**Boldline - Public-Private Partnerships (P3) Accelerator Proposal**

**Name of Organization Submitting Partnership**: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA).

**Full Address and Postal Code**: 2121 Virginia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20522.

**For Profit or Not For Profit**: U.S. Government.

**Industry Affiliation**: World-Wide Weapons and Munitions Removal and Destruction.

**Links to Biographies of the Participants or LinkedIn Profiles**: LinkedIn

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**Has your Organization Partnered with the U.S. Government:** Not an Official Partnership.

**What stage is your partnership**: New Idea.

**Problem Statement**

Following independence from Belgium, the DRC saw a mix of unrest and rebellion, secession, dictatorships, armed conflict, and neighboring countries controlling parts of the DRC. The country was the battle ground for the African World War (1997-2003) during which time nine African countries fought over the DRC’s resources, causing the deaths of more than five million Congolese. The war led to massive displacement of civilians and severe lack of health services.

Tragically, the world’s best coffee growing regions often overlap with landmines/UXO. The Lake Kivu region of the DRC is no exception. This was once a burgeoning coffee producing area, but enduring conflict put an end to a promising industry. Yet today a glimmer of hope is emerging in the shape of a coffee bean. DRC's coffee industry has the potential to bring peace, hope and better livelihoods to battle-scarred farmers living in the fertile highlands of the Lake Kivu region. Landmines/UXO not only kill or maim civilians, they also prevent farmers from accessing water, arable land and limit travel; therefore, impede farmers’ ability to bring their product to markets.

Lack of donor funding and ongoing conflict has forced many NGOs to curtail victim assistance (VA) activities in the DRC. Therefore, it’s essential that remaining resources are used wisely and that new creative strategies for meeting the needs of landmine/UXO victims is developed. Linking coffee with VA is an important strategy toward helping victims of conflict improve their livelihoods and to lead meaningful and productive lives within their communities.

**Idea**

Even after a conflict ends and the fighters have gone home, the threats from landmines/UXO and at-risk weapons and munitions remain. These threats foment instability; as long as men, women, and children fear to move about their communities due to the lingering threat of mines and UXO, a society can never fully heal and rebuild.

The State Department works with foreign governments and NGOs to deliver programs and services to help remove landmines and UXO from former battlefields and keep weapons and ammunition out of the wrong hands. However, much more work remains ahead - particularly in the form of VA. Linking coffee with VA is an important strategy toward helping victims of conflict. Therefore, PM/WRA created the Lake Kivu Coffee Alliance Public-Private Partnership with the Coffeelands Trust (a fund administered by the Polus Center for Social & Economic Development, Inc.) and the emerging specialty coffee industry.

The Coffeelands Trust is a fund that provides support for coffee farmers and their families who have been injured by landmines and UXO in conflict and post conflict regions. Throughout coffee growing regions, landmines and UXO can devastate the lives of coffee workers, their families, and their communities. The Coffeelands Trust is a vehicle for both the public and private sector to support rehabilitation services to the coffee farmers who often risk their lives to produce coffee to support their families. The Lake Kivu Coffee Alliance represents a joint venture between Eastern Congo Initiative, On the Ground, Higher Grounds and the Polus Center.

**Resource Requirements**

Eastern DRC has been called “a paradise for coffee” due to its perfect location for farming coffee: latitude, altitude and rainfall. However, coffee production has been decimated by conflict, corruption and lack of private sector investment. The coffee sector shrunk from 80 metric tons in the late 1980s to merely 20 metric tons in 2014.

The collaboration of the Lake Kivu Coffee Alliance partners will develop a comprehensive program that cultivates, processes and commercializes coffee grown in a region that is also heavily impacted by landmines and UXO. Many of these coffee farmers, particularly women come in contact with UXO while cultivating their land. This often results in fatalities or serious injury, including limb loss, blindness, hearing loss and psychological trauma

Resources are needed to procure and deliver prosthetics and orthotic components and materials for victims of conflict - both upper and lower limbs. Expertise is sought in “Universal Design” to assist in architectural planning of vocational training sites such as coffee mill, cupping lab and other vocational facilities that will increase job opportunities for landmine and UXO victims.

Additional resources are sought for landmine/UXO victims employed in the coffee industry from sources such as, the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) to provide technical assistance and agricultural support for coffee farmers to improve their coffee production and income. This includes depulping machines and materials, plants, fertilizer and technical assistance from experienced agronomists. Other types of training assistance could include business administration and management, organizational development and strategic planning.

**Best Potential Partners**

The Lake Kivu Coffee Alliance represents collaboration between civil society, the private sector and state institutions toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals in eastern Congo. It aims to foster peace and prosperity through the responsible economic development of Lake Kivu’s emerging specialty coffee industry.

In addition to current Coffee Alliance partners, potential partners would be U.S.-based coffee importers and exporters committed to delivering high quality coffee to its customers using a sustainable approach.

Related to U.S. coffee importers and exporters is Cooperative Coffee which is a green coffee importing cooperative committed to supporting and partnering with small-scale farmers and their exporting cooperatives. By importing directly from their partner-farmers, they do business in a way that creates a fairer, more transparent and sustainable system of coffee trade that directly benefits farmers, and their families and communities.

An ideal partner would be the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA). Established in 1982 by a small group of coffee professionals seeking a common forum to discuss issues and set quality standards for the specialty coffee trade, the SCAA is now the world’s largest coffee trade association with nearly 2,500 company members representing more than 40 countries and every segment of the specialty coffee industry, from growers to roasters and retailers.

Additional partners would be NGOs who have experience with developing countries to unlock their potential for growth in the agriculture sector, link farmers to markets, transform economies and create a path out of poverty, particularly smallholder coffee farmers, many of whom are women.

**Ideal End State**

DRC's coffee industry has the potential to bring peace, hope and better livelihoods to coffee farmers living in the fertile highlands of Lake Kivu. This region is heavily impacted by landmines and UXO. Many of these coffee farmers, particularly women come in contact with UXO while cultivating their land.

Given the DRC’s burgeoning specialty coffee market there is little doubt that job demand will increase. Helping victims of conflict to compete for these jobs in a country with 60% unemployment is a monumental challenge. However, a DRC civil society in partnership with the private sector that values inclusive communities that supports people with disabilities and victims of conflict can meet the challenge. Expanding markets and improving coffee production will improve livelihoods for communities impacted by past and continued violence within the Lake Kivu region.

The nature of this project with its multiple partners, including the coffee industry, and the fact that it is part of a much larger development initiative in the DRC ensures its long-term sustainability. It is envisioned that within three years of implementing the partnership, the coffee industry will financially support the needs of victims of conflict in the DRC. In addition, other large foundations have expressed interest in potentially providing additional funding to support the needs of landmine/UXO victims.

To that end, we hope that other like-minded donors and private sector groups join the United States in reinvigorating their support for victims of conflict in the DRC. Acting now would save countless lives and limbs.