

Francisca Thelin

Founder, President, and Chairman of the Board

Born and raised in Dungu Territory, DR Congo, Francisca was the founding teacher of Minzoto School. Though she moved away from DR Congo in 1989 with her husband Kevin Thelin, Francisca travels to Dungu biennially. She remains close to the conditions, stakeholders and processes of civil society in the wider Dungu community. Because Francisca's family in the Dungu region suffered profound losses of life during the LRA violence, her commitment to improving conditions in Dungu is strong and personal. She founded Friends of Minzoto in response to the dire conditions, extensive suffering and pleas for help that she encountered in Dungu in 2010. At the time, Francisca was assisting author Lisa Shannon as a translator while Lisa was conducting research for her book *Mama Koko and the Hundred Gunmen* (February 2015, *Public Affairs*). In addition to English, Francisca is fluent in Lingala, French and Kizande, the primary local languages in Dungu. She has made numerous public presentations on DRC history, culture and the ongoing humanitarian crisis at universities, elementary schools, secondary schools, churches, and community educational events. Francisca has also served as a speaker for the Enough Project. She has nine years of experience as a community organizer and fundraiser through work on behalf of Run for Congo Women. Francisca brings to her work with Friends of Minzoto lifelong relationships with community leaders in Dungu and extensive knowledge of Dungu's local customs, community dynamics, and formal and informal structures of governance and civil society.