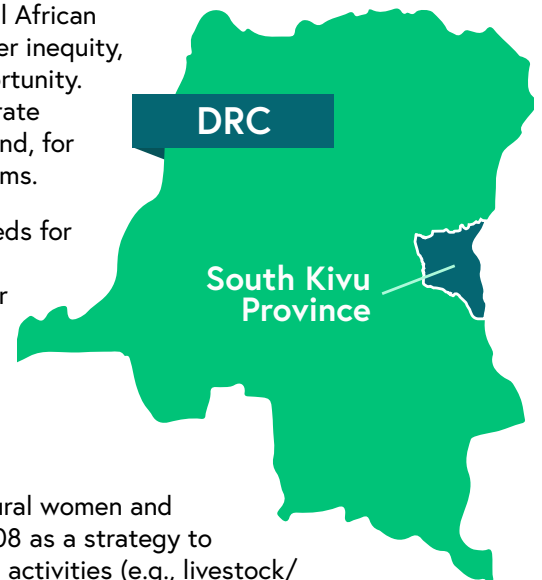


Women & Families Economic Empowerment

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a vast, under-developed Central African country of over 78M people. Political instability, extreme poverty, gender inequity, and human rights violations limit health, wellbeing, and economic opportunity. However, even in the context of these adversities, Congolese demonstrate resilience in building their futures, investing in family and community, and, for example, through active participation in locally led microfinance programs.

Rural communities of subsistence farmers struggle to provide basic needs for their families. As most lack the collateral necessary to access credit to increase production from traditional financial institutions, asset transfer and microfinance programs have gained traction, providing a viable way to address the connection between health, social, and economic wellbeing of individuals, families, and their communities.



Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Rural DR Congo

PFP is a Congolese-led livestock asset transfer program serving poor rural women and families in the South Kivu province of Eastern DRC. Implemented in 2008 as a strategy to promote economic stability and improved health via income generating activities (e.g., livestock/animal rearing, agriculture), the program includes training, peer support, and helps reduce other factors that can limit rural families from initiating and sustaining self-employment activities.

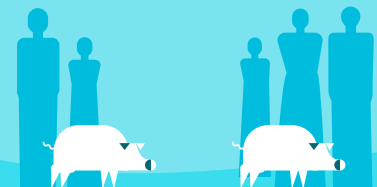
How PFP Works



Household participants agree to a loan of a female piglet, build a raised pigpen with locally-sourced materials, a compost for capturing animal waste, and nurture the young pig to maturity.



Additionally, participants agree to actively engage with other PFP participants in their community, attend group meetings, and monitor the health of their pig(s).



Once their pig bears offspring, the household reimburses PFP two piglets; one piglet to repay the original loan and one as "interest" on the loan to allow the program to pay-it-forward and expand to other households and villages.

Economic Empowerment

Funds from selling a living pig or butchered meat products can help fund essential family needs (e.g., school fees, healthcare, food, clothing) repair housing, acquire land for agricultural production, and invest in livestock or other business activities. Some have reported using money to support the larger community.

Why Pigs?

- Pigs are common to the area
- Do not need large amounts of space and eat virtually anything humans eat, reducing the need to travel
- Reproduce twice annually—averaging 6 piglets per breeding
- Men in the DRC typically control household decisions regarding the sale of goats or cows (as they are tied to the dowry system), women can make independent decisions about the purchase, breeding, and selling of pigs
- Culturally not taboo as in other nearby Muslim communities

Research Study to Evaluate Effectiveness

Johns Hopkins University has worked hand-in-hand with PFP's team to conduct a randomized, controlled trial to test the effectiveness of the program.

Study participants included:

832
households in
10 villages

Adults
15 years
of age or
older

84%
women led
household
involvement

74%
married

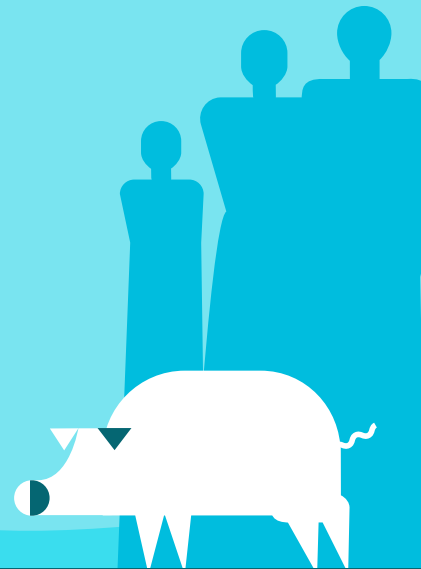
3 children
in home (on
average)

Over **63%**
had never attended
school

Study findings demonstrate: **Significant improvements** in household economic security & family health.

At 18 months, participants in PFP reported:

- ➔ **24% fewer** unpaid credit or loans
- ➔ **57.1% greater reduction** in symptoms of anxiety
- ➔ **8.2% greater improvement** in subjective health
- ➔ **6.1% greater improvement** in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder
- ➔ **Reduced** reported experience and perpetration of intimate partner violence among married/partnered women and men (*the difference was not significant between control and intervention groups*)



Positive Impact

Findings support the validity for large-scale implementation of sustainable, community-led livestock economic programs. In addition to increasing household wealth and status amongst participating families, results showed a positive effect on mental health symptoms, thus improving health in areas where women and families have extremely limited access to quality health and social services. Although not statistically significant, we found a reduction in intimate partner violence in participating households. This reduction demonstrates the potential of Congolese-led programs to improve relationships in the household between partners/spouse and reduce the impact of witnessing parental violence as a child.

Economic interventions like PFP implemented in conflict-affected rural areas empower families to overcome the lack of income opportunities and access to credit, as well as limited health and social support infrastructure. These challenges make it essential to engage with communities in developing locally-appropriate interventions that address the complex and inter-related economic, health, and social conditions rural families face in order to achieve lasting improvements and progress.

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