



## A COORDINATED RESPONSE TO COMPLEX NEEDS IN THE EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika, have been severely impacted by a decades-long humanitarian crisis. More than 8 million people in eastern DRC (30% of the population) are acutely food insecure, and a majority of territories within the four provinces face high levels of protection risks. At the start of 2025, violence escalated in eastern DRC between government armed forces and M23 rebels. Fighting quickly reached Goma, a city of over 2 million people. The conflict directly affects 1 in 10 Congolese, with 1 in 20 displaced.

The EAST programme, funded by UK Government, focuses on structured livelihoods and economic recovery, health and nutrition, protection and inclusion interventions to strengthen the resilience of the most affected communities in Eastern DRC. The programme has been implemented by a consortium of five NGOs since December 2023. In addition to planned activities, partners have the capacity to pivot and scale up interventions in response to emergency humanitarian needs.

The EAST consortium is made up of five international and national humanitarian NGOs: Concern Worldwide (lead), Acted, Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Congo Handicap.

### Inclusive programming

EAST is grounded in the principle of "leaving no one behind". Under the leadership of Congo Handicap, people living with disabilities are specifically targeted among participating populations, and are supported equally across all project components by consortium partners in all targeted provinces.

In Beni, North Kivu, parents and guardians are delighted to see how the EAST programme is transforming their children's lives. Congo Handicap referred 13 year old Jonathan Muhindo Mbalasi to the Beni General Referral Hospital for surgery for clubfoot. Jonathan is recovering and looks forward to playing football with his friends. His mother, Claire, hopes that he will soon be able to walk and play like other children. "I am delighted to know that my child is being taken care of", she says.



### Protection for men and women

In December 2024, single father Felix survived several deadly attacks in his village in Beni territory. Many houses, including his own, were burned to the ground and farmland scorched. Felix's friends were ambushed and killed. He managed to flee with his 12 year old son, leaving everything else behind.

Felix received a psychological first aid intervention from DRC as well as soap and food items. He was also included in the EAST individual protection assistance programme, which provides survivors with small cash sums. Felix used the money to rent a room for him and his son, and start a small vegetable oil and plantain business, as he had managed a similar business before.

"I was helped mentally, financially and received necessary materials for basic needs", Felix says. "Now, I feel good. [...] I feel okay because I did not even have a single coin before DRC's intervention into my life. Now I am resilient, I am autonomous, and I am really depending on myself because of what I am able to do to earn a living."

### Referrals for complex cases in Nutrition and Health

With decades of experience in different sectors, EAST consortium partners work together to ensure that programme participants receive the full range of support that they require and deserve.

Christivie Kavira, a young girl who has difficulties walking, talking and sitting independently, was first referred to PUI by Congo Handicap after being diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Her grandmother, Francine, explains the help they received: *“This child was brought to me when she weighed four kilos. But Premiere Urgence provided food and referred me to the general hospital. At the hospital both my child and I were fed free of charge every day. After that, she was discharged. [...] Today, my child weighs nine kilos.”*

On discharge, Christivie was referred to Congo Handicap’s services. She now receives treatment three times a week consisting of massages and rehabilitation care. She has also received an adapted pair of shoes to ease her mobility.

Francine is grateful for the support she received: *“Before, I was very unhappy, I had sorrows, and I was very worried about the child's condition. [...] Before, my grandchild could not even move, she could not move any of her body parts. Today, at least, my baby can move because of the support that I am receiving. [...] My hope and my dream for this grandchild particularly is that she walks one day”.*



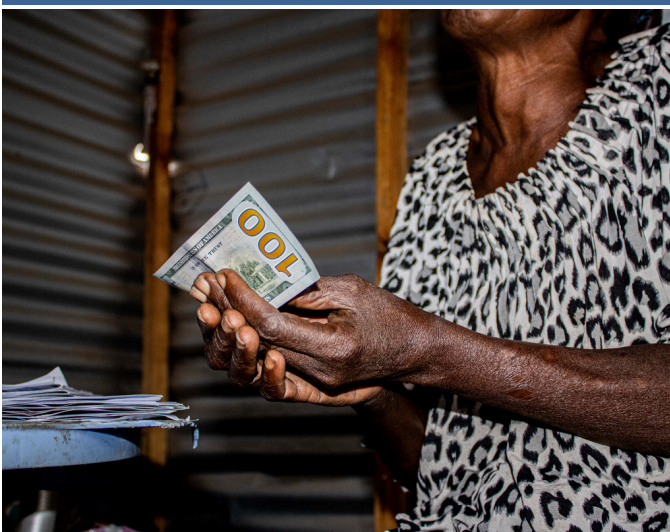
### Giving hope to vulnerable families through Livelihood support

In Tanganyika province, Concern implements livelihood activities to help people recover from conflict-related displacement and other - often climate-related - shocks. Mother of ten Maria Kasongo Mwabana lost everything she owned after her village was attacked and destroyed. Concern supported her to restart her market garden, providing an income for her family.

*“We have received seeds of groundnuts, maize and beans. After receiving this help, I now have food, money and something to work with. Thanks to this support, I can pay for the children's school fees. I have food at home. Now, the children are happier”*, Maria Kasongo testifies.



### Emergency protection response in North Kivu.



From January 24 to 28, 2025, the city of Goma was the scene of intense clashes between warring parties. These clashes increased the already critical protection risks. In response to this situation, Concern Worldwide and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are implementing activities to meet the protection needs of the civilian population in Goma.

Francine has benefited from individual protection assistance in the form of cash protection and dignity kits, and speaks of the change in her life.

*“I was attacked while looking for firewood in Rusayo. Bandits raped us (...) but when I arrived here at the Rusayo health center, I received medical care from MSF and then they referred me to Concern where I received dignity kits and cash. Thanks to this support, I won't have to go back to the bush to fetch firewood”*, Francine testifies.

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