

## Didier's story: from refugee to skilled carpenter

*"I have plans to open my own carpentry workshop one day. I want to give other people the same tools and skills that gave me everything when I had nothing."*

**These were the words of Didier from Kasai**, a region in DR Congo that experienced a large-scale rebellion in 2017, leading to nearly 1.4 million people being displaced, including 850,000 children. This led to an extreme hunger crisis in the region due to subsistence farmers being unable to plant crops, and civilians were slaughtered in the thousands.

Didier was working at a mill when a rebel group descended upon his town. He heard gunshots in the distance and looked outside to see the town governor's soldiers filling the streets. He rushed outside to take shelter behind the soldiers before the rebels reached him.

They were able to hold the rebels back long enough for the civilians to flee. Didier ran to the nearest town to take refuge, and after hearing that the rebels had overwhelmed the soldiers and taken his town, he made the desperate decision to flee his country and seek a safer life elsewhere.

He found a truck heading to the southern city of Lubumbashi, and then crossed the border into Zambia heading towards Solwezi. Didier was now totally alone and incredibly vulnerable, having lost everything. But everything changed when he found the Mentra Youth Carpentry Group. He already had basic carpentry skills from working at the mill, so the group agreed to teach him until he was capable enough to start making furniture on his own.

**Two years after fleeing his country, Didier is now a skilled carpenter** who is passing his skills on to other trainees in the group using tools that they received from TWAM. He is also able to make money selling the things that he makes, earning enough to support himself and his new family - his wife and child.

**This is the attitude that we see in so many of the trainees. It is not enough that their own lives have been transformed, they want to play their own part in reducing the suffering of the people around them. They see the value of tools and skills and feel called to share the gift they have received with their communities.**

