

**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

## **SUCCESS STORY RESPONDING TO DISPLACEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)**

In North Kivu Province, Eastern DRC, more than 18 years of armed conflict have displaced hundreds of thousands of people and damaged homes and buildings. When conflict threatens their homes, internally displaced persons (IDPs) often must flee with little advance warning, taking few possessions. As the conflict endures, IDPs are often unable to return home, forcing families to settle in camps or with friends or family members in safer areas, and establish new lives with the few resources they have left.

USAID/OFDA works with partner organization Concern to address the immediate needs of IDPs and to provide displaced people with the opportunity to improve their earning potential. Since 2008, USAID/OFDA has provided Concern with nearly \$1.7 million to assist IDPs in Masisi District, North Kivu Province. To help IDPs replace household items, Concern distributed sleeping mats, blankets, soap, water containers, kitchen sets, clothing, and plastic sheeting to more than 13,000 IDPs as of early 2009. In addition to providing relief supplies, Concern implements cash-for-work and agricultural programs that allow IDPs to gain skills and resources that may improve their lives for years to come.

### **STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS BY IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Years of insecurity and neglect damaged the majority of Masisi District roads, hampering residents from traveling to hospitals and markets to buy and sell goods. In response, USAID/OFDA supported Concern to hire more than 2,700 individuals, including women, to rehabilitate important roads, bridges, and drainage



*A rehabilitation team works on the road between Loashi and Masisi towns, Masisi District (Courtesy of Concern).*

canals. Concern's cash-for-work road rehabilitation program provides conflict-affected people with an opportunity to earn income, as well as contribute to the community by restoring infrastructure. In addition to improving access for local residents, better roads also allow humanitarian agencies to reach affected populations with much-needed assistance. Security on the roads also improved, as increased traffic provides safety in numbers, and the clearing of overgrown areas left fewer places where bandits could hide. After observing the benefits of improved roads, one community rehabilitated an additional road on their own initiative with the skills gained through Concern's program.

Participants in the cash-for-work program received cash payments in return for labor, allowing them to purchase supplies, build houses, and pay school fees. Following the death of her husband, Pauni Sindja, a widow with five children, previously relied on the local church for food, clothing, and shelter. While Pauni sometimes worked in others' fields in return for seeds to eat or plant, she could not afford to send her children to school. By working for Concern's road rehabilitation project, Pauni earned enough money to pay

for school fees, as well as buy clothes for her children. Pauni said this was the first time she had ever been paid for work and hoped to have another similar opportunity.

## PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Forced to leave their homes and farms, IDPs often become dependent on others for food and other necessities. Through seed distribution and agricultural training, Concern enables IDPs to provide for themselves and reserve resources for the future. Concern distributed seeds, plant cuttings, and agricultural tools to approximately 2,400 people as of April 2009, including families hosting IDPs and displaced people with access to land for planting. Concern staff used community plots to conduct trainings on methods for growing a large, healthy crop and protecting plants from pests and diseases.

Njrina Vulini and her six children sought shelter with a host family after conflict forced them from their home. “Life is difficult for a displaced person,” she said. “When we were displaced we came with nothing, but the seeds we received from Concern mean that I can work and provide food for my family.” Njrina was able to plant her seeds on land rented from a neighbor in return for a share of the harvest. “I spend most of the day in the fields,” she said. “I try to weed my field as often as possible so I will get the best crop.” In addition to using the crops for food, Njrina plans to sell some crops to buy clothes and other items for her family and save seeds to plant next season.



*Kasiwa Margerite weeds her field of peanut plants grown with seeds and training from Concern's agricultural program (Courtesy of Concern).*

## LOOKING AHEAD

As ongoing conflict in North Kivu Province continues to threaten homes and farms, tens of thousands of IDPs remain in need of humanitarian assistance. In response, Concern is continuing their cash-for-work, agriculture training, and relief supply distribution programs to assist an additional 45,000 IDPs and members of host families through July 2010. With USAID/OFDA support, Concern provides IDPs with necessary supplies to meet immediate needs, along with the knowledge and resources to build a better future.