EASTERN CONGO INITIATIVE

2011 Year-End Report
A YEAR IN ACTION

*No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come.* — Congolese proverb

Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI) is the first U.S.-based advocacy and grant-making initiative wholly focused on working with and for the people of Democratic Republic of Congo. We envision a Congo vibrant with abundant opportunities for economic and social development, where a robust civil society can flourish. ECI believes that local, community-based approaches are essential to creating a sustainable and successful society in eastern Congo.

In 2011, ECI worked with nearly a dozen Congolese-led community-based organizations (CBOs) that are making measurable impact in improving the lives of children, women, farmers, families, artists, journalists, entrepreneurs and former soldiers.

ECI supports these organizations in two ways:

**Grant-making**
- Support Congolese-led organizations that provide vital resources including health, education, counseling and legal assistance to vulnerable populations and survivors of extreme violence, abuse and neglect.
- Support capacity-building of partners to build strong local institutions capable of implementing efficient and impact-driven programming to reach the most vulnerable populations.

**Advocacy**
- Promote comprehensive security sector reform to develop safe and thriving communities.
- Raise local and international awareness on key issues hindering maternal and newborn child health, and build support to address preventable childhood deaths.
- Develop policies and improve coordination among local and international stakeholders to create strategic economic opportunities, break the cycle of poverty and foster stability.

ECI believes that public and private partnerships, combined with advocacy driving public policy change and raising awareness, will create new opportunities for the people of Congo.

ECI is a catalyst organization, garnering attention and support for Congo and aiming to increase the quality and quantity of investment in the region. These efforts have resulted in additional public and private investment in Congo, contributing to hope in the region – hope that is creating an exciting new future for Congo.
Theo Chocolate is the only organic, fair trade and Fair for Life-certified bean-to-bar factory in the United States. The support of ECI and Theo enabled 450 farmers working in 19 collectives to cultivate and produce quality cacao in an environmentally sustainable way. As a result of training funded by ECI and Theo, over 200 new hectares have been cultivated, and crop yield for farmers has risen from 30 to 60 percent. The farmers, most of whom are women, have improved the quality of their cacao crop and are selling it at competitive and fair prices on the international market. “Through the ECI-Theo partnership, household incomes have effectively doubled, giving farming families the opportunity to take their kids to school and improving their access to healthcare,” said Atandi Isaka, Congolese cocoa farmer and cooperative member. The end result naturally leads to a healthier, more educated society.
The resiliency of the Congolese people is apparent in the success of our grantees in 2011.

**Centre Olame**
Utilizing radio programming, mobile cinemas and public education as a means for civic engagement, Centre Olame mobilized rural populations, with a particular emphasis on women, to engage in election education and demand for transparent processes. Centre Olame trained observers to monitor election irregularities and fraud, and to report findings to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), national government, local governments and the international community.

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**Forum of Ituri Women (FOMI)**
FOMI enabled rural women to participate in the public sphere and political processes. The organization aimed to increase the number of women elected to both national and local posts and to raise awareness of the importance of women’s issues in government. FOMI focused primarily on community civic education, literacy classes, voter education, the training of election observers and post-election advocacy to report irregularities.

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“Christine” at HEAL Africa. Kidnapped and raped at the age of 14, she became pregnant and developed serious medical complications. She was taken in by HEAL Africa, a hospital supported by ECI, and underwent seven surgeries. Now recovered, she is back in school and wants to become a lawyer.

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Erick Ildefonce Kangala. Orphaned at 2, Erick became a soldier at 13 and fought for six years before leaving the militia. “Before I went to battle, I didn’t do drugs, but I started when I went to the battlefield. I really suffered a lot psychologically and physically. At Let Africa Live (LAV), I was trained as a woodworker and a master carpenter. Once I had a trade, people in the community come to me asking for my services.” LAV’s vocational training enables former soldiers to find work and reintegrate into the community.

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**Un Jour Nouveau**
Un Jour Nouveau raised awareness and informed and mobilized religious communities using the power of media during the elections. They encouraged peaceful and active participation in the electoral process through media and education. Specifically, Un Jour Nouveau broadcast messages focusing on civic engagement, responsible election education and the role of accountable government on 15 radio stations.
Synergy of Women for Sexual Violence Victims (SFVS) and Research Center on Environment, Democracy and Human Rights (CREDDHO)

SFVS and CREDDHO worked with community- and faith-based groups to educate constituents about public budgets and the responsibilities of their elected officials in order to advocate more effectively for government action and change. The organizations specifically focused on training female leaders on voter’s rights education and the political rights of women, the electoral system, political leadership and the role of the justice system in the election process.

Mutaani FM

Through print, advertisements and radio programming, Mutaani rallied communities to advocate for free and fair elections. Mutaani trained journalists and worked in collaboration with other local partners to publicize smart messaging, challenge communities to vote based on competence and hold elected officials accountable according to their mandate. The organization also hosted a website with a Google map which detailed verified election irregularities. This website highlighted the importance of the community and civil society in the elections and monitoring the progress of elected officials.

Green House

Green House works to expand small- and large-scale agriculture production in Ituri and North Kivu to increase the economic capacity of low-income farmers and increase the availability of affordable vegetables and protein sources for the community. The organization also operates a seed bank, nursery and demonstration field and offers agricultural products for purchase by the local community. As a result, Green House improves farmers’ ability to generate income for their households and expands their access to basic services such as education and healthcare.

ICCN/Virunga National Park (Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation)

The ICCN works to reduce poverty through job creation and the production of eco-friendly energy sources. In an effort to slow the consumption of charcoal – a commodity that rebel groups often sell for profit – ICCN promotes a new type of fuel called Chardust, created from ashes collected from households and markets. ICCN’s work has created more than 100 jobs, promoting stability in the region and offering women in the community a sustainable source of income.

Sifa Maroyi

Sifa Maroyi has created a future for herself with the help of seamstress training provided by LAV, which enabled her with the skills to open her own shop. “Before, I couldn’t talk or smile because I was suffering a lot in my heart. When I found LAV, I realized life was going to be better. Now I feel good in my heart.”

At Let Africa Live, former child soldiers learn skills such as welding and carpentry. Microgrants help these young people invest in their own entrepreneurial businesses, paving the way for them to earn a sustainable income.
ECI uses targeted methods to communicate directly to select individuals who can help shape policies and action in the government, academic and private sectors. Our advocacy efforts pair robust scholarly research with authentic voices from Congo, shared via media and strategic outreach. We work to develop Congolese-specific solutions and to advocate for the advancement of the Congolese through collaboration with individuals and governing bodies in the U.S., Europe and DRC, as well as NGOs, corporations and private investors. In 2011, ECI's advocacy activities contributed to a number of key developments in the DRC, U.S. and around the world.

**ECI and DRC Elections**

2011 marked historic presidential and parliamentary elections in DRC. Leading up to and following the November 28th elections, ECI engaged a team of experts to provide local and international stakeholders with information, analysis and relevant programming. In addition, ECI made a number of election-related grants to support community-based organizations engaging and educating the public on the electoral process and citizen-rights. Focusing particularly on women and youth, this support encouraged the work of radio stations, mobile cinemas, women’s literacy classes and voter education programs.

ECI leadership, including Executive Committee member Cindy McCain and CEO Whitney Williams, witnessed the November 28th elections in eastern Congo and followed ECI grantees serving as members of the independent media and official elections observers. They visited five urban and rural polling stations together with ECI grantees trained in election observation, reporting and civic engagement. They witnessed an impressive display of the desire of the Congolese people to advance governance and their daily lives through democracy. ECI posted field reports on YouTube.
However, the election process was compromised throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo, calling into question the legitimacy of the results. In press releases and online articles, ECI has called for a strong response from the U.S. government and the international community.

A Landmark Analysis
One of the principle obstacles to delivering effective support to community-based organizations in DRC is a lack of precise information. There is a vacuum of data relating to organizations and their capacity to effectively meet the most pressing needs of their community.

Working with USAID, ECI filled this void in 2011 with an unprecedented Landscape Analysis of Community-Based Organizations across Maniema, Orientale, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

The picture that emerged from the Landscape Analysis is an eastern Congo full of many highly effective CBOs who are already in place and ready to flourish with proper funding, training and financial management. The full Landscape Analysis report can be found at http://www.easterncongo.org/about/publications/landscape-analysis.

ECI Election White Paper
Also in September, ECI released a technical paper, Urgent Steps Required: Technical Issues Threaten Free, Fair and Transparent Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Co-authored by Tony Gambino and ECI Fellow Mvemba Dizolele, the paper highlighted the challenges facing the November election and called on the U.S. and MONUSCO to intensify their efforts and engagement with the Congolese to re-establish the integrity of the election process. ECI ensured the paper reached the hands of key stakeholders through an aggressive and robust advocacy strategy in Washington, D.C., as well as a multi-tiered strategy with hard copies, email announcements and social media.
House Foreign Affairs Committee Testimony
On March 8th, International Women’s Day, ECI Founder Ben Affleck testified before the U.S. House Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights. He was joined by ECI Executive Committee Member Cindy McCain to discuss their recent trip to eastern Congo, speaking especially in support of the community-based organizations they met and on behalf of the women and children of eastern Congo.

Building Capacity for Peace and Reconciliation
With substantial support from ECI, the Congolese Coalition for Transitional Justice hosted an innovative conference in April to review a law drafted in support of the establishment of a specialized mixed court to try war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights abuses committed on Congolese soil since 1990. A delegation of 100 civil society leaders, government leaders and members of the international diplomatic community attended the conference and secured commitments from government officials to introduce a reformed mixed-tribunal bill in national parliament. After the recent breakdown of civil society in eastern Congo, this is a critical step in the creation of the rule of law, public safety and the development of a just and equitable society.

U.S. Special Advisor to the Great Lakes Region
One of ECI’s key advocacy goals for 2011 was the appointment of a Special Advisor to the Great Lakes region. ECI worked for more than a year through intense outreach and education to address the need for a dedicated U.S. government representative focusing on the Great Lakes region and, in particular, the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the final months of 2011, the State Department formally announced the appointment of Ambassador Barrie Walkley to the position of Special Advisor to the Great Lakes Region and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are proud that ECI was instrumental in raising the profile of this issue among stakeholders and among coalition partners, and expect that this position will go a long way toward improving the peace and security in DRC.

In April 2011, Ben Affleck and Cindy McCain appeared with Jake Tapper on ABC World News with Diane Sawyer and on Nightline. In sharing stories about progress in Congo, McCain told viewers, “These people have such incredible spirit.” For a slide show of images from McCain and Affleck’s February trip to Congo, visit ABC News.
Eastern Congo Initiative highlighted positive, inspiring stories from Congo throughout 2011.

**iPad App**
As part of ECI’s goal of keeping Congo prominent in the eyes of policy makers, investors and supporters, in September ECI released an iPad app that provides instant updates to the successes of Congolese CBOs. Updates from the field include videos, photos and stories highlighting the inspiring work of ECI’s grantees and partners. The free app is available online in the iTunes store.

**ECI in the News**
ECI remains dedicated to educating and informing the broader public on issues and developments in eastern Congo and the Great Lakes region. In 2011, ECI shared over 2,500 Congo-related news stories to subscribers of our weekly clips service and followers of our social media profiles, covering issues from gender-based violence to economic development to the national elections in November. ECI was also featured throughout the year in national television, print and online media, with coverage from news organizations such as Huffington Post, NPR, CNN, Politico and ABC News.
Increase the quantity and quality of investment in Congo

The well-being of the Congolese people depends on the attraction of philanthropic and commercial investors to Congo. In order to maximize the rewards of the resulting investments, we will continue to advocate for the resolution of issues that compromise the future of the region, as well as to catalyze an influential community advocating for a comprehensive U.S. and international strategy for eastern Congo.

Support the international community’s efforts to end preventable child deaths

The vast majority of child deaths are preventable and can be treated through low-cost solutions. ECI is working with U.S. and other international stakeholders across the public and private sector to support the efforts of community-based organizations in ensuring that Congolese mothers and children have access to basic healthcare services, technology and experienced practitioners.

Continued polling to gather data

In December 2011, ECI conducted a groundbreaking poll establishing a baseline of public opinion regarding critical issues such as security and maternal health. In cooperation with an international polling firm, ECI will facilitate three annual DRC polls across the entire nation to track economic, political and sector-specific data. The information we gather will empower ECI and DRC stakeholders to build policy decisions and direction based on actual Congolese opinion. To view the results, visit http://www.easterncongo.org/about-drc/infographics-and-facts.

Raise awareness of progress in Congo

The common perception of progress among both the general public and policy-makers has lagged behind actual steps achieved in Congo. CBOs have accomplished remarkable results, highlighting the most compelling outcomes created through programs funded by ECI grants.

ECI is the only U.S.-based advocacy and grant-making organization focused solely on working with and for the people of Eastern Congo. ECI is a 501(c)(3) organization registered in the United States. To learn more about ECI’s work or to support this work with an investment, please visit www.easterncongo.org.
To learn more or donate to Eastern Congo Initiative, visit www.easterncongo.org.