



Progress in the DRC

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By [ONE.Partners](#)



As Secretary Clinton continues her visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), FORGE is grateful that her trip is calling the world's attention to the millions of lives lost due to the horrific conflict occurring in the country. And yet, having worked with over 50,000 Congolese refugees for the past six years, FORGE's true hope for the Secretary's visit is that it will advance the public's understanding of modern DRC far beyond the prevailing perceptions of violence and shattered lives. We are optimistic that the trip will spotlight the tremendous opportunities for peace and development in one of Africa's most populous countries and will focus on the inspiring progress being made by the conflict's courageous survivors.

FORGE works with displaced communities in Africa, educating and empowering refugees to break the cycle of war and poverty through methods that address the underlying causes of poverty and oppression. By re-conceptualizing humanitarian assistance to include practical skill building and human capacity development, FORGE affirms the role of local citizens as empowered agents of peace and development rather than mere beneficiaries of international agencies. Our collaborative, bottom-up approach is both innovative and imperative, but progress towards our ultimate vision of peace and prosperity takes time.

Now in our sixth year of operation, we are proud to see growing examples of the returns on our investments in individuals. Earlier this week, we received a moving email that confirms our results. The following is from Antoine Ngeleka, the former head of one of FORGE's Computer Training Centers, who is currently getting his B.S. in Computer Science through FORGE's university scholarship program. He has some exciting news about developments in Congo, preparations for the 2011 elections, and how FORGE's programming is helping otherwise-ineligible populations join the reconstruction process.

Hi,

I hope all is well with you and everyone near you. I just wanted to share the compliments I received from my former students who repatriated last year and this year. The voter enrollment that officially started early June in Kinshasa to prepare the 2011 elections is starting in the rest of the country this week. The last time it happened in Congo was before the 2006 elections, and most of the people who got jobs with the electoral commission during enrollment were from urban areas. The same thing is happening this time too since it is a computerized enrollment and there are no computer training centers in most rural areas of the DRC.

And yet, I have received so far seven phone calls from former students to inform me that they managed to pass the test and got a job with the electoral commission of DRC! Two of these people are in Mwange (Moba territory), one in Pweto, three in Kirungu and one in Moba port. I believe that many more of my students were selected but haven't yet informed me for some reasons. One of them said, "I didn't know whether the knowledge and skills I acquired from [Kala Computing Center](#) had any value until I managed to defend your work at the test. I know now that I have an important intellectual property in me, thanks to FORGE and its staff".

This is a sign that FORGE was not wasting time and resources in its projects but was actually investing in people. The good seeds that FORGE was sowing are now producing.

May FORGE live longer,

Antoine NGELEKA, Bachelor Of Science in Computing, Cavendish University
Zambia

This beautiful testimonial is moving evidence of the benefits of FORGE programs in Zambian refugee camps. In order to capitalize on the momentum towards peace, security and reconstruction in DRC, let us all remember that the time to invest in the DRC is now. Just this week, FORGE secured official approval from the Congolese government to launch a base of operations in Katanga Province (southern DRC). FORGE's collective efforts will help communities design their own unique solutions to local challenges and will play a valuable and unprecedented role in rebuilding civil society in the DRC. As we continue to embrace the tremendous opportunities in Africa, we look forward to sharing many more stories of individuals triumphing over war and adversity in the coming months and years.

For more information about FORGE, visit <http://www.FORGENow.org> or email [info\[at\]FORGENow\[dot\]org](mailto:info[at]FORGENow[dot]org). Please join us in this movement—there are many simple ways for every one of us to contribute.

-Kjerstin Erickson, Vaughn Hester & Abby Speight, FORGE