



OFFICIAL LAUNCH MEETING OF THE FARM PROGRAM, IN FAVOR OF STABILIZATION IN NORTH KIVU, RUTSHURU, AND MASISI TERRITORIES

**Rutshuru, July 18, 2018 – Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground, leader and member of the FARM consortium respectively, officially launch a new stabilization program in North Kivu: FARM/Tujenge Kwa Utulivu. Provincial, territorial, and local authorities, as well as representatives of beneficiaries and stakeholders attended the launch ceremony, which took place in the territorial administration hall in Rutshuru.**

The FARM program is funded by the Dutch Kingdom and will end in April 2021. This program aims to improve stability in communities of Bwisha in the Rutshuru territory and the communities of Bashali in the Masisi territory, by facilitating access to land and natural resources as well as the development of more efficient, inclusive, and resilient market systems. The program will use democratic dialogue, strengthen land governance, and develop sustainable means of subsistence for at-risk populations. The FARM program aims to reach 44,500 direct beneficiaries and more than 200,000 indirect beneficiaries.

Violent conflicts and massive population displacement have characterized the North Kivu province for more than 10 years, not only weakening market systems but also households' capacities to access food. This causes food insecurity to rise for more than 60 percent of the population. Two interdependent factors aggravate this situation in the Bashali and Bwisha chefferies: limited access to land and insecurity, noting that 70 percent of the population in these two chefferies live off agricultural production.

During the launch workshop, Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground informed participants about the FARM objectives and activities that are beginning at the end of the inception phase (May 2017 to April 2018). The event also launched an effective and constructive collaboration between FARM and stakeholders.

"The FARM program is aligned with the national and international strategies (I4S) aiming to stabilize the Eastern DRC. Thanks to this program, Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground support the Congolese government in its commitment to economic development and governance and basic services improvement by building local capacities," Whitney Elmer, Mercy Corps Director of programs in DRC, explained.

#### ABOUT MERCY CORPS IN DRC

Since 2007, Mercy Corps has been building the capacity of vulnerable people, affected by conflicts in Eastern DRC to help them overcome poverty. We respond to urgent needs by promoting rapid progression toward sustainable resilience. Mercy Corps adopts innovative approaches to transform the Eastern DRC. We analyze the roots of conflict in order to provide sustainable and ad hoc answers. We maintain solid partnerships with governments, the private sector, and civil society. We encourage good governance and engage with communities to help them find their own solutions and increase resilience, now and in the future. To date, we've changed more than one million people's lives in DRC.

#### ABOUT SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND IN DRC

Search for Common Ground began its activities in DRC in 2001. With offices in Kinshasa, Bukavu, Kalemie, Bunia, and Beni, more than 100 Search staff help build peace and democracy in DRC, focusing particularly on youth participation. Search uses participatory research, media (more than 60 partner radios in 26 provinces in DRC), participatory theatre, mobile cinema, community engagement, capacity building, dialogue around governance and democracy, and mediation.

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