

# Case Study Emergencies

## Marie's Story Democratic Republic of Congo



### Summary

In the east of DRC, more than 1 million internally-displaced people still need help to meet their basic needs. The fighting has destroyed the economy and infrastructure, as well as the social fabric of families and communities. Many children and young people were recruited into armed groups or became separated from their families when they fled the fighting.

Because of the fighting, thousands of people have had to flee their homes to seek safety in cities like Goma (capital city of North Kivu province). When large numbers of people move to flee the fighting, children often become separated from their parents. Alone, they follow groups of adults, as they don't know where to go. When these children are found, Save the Children places them in foster families and starts the long process of tracing their parents for an eventual reunification.

We've been working in the DRC since 1994. Our work includes identifying separated and unaccompanied vulnerable children, and demobilising children forced to join rebel groups. In the last year we helped 2,200 children out of armed groups, and reunited most of them with their families. We use networks within communities to identify children who are unaccompanied. We also work with families, educating them on how to stay together in an emergency situation.

Marie, 10, was separated from her family during last October's fighting. Our staff placed her in a foster family in Goma while her mother was traced and found in a small village in Mweso (Kitchanga). Marie was reunited with her mother on 28 May.

**We Save the Children  Will you?**

## Marie's Story

"My parents are from a village in Mweso but I was living with my grandmother in Kiwanja when the fighting started. I fled, like everybody. On the way I tried to find my grandmother but I couldn't. Then I followed a group of people along the main road. We walked for a whole day to reach Rubare. From there, I didn't know where to go. I felt bad being alone. I sat down crying. One of your people [a Save the Children community volunteer] found me. I told him where I'm from and why I was there. He took me to a family. I was scared because I didn't know these people but I quickly found that they were very nice. I stayed in that family for a week before I was taken to Goma to the family I'm with today."



"I've spent months with this family. I feel like I'm with my own family because everybody is nice to me. Merveille [an 8-year-old daughter of the foster family] is my best friend. She is like my sister. But I felt sad because I thought of my mother and I wanted to see her. Save the Children people come to visit me from time to time and provide me with clothes. Last time they visited me, they said that they'd found my mother and that they're going to send me back home. I'm happy to go back home, to my mother, but I'm also sad to leave Merveille. I would like to take her with me."

## What we do in DRC

We work in five of Democratic Republic of Congo's 26 provinces: Kasai Oriental, North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Kinshasa. Since the war, we've helped reunite thousands of children with their families. Working with local and international partners, we're getting children back to school, providing them with healthcare, and protecting them from exploitation and abuse.

**Marie, moments after she was reunited with her mother**



**People gather outside Marie's home to welcome her**

