Greetings from the Democratic Republic of Congo!

Even after a year in which our Congo Initiative (CI) community endured some of our greatest challenges ever since CI’s formation, I still write with joy and thanksgiving as I share with you our 2018 Annual Report.

It is true that alongside our families, friends, and neighbors, our community has suffered through a year of increased insecurity, violence, and political turmoil, while also facing a devastating Ebola outbreak. Hundreds have died and thousands are now internally displaced. And though elections finally took place late in December 2018 (after two years of delay), the results were widely contested as fraudulent. In addition, Congo’s leaders took away our opportunity (1 million people in the Beni region) to vote. For many of us in Congo, feelings of frustration and discouragement weigh heavily on our minds and hearts.

However, amidst such challenges, I am reminded of God’s continued presence and goodness, marked by the stories of positive change that take place within and through the work of courageous young women and men who make up the CI community. Our 130+ staff members press on with incredible dedication and resilience. They continue to inspire and give hope to the people of Congo, who are caught in a seemingly never-ending cycle of conflict and poverty. But this would not be possible if not for the love, prayers, and support of partners like you who make it a priority to remember the Congolese people while much of the world remains silent.

I, for one, remain in awe of the success of our very first year of the NEXT 500 Future Leaders of Congo campaign that helped provide a scholarship for every student at the Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (UCBC) this past year! Then, due to the increased insecurity near our permanent campus, we were fortunate to secure a facility to serve as an alternate, temporary location for classes this academic year. Known as the “Town Campus,” this facility not only provides a safe place for students to receive a transformative education, but it is also increasing the visibility of UCBC throughout Beni.

I hope you find this inspiring report a testimony to what we can accomplish together. As this report looks backwards to illustrate the UCBC difference in the lives of students and the communities they serve, the impact our programs make on the most vulnerable, and the way we equip leaders in the community, it also looks ahead to what we hope to accomplish as we continue to build for a better future.

Thank you for standing in solidarity with the people of Congo during these challenging times, and for your sacrificial and generous commitment to Congo Initiative.

David M. Kasali, PhD
Co-Founder & President
Congo Initiative

ON BEHALF OF UCBC GRADUATES

“Our country is where it is, and is in great need of the men and women you have made of us; masterpieces for the development of our country because we now have the connection between intellect, spirit and action. At UCBC, we had a holistic training through courses, research, chapel, work program, but even more through moments of reflection and solidarity with one another. We extend our warm appreciation for the tireless work of Congo Initiative, and to you, our partners, for a just, more integrated and holistic transformation of Congolese society.”

- Aganze Mugurukar, President of the Class of 2018
THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY, 

347 STUDENTS RECEIVED A 
TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION 
IN 2017 - 2018.

122 NEW STUDENTS
80 NEW GRADUATES
586 TOTAL ALUMNI
37% FEMALE STUDENTS
THE UCBC DIFFERENCE

UCBC is leading Congo by modeling a different kind of education that is integrated and relevant for Congo’s challenges in the 21st century. UCBC provides a distinct education and formation that equips the next generation of leaders to create change in their communities. Thanks to many of you, a new generation is rising.

UCBC’s Agribusiness Center educates and equips students to become leaders in agribusiness. Students have unique opportunities through hands-on learning experiences. In particular, students engage Congo’s Coffee and Cocoa Sectors through service learning projects, internships, and demonstration plot activities. Students receive a comprehensive understanding of the agribusiness through academic coursework and then explore Congo’s Coffee and Cocoa sectors at each step of the value chain (i.e., production, processing, distribution and logistics, and domestic and international market research).

The Center’s work and partnership with regional coffee and cacao companies and participation in Saveur du Kivu (a global coffee conference in Bukavu, DRC), has led to plans to develop a coffee and cocoa lab in Beni. Students traveled to the Great Lakes Coffee Company in Kampala, Uganda to visit their lab and identify needed equipment.

As part of a Service-Learning project for their Public Relations course, UCBC Communication students participated in charitable activities including food collection and distribution to local orphanages. A total of 18 Service-Learning projects were completed this past year.

Each June, UCBC hosts a Creation Care promotion week, drawing attention to the most pressing environmental issues of our time. This year, seminars were held on the connection between environmental stewardship and the biblical mandate to care for creation as well as on the theme, “Fighting Plastic Pollution.” Understanding that words must be put into action, students and staff participated in a special work program at nearby Mayangose market. Students spent the day cleaning up trash and plastic, setting an example and teaching the community best practices in disposing of waste.

SHARING THE LAND

After completing its first three-year project in Beni, the Integrated Research Institute’s Sharing the Land (STL) project is now shaping land reform and administration across three provinces in eastern Congo. STL is training local workers to collect geospatial data, and collaborating with local government, customary chiefs, and other community stakeholders, in order to create a new land management system. STL uses participatory Geographic Information Systems (GIS) methods coupled with community organizing principles to address land conflict, promote land rights, while improving urban planning and rural development.

In consortium with International Organization for Migration, World Vision, Interpeace, and Search for Common Ground, STL launched a three-year program Together for Beni in 2018. The goal is to create a conducive environment for stability and lasting peace that will be essential for the socio-economic development in a region prone to conflict because an abundance of natural resources. STL will strengthen the technical capacities of the land administration by setting up a land information system, establishing a rural land use plan for land security and sustainable economic recovery; creating an inclusive committee to support the land administration, and developing a participatory boundary of Virunga Park.
Improving gender equality remains a priority at UCBC. This year, 44% of the new students who enrolled were women—a 7% increase from the prior year.

At UCBC, women find a community that encourages and supports their desire to lead. The student-led group Women’s Voices continues to promote gender equality in the community and inspire new approaches to addressing challenges women face.

Women in leadership roles increased from 12% to 30%.

The Advanced Studies Program (ASP) is a strategic initiative coordinated by the Faculty Development and Bilingual Affairs (FDBA) department at UCBC. The goal of ASP is to credential 25 full-time faculty with Masters and/or PhD’s by the year 2025.

There are now a total of 11 UCBC faculty and staff members participating in ASP and 8 UCBC staff members have applied to ASP. We are rapidly working towards our goal of credentialing 25 faculty members ASP participants Célé, John, and Mashauri traveled to the U.S. in July 2018 to participate alongside their peers for their Master’s in Bilingual Education at Messiah College.

UCBC’s Work Program is designed to help develop the work ethic of students and staff, provide an opportunity to engage and serve the UCBC and wider communities, care for the campus and creation, and create opportunities for English practice and learning.

17 work sessions were held in 2018.

The UCBC Library is one of the premier libraries in the region. This year, the library added 400 books, 100 of which are resourcing UCBC’s young law degree program. These books are highly contextual and directly connect with law courses. The library is so important to the community, that when the Town Campus was established, one of the first actions taken was to transport essential books to the new location.

“I’m thankful for Women’s Voices (WV) because it has made me a better me. Before joining the group I was shy, not able to stand and speak in public. It was hard for me to believe that other people can trust me...But because of WV, I was elected as the group’s president and I became free and started to speak in public and developed partnerships with other women organizations. I have gained confidence and now as a graduate, I feel ready to integrate what I learned into my professional life.”

~ Laetita Tsibola ('18) President of Women’s Voices
Children and at-risk women in Beni become increasingly vulnerable during times of conflict. This year’s violence had a profound effect on the people of Beni, especially children and women. Many who were already benefiting from our programs reported increased fear and anxiety as well as signs of trauma. Thanks to your support, we were able to provide ways for Congo’s most vulnerable to cope and find a sense of purpose and hope even amidst uncertainty.

Over 320 children received critical education through ABC Primary School and La Charité Primary School. This ever-important first step provides children not only with the foundation for future opportunities, but also establishes a sense of normalcy and hope while they witness the effects of conflict around them.

Church Renewal and Global Mission ministered to over 5,000 youth through 2-day conferences and held children camps during vacation periods to provide counseling and healing from psychological trauma incurred by recent violence.

Bethesda Counseling Center provided 43 children with child therapy using music, art, and play to provide them with a safe space and tools to process trauma.

Community trauma debriefing and seminars served 140 people, providing individual and families with information on healthy strategies to process grief and heal from trauma.

Bethesda Counseling Center's Happy Baby Program seeks to encourage healthy and safe child care particularly for farmers and their families. Many of these carriers were produced and purchased by a local cacao company for their farmers. The carriers were especially helpful to families fleeing the nearby conflict.

Amuli Amuazi, one of NEEMA Congo’s 216 beneficiaries, used to run a popular restaurant in Beni. But in 2003 he sustained life-altering injuries in a terrible car accident. He lost the restaurant while dealing with the costs of hospital care. Now, with the help of NEEMA and UCBC alum, Kizito Muhindo, Amuli has a thriving shoe and hat business. Moreover, he also trains and helps young people to make shoes and hats so they can pay for their school fees.

"NEEMA Congo has proven to me that as long as I live there is hope. [In] 2017 I received a grant from NEEMA and bought a professional machine that helped me launch my shop. This small business helps me sustain the needs of my family."

Bethesda provided 174 baby carriers through the Happy Baby Program, which seeks to encourage healthy and safe child care particularly for farmers and their families. Many of these carriers were produced and purchased by a local cacao company for their farmers. The carriers were especially helpful to families fleeing the nearby conflict.

"When we fled because of the insecurity here in our village, I put my baby in my carrier and was able to run the other side of the village for shelter."

- Mabele Kamabu, a farmer in Mavivi

Holistic Family Development (HFD) continues to provide the parents of La Charité students with job skills to meet the needs of their families. In 2018, CI purchased a 5-acre plot of land to establish an income generating project of cacao production to further support La Charité families. The land was purchased entirely through local initiative, namely family contributions and the proceeds from hand-sewn bags. Now 1200 cacao trees are being cultivated and an additional 1550 will be planted in 2019.

Six parents of La Charité students, displaced from their farming fields due to conflict, are also able to use this plot to continue cultivating beans.

When we fled because of the insecurity here in our village, I put my baby in my carrier and was able to run the other side of the village for shelter.”

- Mabele Kamabu, a farmer in Mavivi
While UCBC aims at equipping the future generation of leaders through a transformative higher education, CI’s other programs equip leaders across sectors to lead change in their vocation. Your critical support provides opportunities for courageous women and men lead change in the legal system, ignite economic development, and shepherd their church communities.

**ETHICAL LAWYERS**

Lawyers have become a source of distrust for many Congolese due to corruption. However, as part of our Justice Initiative, members of the International Christian Lawyers Association (ICLA), which grew from 150 to 250 lawyers in 2018, are transforming the image of lawyers by integrating Christian ethics into practice and demonstrating integrity in their profession.

In April, week-long workshops in the towns of Beni, Butembo, and Bunia brought together more than 150 legal professionals. Focusing on the theme “I am the expected change,” the training encouraged attendees to exercise their profession with personal integrity and Christian ethics, and serve as models to colleagues in hope of igniting wider change.

Over the past two years, and as a result of their relentless pursuit of justice, the ICLA has secured the release of more than 300 people who were wrongfully imprisoned!

**WAKISHA** (wah-KEY-sha: Swahili for “ignite”) is the business accelerator of Congo Initiative. Wakisha ignites transformational entrepreneurship in Congo by giving young entrepreneurs and leaders a chance to add value to the local economy by scaling their viable small businesses.

*75% (6 out of 8)* of Wakisha’s first group of entrepreneurs scaled their businesses by developing their work conditions, expanding markets, increasing revenues, hiring new staff, and improving financial and administrative management. For example, when Laetitia Mukangi’s company Maracujus began producing juice out of local maracuja fruit (passion fruit), there were only seven employees. Now, there are 20. The Maracujus team is also working on scaling their business in the future by planting enough maracuja trees in the “suburbs” of Beni.

Our long-term goal through Church Renewal and Global Mission is to teach, train, and equip pastors and lay leaders through multiple seminars at churches and Christian communities in Beni, Oicha, and Mangina. **88 couples** (pastors and spouses) participated in **18 training workshops** focused on themes related to servant leadership, pastoral counseling, peace and reconciliation, marriage and domestic violence, and more. An additional **40 seminars** dedicated to the theme of reconciliation were held throughout the region.

**CHURCH LEADERS**
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

As noted in the President’s message, due to increased insecurity very close to UCBC’s campus late in 2018, we decided to relocate classes for the 2018-19 academic year to a facility in the center of town. This is not a permanent move, and we hope to resume activities at our main campus sometime in 2019. For now, this alternate location has been an amazing provision, as it has demonstrated UCBC’s commitment to the community, despite extraordinary challenges. Students helped to paint and clean classrooms, beautify the grounds, and prepare the kitchen for serving hot meals every day. The town campus has also attracted new students partly owing to the higher visibility of being centrally located, and it has greatly boosted morale among staff and students alike. We had an intake of 86 new students this year, which is four times more than other nearby universities.

Over the past two years, Hope Tent has become the focal point of UCBC’s community and spiritual life. A gift several months ago from one of our foundation partners will purchase the remaining electronic and A/V equipment to fully complete this project in 2019. We are also anticipating the installation of a new 60-meter radio tower that will enable us to bring back Radio Tele Bilingue (UCBC’s radio station).

In July 2018, we completed the construction of four new classrooms and the main corridor that runs through the University Chapel and Community Center—the focal point of the UCBC campus. In 2019, we hope to complete construction of another four classrooms as well as a stand-alone toilet facility to serve over 1,000 people.

2018 FINANCIALS

**REVENUE**

$2,162,981

- Individuals ($1,560,757)
- Foundations ($408,938)
- Church Partners ($175,859)
- Other ($17,427)

**EXPENSES**

$1,484,040

- Programs ($1,162,869)
- Fundraising ($192,724)
- Management ($128,447)

HEALING FOR VICTIMS & CAREGIVERS

Since 2016, Bethesda Counseling Center has provided professional counseling services to the people of Beni. These include trauma and grief counseling for those impacted by violence and insecurity. When the Ebola outbreak hit in August 2018, Bethesda stepped in to provide critically-needed support to front line healthcare workers who are grappling with their own fears and trauma as they seek to care for Ebola victims. Partnering with organizations like the International Red Cross, Bethesda continues to serve over **36 healthcare workers**. In addition, staff (like those pictured above) go door-to-door, checking on individuals and families in the community who have experienced trauma, increased stress, or grief as a result of the Ebola outbreak and insecurity. As a result of their outstanding work, Bethesda is now sought after by a variety of organizations in the region for services and training in counseling. For example, Female Solidarity For Peace and Integral Development (SOFEPADI), one of the leading organizations advocating and defending women’s rights, now refers victims of abuse to Bethesda for trauma counseling.

WHO WE ARE

Congo Initiative is an envisioned community of Christ-centered Congolese leaders and global partners united for the transformation of lives and a flourishing Democratic Republic of Congo.

Congo Initiative educates ethical leaders who have integrity; invests in a sustainable vibrant Congolese society; and develops grassroots initiatives for peace, hope, and justice.

We are together—being transformed to transform.