market days, chatting with customers and offering free temperature checks and coupons for discounted clinic services. Based on what we heard from our communities, we began piloting new health services our patients asked for: over-the-counter medicine sales and overnight stays — with comfortable beds and comforting meals — for patients who need monitoring.

Asili clinics can offer world-class services at genuinely affordable prices in part because we invest in the technology our doctors and nurses need to focus on caring for patients. Our medical team worked with Boston-based health IT company VecnaCares to design and pilot a brand-new system for electronic medical records (EMR) — built from the ground up for the unique clinical environment of primary care in eastern Congo. As they use the system, our medical team is helping VecnaCares develop and refine it for other community clinics around the world.



A representative of VecnaCares, nurses Christophe Mpenzi and Georges Bahati, and medical coordinator Dr. Johnny Muhindo celebrate the first employee training in the new EMR system. Photo: Johnny Muhindo



Left: In Ciriri, children dance to gospel music while they wait in line for water. Right: After getting a new solar light, this mother from Mudaka said, “At night I can help the kids with studying. We’ll be able to see. I can do anything.” Photos: Carly Lunden / Alight

Water

This year we completed the water business lines in Zone 1 (Ciriri) and Zone 2 (Camp TV), both covering customers in and around the city of Bukavu. Each zone has 7 water points, all supplied by a 300-square-meter reservoir — enough water to fill two thousand bathtubs, or 15,000 of the jerry cans our customers use to carry water.

Energy

The Asili social enterprise model works for all kinds of basic services, so we are always listening to our communities to figure out what new services Asili might be able to provide. One clear need: an affordable, consistent, and reliable source of energy. Out of every 100 Congolese people, only 9 have power at all — and even those who do can only count on a few hours of electricity a day. “At night,” said one woman in Mudaka, “the world becomes very small.”

In 2019, we decided to see if energy could be the next world-class service Asili could provide. We did research to find out what people in our communities want from energy and how much they’re willing to pay for it. Our conversations quickly focused on clean energy — particularly in-home solar systems. Pilot installations of solar cooking and lighting have been very well received. One house at a time, the night is getting brighter and the world is getting bigger.

FINANCIAL REPORT

2019

*An ECI fontanière — in the community, they are known affectionately as “water mamas” — counts cash at an Asili water point.
Photo: Gerry Kahashy*

Consolidated statement of ECI’s financial position as of December 31, 2019

Assets

Current assets	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,587,589
Receivables	1,159,056
Inventory	128,310
Prepaid expenses	22,493
	\$2,897,448
Property and equipment	
Land	\$153,303
Buildings	606,274
Furniture and equipment	1,333,002
Vehicles	277,912
	2,370,491
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(633,597)
	\$1,736,894
Other assets	
Deposits	\$17,788
Total assets	\$4,652,130

Liabilities and net assets

Current liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$424,534
Grants payable	2,340
Due to Alight	610,126
Total liabilities	\$1,037,000
Net assets	
Without donor restrictions	\$2,586,847
With donor restrictions	1,028,283
Total net assets	\$3,615,130
Total liabilities and net assets	\$4,652,130

Consolidated statement of activities and change in net assets for the year ended December 31, 2019

Support and revenue	Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Total
Contributions	\$1,273,971	\$ -	\$1,273,971
Sales	31,080	-	31,080
Other revenue	71,345	-	71,345
Net assets released from donor restrictions	357,316	(357,316)	-
Total support and revenue	1,733,712	(357,316)	\$1,376,396
Expenses			
International programs	\$1,182,125	-	\$1,182,125
General and administrative	375,395	-	375,395
Fundraising	5,457	-	5,457
Total expenses	1,562,977	-	\$1,562,977
Change in net assets before other items	170,735	(357,316)	(186,581)
Other items			
Transfer of Asili net assets	1,686,155	1,287,049	2,973,204
Loss on foreign currency exchange	(3,636)	-	(3,636)
Change in net assets	1,853,254	929,733	2,782,987
Net assets at beginning of year	733,593	98,550	832,143
Net assets at end of year	\$2,586,847	\$1,028,283	\$3,615,130



When American friends visited South Kivu in April 2019, they drank Asili water out of an Asili mug. Photo: Gerry Kahashy



Cover image: Members of the united ECI team, including Asili staff, celebrate in Bukavu. Photo: Gerry Kahashy

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