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Mobile Cinema—A Powerful Tool to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the DRC

Deaf people are among survivors of rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In June 2009, USAID’s partner Search For Common Ground (SFCG) screened a film called “Fighting the Silence” at Bagira, in Bukavu, South Kivu. Over 60, mostly Deaf people, gathered in the hall for the screening as an interpreter translated the film in sign language. After each sequence or episode, a SFCG animator asked questions about taboo topics (rape and witchcraft) developed in the documentary to spark debate and reinforce the messages raised in the film. The documentary demonstrated how rape has been used as a weapon in the conflict and a tool for dislocating and paralyzing communities. The film provided insight into

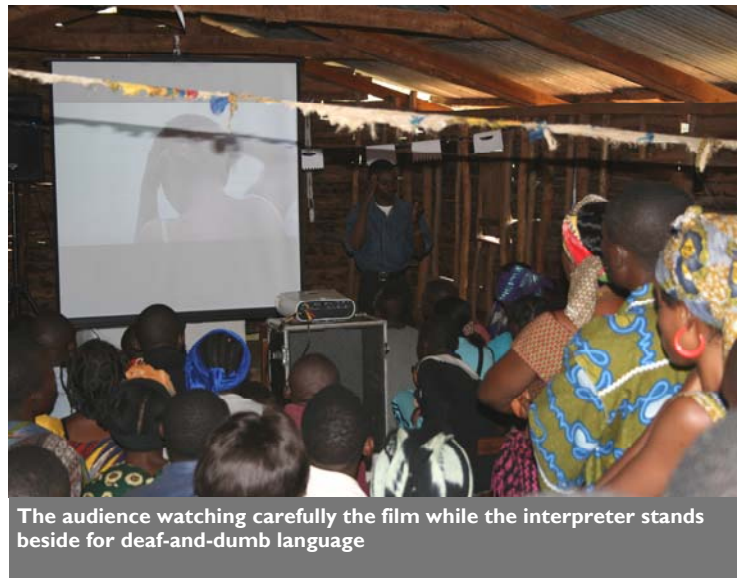
the consequences of sexual violence and steps needed to prevent it.

“Many years ago, I escaped rape by a soldier. Personally, I think rape came in to our community due to the war,” disclosed an old woman during the debate.

“Fighting the Silence” was produced in South Kivu and edited into four series in Swahili that target youth, the military, couples and the general public.

Since 2008, SFCG has used Mobile Cinema as a powerful tool to reach out to thousands of people in eastern DRC. Mobile Cinema has reached 70,000 people through 35 screenings in three territories of South Kivu. The Mobile Cinema is a component of a four-year project funded by USAID and implemented by SFCG. The project has several tools including radio program and television production, comic book production, participatory theatre for conflict transformation and mobile cinema.

Rape and other forms of sexual gender based violence (SGBV) are significant



The audience watching carefully the film while the interpreter stands beside for deaf-and-dumb language

Photo: Alain Mukelaba, USAID/DRC

challenges in the DRC. Each month, over 1,000 rapes are reported by humanitarian organizations, with an average of 36 women and children raped daily. Since 2002, the United States Government has been a lead bilateral donor to respond to severe and widespread GBV in the DRC. ■

Support for Improving Cassava Production

« Through a partnership with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), we sell at least 200 bags of cassava flour each month and we do not meet all the demand from Matadi” says Bibiche Mahungu Basila, the Coordinator of a non-governmental organization “*Groupe du Peuple de Dieu*” (GROUPEDI). Created in 2003, GROUPEDI is based in Kwakwa village 45 kilometers away from Matadi, Bas-Congo province, in the western part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). See on page 4



A Deaf expresses her point of view through sign language during a debate following the film

Photo: Alain Mukelaba, USAID/DRC

Researchers Find Signs of Eastern Lowland Gorillas Outside of Known Range in the DRC

The world's least known gorilla—the eastern lowland gorilla or Grauer's gorilla—survives in previously unexplored forests of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This finding was announced on June 10, 2009 by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) scientists.

According to the Director of WCS's Africa Programs Dr. James Deutsch, "the announcement that Grauer's gorillas inhabit forests in Itombwe more than 50 kilometers south of their previously known range gives hope for the survival of the subspecies and a renewed impetus for protecting this extraordinary biodiversity area in the Albertine Rift of Africa." Scientists also found indications of a wider range for chimpanzees in Itombwe than previously known. They have also discovered frog and toad species that are new to science and in the process of being named.

The eastern lowland gorilla lives exclu-

sively in eastern DRC and is a close relative of the mountain gorilla. The new gorilla areas were identified between June 2008 and January 2009 by a survey team.

The surveys were co-funded by multiple partners including USAID/Central African Regional Program for Environment, WCS, World Wildlife Fund, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Ape Conservation Fund.

The surveys were supported by the *Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature*. USAID has increased its support for great apes conservation in the region through the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service-administered Great Ape Conservation Fund.

The forests of Itombwe are recognized by conservationists as an important center



An eastern lowland gorilla

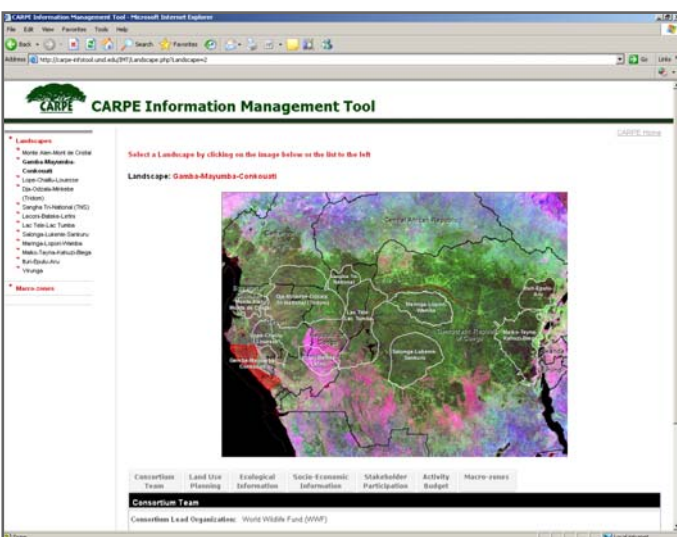
Photo: Deo Kujirakwinja/WCS

of biodiversity. They cover some 14,000 square kilometers. ■

CARPE Launches a New Web Site to Share Information

In June 2009, the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) officially launched a Web site called the CARPE Information Manage-

ment Tool. This site organizes information and reports from CARPE partners for its 12 landscapes and for macro-zones within each landscape including pro-



ected areas, community zones and extractive resource zones. All landscape programs information are made available to CARPE partners, stakeholders and members of the general public who may be interested in following the progress of this initiative.

The CARPE Information Management Tool contains information on the Landscape-level

documents, the consortium team managing each landscape, the land use planning documents, the landscape-wide reports from CARPE partners, the activity budgets for each landscape for each U.S. Government fiscal year, and other reports categorized as either Ecological, Socio-economic, or Stakeholder participation information. For more details go to <http://carpe-infotool.umd.edu/IMT/>.

CARPE is a USAID initiative aimed at promoting sustainable natural resource management in the Congo Basin. The Congo Basin forest is the second largest contiguous moist tropical forest in the world and plays a key role in securing the livelihoods of Central African citizens. The forest also provides habitat for biodiversity conservation and supplies vital regional and worldwide ecological services. ■

Participatory Theater Used for Conflict Transformation in Uvira-Luvingi

Over the years, Uvira has been an area often affected by conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Uvira is located 120 kilometers away from the city of Bukavu, in South-Kivu, in eastern DRC. The capital of the neighboring Burundi, Bujumbura is only 15 kilometers away.

On June 15, 2009, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a USAID partner, led participatory theatre sessions in Luvingi-Uvira. This activity adapts renowned participatory techniques to base scenarios on real conflicts and incorporate the audience's suggestions for their peaceful resolution. Surrounded by a crowd of people, actors perform sequences of skits with different themes including farming conflict, theft in farming, education of youth, and conflict in the village. On-the-ground participatory theatre is one of the many tools used by SFCG to reach the largest number of people for conflict transformation.

One of the skits was on education, an important topic for 18-year-old Sinamakosa Matata, a young student of pedagogy at the Mulangaliro Institute, located

at about 60 Kilometers North of Uvira. Mr. Sinamakosa was about to pass the state exams and when asked what he thought of the participatory theatre, Mr. Sinamakosa said "I am interested because performers remind me that as a student, I have rights and I must study to get good grades". Watching enthusiastically, Mr. Sinamakosa added "Another lesson learned here is that parents should provide the necessary food and fees for their children for school, especially before the exams."

in the east, as well as tensions around



Photo: Alain Mukheba, USAID/DRC

The participatory theater incorporates the audience's suggestions



Photo: Alain Mukheba, USAID/DRC

The audience watching carefully the performance

In 2009, 414,132 students were registered for the state exams that took place in June.

The participatory theater is a component of a four-year co-funded project implemented by SFCG in Kinshasa, North Kivu and South Kivu. The project uses media and outreach to support Democracy and Governance in the DRC, and USAID has provided more than \$3,300,000 in support of these activities. SFCG has approximately 50 staff members in offices in Kinshasa and Bukavu, with sub-offices in Baraka, Uvira and Moba, and collaborates with approximately 100 local partners in all provinces of the DRC. Faced with ongoing insecurity and human rights abuses, particularly

refugee return and internal displacement, USAID programs seek to renew relationships broken over years of conflict through communication and collaboration. ■



Photo: Alain Mukheba, USAID/DRC

Congratulations to **Alpha Ibrahima Bah** who is the new Education Team Leader at USAID/DRC. Mr. Bah has worked successively for USAID in Guinea, in Djibouti and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He began working for USAID in 1991 as the Education Project Management Specialist at USAID/Guinea. Mr. Bah arrived in the DRC in August 2008 where he assumed the position of Deputy Education Team Leader. Mr. Bah holds a Master's degree in Education from University of Manchester, England.



Photo: Alain Mukheba, USAID/DRC

Mr. Sinamakosa Matata watches the performance

Raising Public Awareness about Voter Registration in the DRC



Photo: Alain Mukaba, USAID/DRC

Awareness raising operation in the district of Mikondo, commune of Kimbanseke, Kinshasa.

USAID is funding two projects that aim to raise public awareness about the electoral register update and mobilize voters to register before elections. These projects are implemented through small grants to Christian Aid and local NGOs under Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI). A total of 165 Community Mobilizers funded by USAID are deployed

people about registration. These “hot spots” are located in markets, parking, bus stops and churches. In villages, Mobilizers sensitize community leaders including priests, pastors, teachers and nurses who are expected to continue raising awareness in their communities.

Statistics indicated that there are more than 27 million eligible voters in the DRC. The registration process will continue until August 20, 2009 and on August 2, 2009, the operation will begin in the rest of the country and last until September 2009. ■

Since June 2009, the Independent Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has begun registering new voters in the capital Kinshasa and in Bas-Congo province, in the southern part of the DRC. This process aims to update the country’s electoral register in preparations for the upcoming local and general elections scheduled for early next year and 2011 respectively.

in 24 districts of Kinshasa and 120 within the 10 territories and 6 municipalities of Bas-Congo province. Armed with megaphones and other tools such as flyers and posters, Mobilizers are visible in sites called “hot spots” to sensitize



Photo: Alain Mukaba, USAID/DRC

At a voter registration center in Kimbanseke, a young new voter providing finger prints before getting his voter card.

Support for Improving Cassava Production

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In collaboration with IITA/DRC, with funding supported by USAID,

GROUPEDI provides training in farming techniques, in cassava production to vulnerable people, widows, young mothers and unemployed people. Since January 2009, GROUPEDI has already covered some 100 hectares of land to cultivate cassava in Bas-Congo with support from IITA.

“In 2008, through a partnership with IITA, I attended – on behalf of GROUPEDI—a training session on cassava roots processing and the increase in cassava productivity at the National institute for Agriculture Studies and Researches (INERA- Mvuazi), in Bas-Congo province”, says Ms. Mahungu. “With cassava roots we produce unfermented flour for bakeries”, she continued. “When Congolese people con-

sume bread made with unfermented cassava flour, Congolese farmers are happy because it is a local product and it is very tasty,” notes Ms. Mahungu.

In June 2009, Ms. Mahungu was invited to Kinshasa by the Ministry of Agriculture to attend the official launch of the “Presidential Initiative on Cassava” aimed at stimulating and propelling cassava mass production in the country. She also attended a training of women on the manufacturing of recipes based on cassava flour.

Cassava is a staple food in the DRC. In recent years, with funds from USAID, IITA/DRC with local partners launched a program to rehabilitate cassava production in the DRC. The program introduced 11 high yielding cassava varieties and promoted good farming practices which led to an increase in cassava production. ■



Photo: Alain Mukaba, USAID/DRC

During the workshop, participants learn to make fritters from cassava flour



USAID/DRC welcomed **Donald Clark** who is acting as the Mission Director (MD) during the USAID/DRC Mission Director absence from post. Mr. Clark has 36 years professional experience. He served as Mission Director in Uganda, Senegal and Nepal from 1994-2007. He also served in Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Sri Lanka and Mali. Mr. Clark has a Master's degree in Business Administration from Dartmouth College and a Bachelor's degree in Arts from Colby College. Mr. Clark will be Acting Mission Director until August 16, 2009.



USAID/DRC also welcomes **Sara Rasmussen-Tall** who has joined the Program Office team and will serve as the Social Protection Team Leader. Mrs. Rasmussen-Tall worked as an Education Officer at USAID for the last ten years in Senegal and Mali. Mrs. Rasmussen-Tall holds a Bachelor's degree in Development Studies from Lewis and Clark College and has taken Master's degree courses in Business Administration and in Education from the Open University in the United Kingdom.



USAID/DRC bid farewell in July 2009 to Program Officer **Jeff Bryan** who served in the DRC since 2005. Mr. Bryan joined USAID in 2000 and was previously posted in Missions in South Africa, Angola, Afghanistan and the DRC. Before joining USAID, he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Gabon, Antigua/Barbuda, and Madagascar. Mr. Bryan left the DRC for an assignment to Chisinau, Moldova to serve as Supervisory General Development Officer. Mr. Bryan holds a Master's degree in urban planning from Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University.



In July 2009, Dr. **Emile Bongo** departed USAID/DRC where he served for nine years as the Infectious Disease Specialist. He moved onto his new position as the Presidential Malaria Initiative Advisor at USAID/Benin. Prior to working with USAID, Dr. Bongo was the Chief Medical Officer of Evangelical Hospital of Loko and the Chief Doctor of IME LOKO Health Zone in Equateur province, in northern DRC. Dr. Bongo holds a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Kinshasa.



After three years in the DRC as the Democracy and Governance (DG) Officer, **Kaya Adams** departed post in July 2009. Prior to joining USAID/DRC, Ms. Adams served as a U.S. Personal Service Contractor (USPSC) Democracy Officer in Rwanda and in the Central Asia Regional Mission. Ms. Adams is now the Regional Advisory in the East-African Affairs office in the Africa Bureau in Washington. Ms. Adams has a Master's degree in International Relations from Syracuse University.



The Country Desk Officer for the DRC in USAID/Washington, **Krista Desgranges** is currently on Temporary Duty in the DRC until September 12, 2009. Ms. Desgranges covers the DRC, CARPE, and Congo Brazzaville. Previously, she served in the Africa Bureau as Desk Officer for Uganda, Burundi, and Tanzania and has also worked at the Department of State, Department of Labor and United Nations/International Labor Organization. Ms. Desgranges holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Tufts University and a Master's degree in International Development from American University.

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