

OPEN LETTER TO DONORS TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

44 Congolese Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who have responded to humanitarian needs in DRC for many years, call on donors to significantly step up their engagement to meet the current needs of the Congolese population. The DRC donor conference should aim to raise at least one billion dollars, of which 25% should be allocated directly to local organisations, in line with commitments under the Grand Bargain.

Although the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated at the beginning of 2018 that 13 million people are in humanitarian need, the humanitarian community has not stepped up proportionally.

Despite this, Congolese CSOs have continued to respond to new and ongoing needs across the country. When the Kasai and Ituri exploded, the first organisations to raise the alarm and respond were local. In Kasai, the first needs assessments were conducted in the summer of 2016 by local organisations and the first response started in December 2016. Four months before the first international organisation set up in Kasai, local organisations based in the province were already distributing food, building latrines, raising awareness about hygiene, and contributing to the protection of thousands of displaced families. This assistance was financed by local organisations themselves through the contributions of their members. A similar dynamic has emerged in Ituri. However, the inclusion of these first respondents in the wider internationally led humanitarian response, remains weak and insufficient.

Strengthening the capacity of local actors is the best way to ensure that short term humanitarian interventions are linked to longer term development. Since the departure of MSF from Ituri in 2010, a local organisation has managed the medical centre and maintained the quality of care for victims of gender based violence, often without external funds. Local organisations have a legitimacy in the community and a long-term presence that allows them to address structural issues, to alleviate and prevent conflict, and to contribute to significant change over time.

There are many examples of success. Young girls sexually exploited by armed groups have been able to escape and reintegrate into school with support from local civil society. Young boys have been persuaded to put down their weapons and return to school. Women, girls, boys and men, victims of sexual violence, have been able to attain justice and take the lead in the fight against sexual violence in their communities as a result of legal aid and awareness raising about their rights. Other people in need have received support vital to their survival, allowing them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

These successes are however fragile and have been undermined by donor's lack of urgency and disengagement in 2017, when needs increased significantly. Today, many people in need receive no humanitarian support, and any that is received, is not enough, not quickly enough. At the same time, the civil society organisations responding to emerging needs do not receive the backing needed to scale up their response.

There are very few projects that link emergency and longer term responses, as humanitarian funds are not sufficient even to cover immediate needs. Strengthening and supporting the actions of local organisations is largely absent from the strategies of most donors and international humanitarian

organisations. Increased support to CSOs, given their local legitimacy, would allow a quicker, more relevant, and more sustainable response to the changing needs of the population.

In a tense electoral year, and in the context of the significant increase in needs in 2017, it is critical that donors:

- **Pledge and commit at least one billion dollars during the donor conference and fully fund the Humanitarian Response Plan by the end of 2018 so that the Congolese people receive a timely and appropriate response to their needs.**
- **Put strengthening local civil society at the heart of emergency response and resilience programming. This includes direct financial support to these organisations, building their capacity to respond, mentoring them, and ensuring that they are integral to planning and coordinating the response.**
- **Put in place contingency measures and sufficient flexible financing that include local CSOs, to respond rapidly to emerging needs.**
- **Develop funding strategies which facilitate a better link between emergency and longer term interventions and capitalise on the presence and expertise of local CSOs.**

List of signatory CSOs:

ACODET,	CEMEA,	GADHOP,	RFEDI
ADEDEFO,	CEVAPI	LIZADEEL/ Kasai,	SIKASH,
ADSSE	CEPROSSAN,	MOLONI TELEMA,	SMM,
AMOR-ONGD,	CODEMOR	MMF Nord Kivu,	SOFEPAI,
AJID,	COOPAGRI,	ŒUVRE DE DON	SOPA,
CADEFA,	COPROMOR,	BOSCO,	SOPROP,
CAFED,	DFJ,	PADI/ Kasai,	TDH,
CAFM,	DFJP,	PFNDE,	UPDI
CAPDI	DYFED	RACID	WWJ
CAPH,	DYNAFET,	RAPRODHOK	
CARITAS Luebo	EFIM,	RECONFORT ASBL,	
CEDIER,	FFC,	REFED,	