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Supporting Returnees in the DRC

For years, Madeleine and her husband farmed cassava, groundnuts, and maize in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) Tanganyika Province, earning enough to support themselves and their nine children. Their lives changed in October 2017, when intercommunal violence broke out in Kabumba, Madeleine's village. The family's home and crops were destroyed and they fled.

Madeleine and her family made the difficult decision to return to Kabumba in August 2018. The village had been devastated and the population scattered. Madeleine and her family began anew, struggling to eke out a living until a local peace campaign encouraged other families to return to Kabumba in late September 2018. Local authorities alerted humanitarian organizations—such as Caritas and Catholic Relief Services (CRS)—to the plight of returnees, and the organizations began providing multi-sector assistance.

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) jointly support Caritas and CRS to provide returnees and vulnerable populations in the DRC with food, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. Caritas and CRS conducted a late 2018 needs assessment in Kabalo Territory, where Kabumba is located, that found the population urgently needed food assistance. In



Photo Courtesy of CRS

response, the organizations distributed two rounds of food vouchers that allowed households in Kabalo to purchase food from approved vendors in December 2018 and March 2019. The voucher amount was determined by household size.

Madeleine participated in the voucher program, which allowed her to procure healthy, sustaining foods for her family. With their food needs met, Madeleine and her husband have been able to restart income-generating activities—such as providing bike transport for vendors to markets, garden vegetable production, and small livestock farming—and to take care of other essential household bills. Madeleine attributes her family's recovered livelihood to the assistance provided by Caritas and CRS, saying that with proper storage they could now have enough food to last them six months.

The Caritas and CRS program, which runs from September 2018–September 2019, assisted 66,200 beneficiaries with food and relief commodities in the DRC in its first six months.

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