



**COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY IN THE DRC:**

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**EVIDENCE AND  
POTENTIAL**

STUDY COMMISSIONED BY FUND FOR CONGOLESE WOMEN (FFC)



By: Bernard LUTUTALA Mumpasi  
Professor at the University of Kinshasa  
Consultant  
[bmlututala@gmail.com](mailto:bmlututala@gmail.com)

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I wish to thank all those who conducted the interviews and helped to administer the survey in the field with great courage and commitment. Despite the fact that most of research was carried out during COVID—19 lockdowns, it was all conducted with great efficiency.

Finally, I must extend my thanks Mr. Fidèle Bikangi Nkiabungu, who worked ceaselessly to ensure that the organization of the data, from codification and data entry, to the production of statistical tables, was completed in record time, sometimes depriving himself of sleep to deliver the expected work on time.

**Prof Bernard LUTUTALA Mumpasi**  
*Consultant*



# INTRODUCTION

## The context

This study focuses on community philanthropy in the DRC. It is based on the observation that the population continues to face multiple precarious situations, but that they do not give up. Women, for example, launch resilience initiatives and multiply self-financing strategies in grassroot social groups, solidarity mutuals, village associations or cooperatives.

At the same time, the Fund for Congolese Women (FFC) provides grants and technical support to grassroot associations that campaign for women's rights in a challenging environment consisting of multiple political, economic, social, and health crises.

Its modest contribution should help influence the emergence of a culture of community philanthropy in the DRC that supports women.

## The working hypothesis

On the basis of this observation, the study formulates the hypothesis that the existence of these collective initiatives of resilience and solidarity constitutes an opportunity for the development of a community philanthropic culture, and to encourage an awakening of awareness on the importance of such grassroots philanthropy.

In effect, philanthropy is based on certain principles, in particular the fact that humanity has no color or identity, and that every human being must enjoy their rights, and society must do everything possible to guarantee their rights, either through socio-political actions or through charitable acts such as philanthropy.

## Research questions

The following research questions emerge from this background and assumptions:

- Are there specific practices or acts of generosity that support local development initiatives?
- How do they manifest themselves, and under what circumstances?

- What are people's beliefs about giving? (Do people think you have to be rich to give?)
- What do they think about others who give?)
- What can be done to make this a sustained and lasting practice in our communities? (Is it possible to change local perceptions and to increase the number of people who believe in and commit to contributing to actions for the collective interest of those most in need, but without the notion of any gain or benefit in return?)

The results of this research are aimed at understanding and highlighting systems of community philanthropy that already exist: who gives, how, and why? Who doesn't give and why don't they?

## General objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to demonstrate the existence or otherwise of a culture of community philanthropy and to formulate potential strategies to establish a model that aligns with, and supports, local realities.

## Specific objectives

1. To take an inventory of existing practices or acts of generosity in the context of the selected provinces;
2. To identify the opinions that communities and their leaders have of community philanthropy and the factors that would promote the sustainability of good practices in the behavior of local populations;
3. To identify possible strategies or models of community philanthropy based on the information gathered.



## STUDY METHODOLOGY

The data for this study came from a survey that we carried out among 537 philanthropic institutions and 487 beneficiaries of community philanthropy in the cities of Kinshasa, Goma (North Kivu), and Bunia (Ituri).

These places were chosen because:

1) They have been affected by various epidemics (Cholera, Ebola, Covid-19), as well as by natural disasters and armed conflicts. People's lives have been frequently affected by shocks and brutal disruptions including killings, looting, violence (particularly gender-based), and massive population displacements. Such contexts might warrant the existence of practices or, even more broadly, of a culture of community philanthropy including the use of regular contributions to alleviate the suffering of victims (whether internally displaced, raped, victims of burned houses, child beggars in the street, prostituted girls) and promote the return of peace;

2) Solidarity models (cooperatives, village associations) might already exist, created by those affected as a means of building resistance or fostering resilience however uncertain, let alone sustainable, in the given situation.

These people or groups of people might be willing to extend their form of solidarity into more organized philanthropic actions.

3) The communities constitute a diversity of people from different social classes and backgrounds, including community leaders, private sector groups, intellectuals, heads of CSOs and religious denominations, who can potentially play a role in sensitizing, mobilizing, and raising the awareness of the local population.

The type of data to be collected, as well as data sources and collection techniques, were specified for each research question.

Two main collection techniques were used: individual interviews and desk research (Table 1).





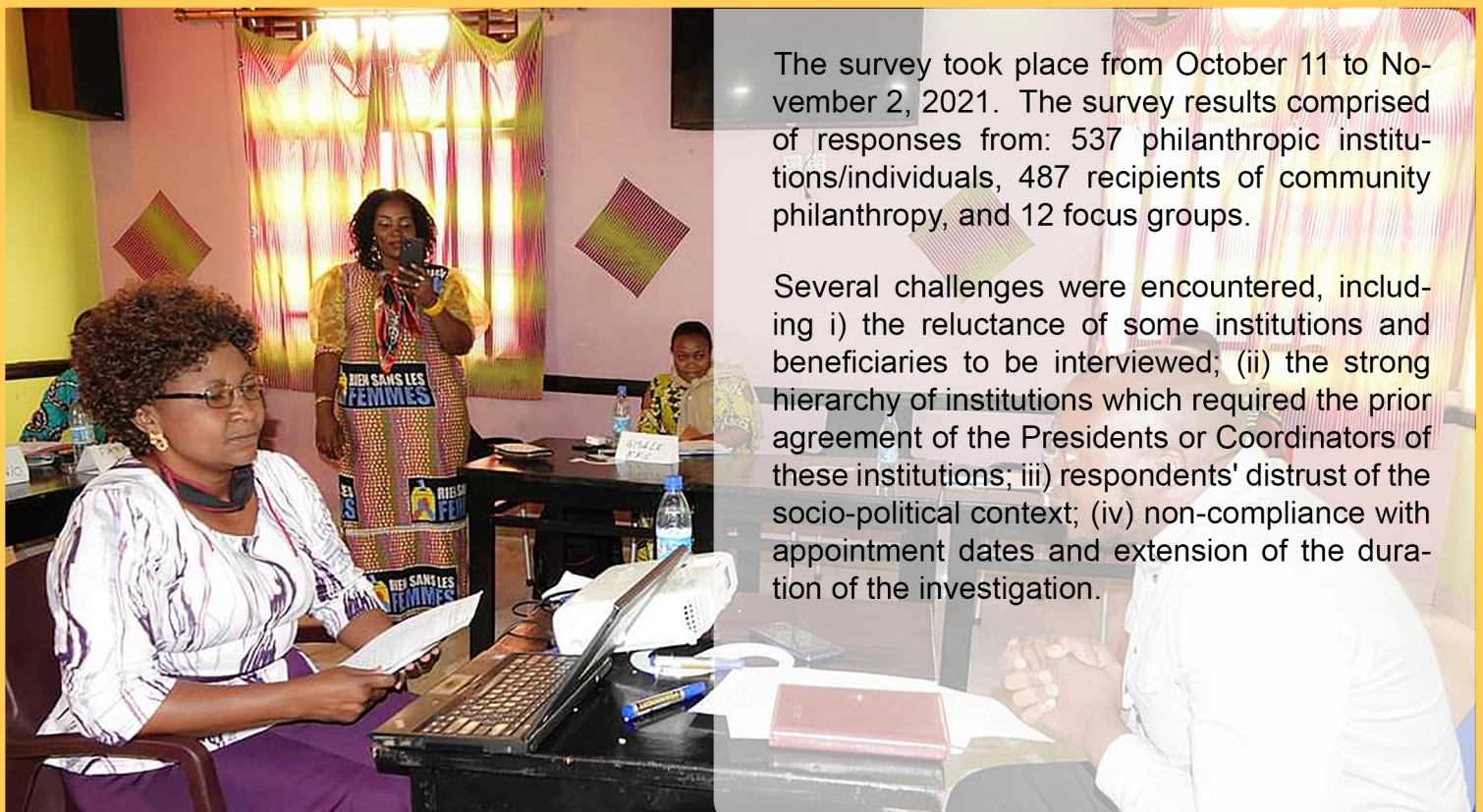
**Table 1: Framework for survey questionnaires**

<b>Research questions (See Terms of Reference)</b>	<b>Data to collect</b>	<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Collection techniques</b>
Are there practices or acts of spontaneous generosity that support local development initiatives (LDIs)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding sources for LDIs</li> <li>• Amounts of donations received</li> <li>• Organizations/individuals who made the donations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of LDIs</li> <li>• Ministries of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action, and National Solidarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
The term "philanthropy" is a Western term. Is there another name to describe the act of giving, to help others, or to improve collective conditions?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders of LDI who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
What are some of perceptions that exist of social practices or even participation in community development such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of material goods such as food for weddings, funerals, cases of illness.</li> <li>• A local contribution for the construction of a school, a health center, a football field, etc.</li> <li>• A contribution from a traditional chief who gives land, the people who bring sand, the women who draw water, etc.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders of LDI who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
Who are these philanthropic people or institutions? How can they be characterized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature and socio-demographic characteristics of philanthropic institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
What motivates people to give?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivations of community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
What can be done to make philanthropy a sustained practice in our communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms of collective appropriation of philanthropy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>• Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
Have these individuals ever belonged to, or do they currently belong to, cooperatives or village associations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership (or not) of cooperatives or village associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>
How do the practices of philanthropy manifest themselves?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of donations made by community philanthropists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>• Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews</li> <li>• Desk research</li> </ul>



How does the public perceive donations or acts of philanthropy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinions on the culture of giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>
How do leaders view donations or acts of philanthropy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinions on the culture of giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political, religious, cultural leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>
What are the factors that promote a culture of giving?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factors that promote the culture of giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>
(How) can the existence of acts of generosity and solidarity at the level of communal initiatives develop into a culture of community philanthropy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philanthropists belonging to charitable associations</li> <li>Opinions on the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>
What would it take to raise awareness about the culture of philanthropy?	Opinions on philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual Interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>
What would it take to increase the number of people who believe in, and are committed to, contributing to actions of collective interest to those in need?	Opinions on the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals/leaders of philanthropic institutions</li> <li>Leaders of LDIs who receive donations / contributions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual Interviews</li> <li>Desk research</li> </ul>

The surveys were supervised by the heads of FFC beneficiary organizations in the three provinces. Interviewers (32) were trained by these supervisors, who themselves received online training.



The survey took place from October 11 to November 2, 2021. The survey results comprised of responses from: 537 philanthropic institutions/individuals, 487 recipients of community philanthropy, and 12 focus groups.

Several challenges were encountered, including i) the reluctance of some institutions and beneficiaries to be interviewed; (ii) the strong hierarchy of institutions which required the prior agreement of the Presidents or Coordinators of these institutions; iii) respondents' distrust of the socio-political context; (iv) non-compliance with appointment dates and extension of the duration of the investigation.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

## 1. Philanthropy: A Real Phenomenon

The study shows that the practice of philanthropy is a reality in the three provincial capitals. Community philanthropists and beneficiaries of philanthropy are found at all ages, and from a young age, among both men and women.

The average age of community philanthropists is 37. A significant proportion (4.3%) of people under 25 are already philanthropists. The highest proportion of philanthropists under the age of 25 is found among women in North Kivu. The beneficiaries of philanthropy are slightly older (46 years on average) than the philanthropists.

## 2. A dual-pronged phenomenon

Two standard models of philanthropy exist in the DRC.

The first is that of philanthropic persons/institutions who themselves initiate philanthropic actions and decide on the beneficiaries of these actions.

The second model is that of individuals/institutions that come to the aid of affected populations in response to requests made to them, either directly or via NGOs and other institutions.

In this second model, potential beneficiaries must have the capacity to formulate requests for assistance, and a database of philanthropic individuals/institutions to whom such requests and projects can be directed. A further requirement is the ability to manage properly any funds they might receive.

Furthermore, there is some confusion between philanthropy and development aid. Philanthropy assumes that philanthropists draw funds and goods to give from their own assets.

And the study shows that 95.8% of philanthropists surveyed do in fact derive donated funds and goods from their assets; the proportions for North Kivu and Ituri are 76.4% and 70.5%, respectively.

**Table 2: Why people give, according to donors**

	Kinshasa	North Kivu	Ituri
Humanism	x	x	x
Testify to the love of God / one's neighbor	x	x	x
Help the destitute and the poor		x	x
Assist women and girls	x		x
Help vulnerable people	x		x
Help orphans	x		x
Help people in need	x	x	x
Help the elderly		x	x
Alleviate the misery of people		x	x
Contribute to community development	x	x	
Help widows	x		
Strengthen the bonds between people	x		x
Fight against violent gangs	x		
Improve public health	x	x	x
Build the capacities of institutions	x	x	
Empower women and foster self-care	x	x	x
Fight against unemployment	x	x	
Get children off the streets	x	x	x
Support the schooling of street children and orphans	x		x
Organize training for people living with disabilities	x		
Promote agriculture for good yields		x	x
Alleviate the suffering of displaced people			x







### 3. A phenomenon dictated by the suffering of the population

The reasons that push people/institutions to engage in philanthropy are firstly the suffering and misery of the population, and secondly the quality of the projects that are submitted to the philanthropists. Philanthropy is a response to the fact that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population live below the poverty line, more or less abandoned to their sad fate by the Congolese state. Forms of community philanthropy make up for the complete lack of a functioning social policy (Table 2).

### 4. An expression of humanism and solidarity

Philanthropy is regarded as a desire to come to the aid of others, to do them good, especially those left behind such as the unemployed, neglected children, and those displaced by war. Philanthropy makes it possible to provide them with psychological support, to mentor, support and train them professionally, and provide them with the necessary capital to start a business.

It goes so far as to promote involvement

in improving the environment in which people live, and in providing them with essential goods and commodities.

It enables people to demonstrate God's love, to help the poor and vulnerable, to improve their living, working and social conditions, and to strengthen their own capacities.

### 5. A moral duty

The perception that the population has of philanthropy is that it is an obligation, a duty towards others who lack means, who are abandoned by the Congolese state.

It is an act that does not require wealth to be practised, but simply to demonstrate love of one's neighbor, a willingness to help, generosity, humanism, compassion, acceptance of diversity, solidarity, concern for peaceful coexistence and the fight against discrimination (table 3).

**Table 3: Perception of respondents on philanthropy**

	Kinshasa	North Kivu	Ituri
Philanthropy must translate into...			
• The love of one's neighbor	X	X	X
• Willingness to help someone in need	X	X	X
• Generosity	X	X	X
• Humanism	X	X	X
• Compassion	X	X	X
• Accepting diversity	X	X	X
• Solidarity between human beings	X	X	X
• Unity between human beings	X		X
• The concern for a peaceful cohabitation		X	X
• The fight against discrimination			X
Philanthropy must be done...			
• Through mutual aid and mutual support	X	X	X
• By sharing	X	X	X
• With openness	X		
• With honesty	X		
• By mobilizing funds for others	X	X	
• Through visits and support		X	
• By creating jobs		X	



## 6. Community philanthropy: a necessity, even an imperative in the context of military-political conflicts and gender-based violence (GBV )

In the context of military-political conflicts and continued outbreaks of violence, philanthropy provides means to i) rebuild social cohesion (Figure 1); ii) care for the suffering; iii) repair shocks and brutal ruptures; iv) give the damaged community something to survive on. In Kinshasa, the vast majority of people surveyed (79.5%) think this is absolutely the case.

In the other provinces, the answer is more nuanced. In North Kivu, only 58.9% of respondents think so, while 31.4% of respondents believe that philanthropy only partially provides the means to rebuild social cohesion.

The same trend is observed in Ituri with 54.8% of respondents who think so. How to explain that, in these two eastern provinces, respondents were somewhat hesitant about the fact that philanthropy provides the means to rebuild social cohesion?

It seems to us that the problem is not the capacity for philanthropy as such, but rather the understanding of how to rebuild social cohesion.

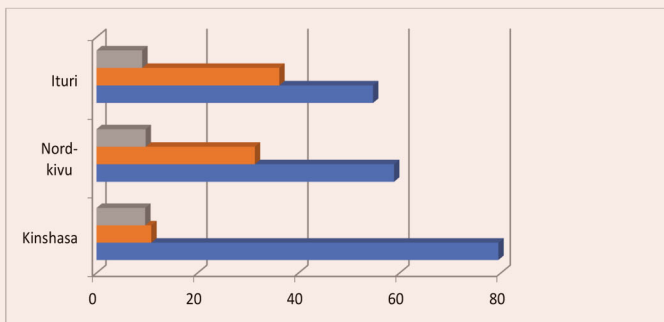


Figure 1: % of respondents who believe that philanthropy provides the means to rebuild social cohesion destroyed by political conflicts (Legend: Green: not at all, Red: yes somewhat, Blue: yes absolutely)

## 7. A practice that can have its roots in solidarity mutuals

Discussions in the focus groups showed that it is difficult for solidarity mutuals to transform themselves completely into philanthropic organizations because they are created by members for reciprocal assistance in order to meet their basic needs. For mutuals to become philanthropic institutions, this should be included in their objectives at the time of their creation.

## 8. A practice that can turn into a culture

Community philanthropy can take root in Congolese culture. This process should be carried out through the strategies identified here:

- Teach in primary schools (95% Kinshasa, 86% North Kivu, 80% Ituri);
- Speak about it in church (94% Kinshasa, 92% North Kivu, 87% Ituri);
- Speak about it within families (90% Kinshasa, 95% North Kivu, 90% Ituri);
- Deduct from taxes (41% Kinshasa, 29% North Kivu, 22% Ituri);
- Other strategies (35% Kinshasa, 47 North Kivu, 39% Ituri).

## 9. Obstacles to overcome

Two main groups of obstacles must be overcome to establish philanthropy: 1) individual obstacles (lack of will or financial means, selfishness, and a weak sense of solidarity); and 2) obstacles related to socio-political structures (corruption and mismanagement, political instability, and insecurity). structures socio-politiques (corruption et mégestion, instabilité politique et insécurité, etc).





**Table 4: The main obstacles to the practice of philanthropy**

	Kinshasa	North Kivu	Ituri
Individual obstacles...			
• Lack of will	X	X	X
• Lack of financial means	X	X	X
• Selfishness, lack of solidarity	X	X	X
• Lack of love for one's neighbor	X	X	X
• Hate and jealousy	X		X
• Misunderstanding of philanthropy		X	X
Structural obstacles...			
• Weak culture of philanthropy	X	X	
• Corruption, widespread mismanagement	X	X	
• Lack or reluctance of partners	X	X	
• Widespread unemployment, poverty	X	X	X
• No deduction from taxes	X	X	X
• Political instability, insecurity			X
• Weak political incentive	X	X	X
• Non-accompaniment of beneficiaries	X	X	X





## GENERAL CONCLUSION



The study shows that community philanthropy does indeed exist in the DRC. The Congolese state allows for its existence. Individuals and institutions dip into their pockets or their own funds or solicit funds from donors to help others. However, care must be taken to ensure that development aid granted by various institutions does not water down philanthropy, and vice versa.

Philanthropy is seen as a testimony of God's love, of love for one's neighbor. It is a manifestation of the obligation to help others. As such, one does not need to be rich to practice it. Philanthropy is also seen as an activity that fills a gap in the absence of a real social policy from the Congolese state.

Philanthropy is not only about helping poor individuals and vulnerable people so that they have food, water, and shelter. More than that, the beneficiaries of the donations in turn carry out actions of care, psycho-pedagogical supervision, awareness-raising, support, or professional training.

Philanthropy even allows people who want to start a business to have the means to build up capital or working capital.

However, opinions are divided on the question of whether philanthropy contributes to development. For some of the people surveyed, it can serve to hinder development if the donations that are made to "give fish instead of teaching how to fish." Philanthropy should therefore be oriented towards improving the conditions for the population itself to take charge of its own development.

The people interviewed believe that community philanthropy has a bright future ahead of it in the DRC. A certain philanthropic culture exists, in particular with the various mutual associations, which can become philanthropic institutions, provided that this is written into their statutes and objectives at the time of their creation.

The development of community philanthropy in the DRC is strongly desired and wanted. Three channels are to be used for its development: i) cultivate the culture of philanthropy from an early age in school; ii) teach it in churches; iii) experience it in families; iv) promote it by making it an alternative to levying taxes; v) compel the Congolese state to develop the culture of philanthropy, especially since this is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic.



## RECOMMENDATIONS



The main recommendations that we would like to make are the following:

1. Raise awareness and mobilize the population, especially the political class and businessmen/women, on the importance of philanthropic works, love of one's neighbor, the fight against tribalism;
2. Inculcate the benefits of philanthropy from an early age, in school, and in the family;
3. Generate real political will for the culture of philanthropy;

4. Build the capacity of beneficiaries on the effective management of donations received from philanthropy;
5. Make this study a tool for advocacy at the government level and sensitize the population;
6. Have effective coordination of philanthropic actions in the country;
7. Develop the spirit of sharing with community leaders, political leaders, and other decision-makers;
8. Organize awareness workshops on peaceful coexistence and living together.



## APPENDICES

1. Interview guide for focus groups.
2. Questionnaire survey for the of heads of philanthropic institutions.
3. Questionnaire survey for the recipients of community philanthropy.
4. List of structures granting and benefiting from philanthropic aid in the city of Bunia and its surroundings.
5. Directory of institutions, foundations, solidarity mutuals in Goma.
6. Mapping of financial support structures and beneficiaries.



**Not everyone can reach the summit in life,  
however if you get there, help those suffering for a better world.**