



## **PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : REPUBLIC OF CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)**

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## PROFILE SUMMARY

The Republic of Congo had been slowly recovering from a decade of political violence that left the country's infrastructure severely damaged and its people highly impoverished. Until March 2002, a tenuous peace was holding in the country, and the majority of the estimated 800,000 persons previously displaced by conflict had returned home. By 2001, estimates of remaining IDPs ranged anywhere from zero to 150,000 (USDOS, February 2001; USCR, 2 October 2001). However, at the end of March 2002, renewed fighting between government forces and *Ninja* militias erupted in the Pool region surrounding the capital, Brazzaville. In late May, the UN reported that at least 45,000 people were displaced, of whom more than 20,000 remained in the conflict zone, without any protection or assistance (UN RC, 24 May 2002).

### **Background and causes of displacement**

Congo has suffered intermittent civil strife since the country's first democratic elections brought Pascal Lissouba, a southerner, to power in 1992. Disputed parliamentary elections the following year led to violent, ethnically-based clashes between government forces and the opposition. While peace was restored by 1995, this was short-lived and full-scale civil war broke out in 1997. Lissouba and his prime minister, Bernard Kolélas, were deposed by forces loyal to Denis Sassou Nguesso, a northerner, who had the backing of Angolan government troops.

Despite efforts to restore peace to the country after the 1997 civil war, violence erupted once again in September 1998. Each of the three key players – Sassou Nguesso, Lissouba and Kolélas – relied on different militia that formed when the army fractured along ethnic lines: respectively, the *Cocoye* or *Zulu*; the *Cobra*; and the *Ninja*. But ethnicity was not the only factor fuelling the fighting: the lure of Congo's considerable offshore oil wealth was also a key issue.

By the time President Sassou Nguesso's government and rebel forces signed a peace agreement in December 1999, the two bouts of civil conflict had exacted a toll of tens of thousands Congolese dead and hundreds of thousands internally displaced. The situation of internal displacement reached crisis proportions during the 1998–1999 conflict, when various UN and NGO sources estimated that some 800,000 – 810,000 people were forced to flee their homes – most of them from the southern provinces of Pool, Niari, Bouenza and Lekoumou, but also from Brazzaville. The UN reported that several towns, including Dolisie (80,000) in Niari province and Nkayi (60,000) in Bouenza province were completely emptied of their populations.

Presidential elections in March 2002 – Congo's first since 1992 – saw Denis Sassou Nguesso win a landslide victory. Both Pascal Lissouba and Bernard Kolélas were declared ineligible to run for election under the revised constitution: both were living in exile abroad, having been tried and convicted in absentia for crimes allegedly committed during the civil conflict in the 1990s. Soon thereafter, government forces claimed that several military positions in the Pool region had been attacked by *Ninja* militias. In early April tensions between the two sides escalated into heavy fighting in the Pool region surrounding the capital. The UN reported that tens of thousands of people were fleeing into forests or seeking the protection of military posts.

### **Conditions of displacement**

During the 1998–1999 war, combatants on all sides committed widespread human rights violations. Amnesty International reported that women and girls were raped, and that people fleeing were used as human shields (AI, 2001). In this context thousands of IDPs chose to hide in the forests of the Pool region where they were completely without aid or shelter. As a result, these IDP populations were extremely vulnerable to death and disease. UNICEF reported in October 2000 that some 70 percent of IDPs were 'severely malnourished' at the height of the emergency in Congo. MSF confirmed that the principal cause of death during the war was malnutrition.

Immediately following the signing of a ceasefire at the end of 1999, relative stability was restored and a massive return of IDPs took place. Agencies estimated that as many as 500,000 to 600,000 IDPs returned home in the first four months of 2000. According to ICRC, return was so swift and widespread that the four remaining IDP camps in Brazzaville at the beginning of 2000 were already closed by April.

By the end of 2001, information about any remaining concentrations of IDPs in Congo had become increasingly sparse. Few public documents existed with any reference to IDPs, and news out of Congo centred on reconstruction and poverty eradication. However, various agencies believed that even before the new wave of displacements starting in April 2002, there may still have been as many as 150,000 IDPs remaining in the country. Most of the remaining IDPs were said to reside in Brazzaville and to no longer require life-sustaining assistance. At the same time, however, the UN reported that at least some of these IDPs were not able to find formal or informal work in the city. In addition to the residual caseload of IDPs from the 1998–1999 war, there was also a smaller caseload of some 30,000 people who were temporarily displaced from Mindouli, southeast of Brazzaville, in May 2001. These people were forced to flee their homes as a result of isolated clashes between army soldiers and armed supporters of the exiled former prime minister, Bernard Kolélas (USCR, 2 October 2001).

### **Humanitarian response**

During the conflict in 1998–1999, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Republic of Congo argued that while the country was experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, it was receiving the lowest level of emergency relief on a per capita basis.

Since that time – with the focus shifting more from emergency relief to rehabilitation – the government of the Republic of Congo has initiated various post-conflict projects aimed at reconstruction and poverty eradication, which have won some support from international donors. The European Union, for example, donated 750,000 euros just for the reintegration of ex-combatants and the collection of weapons in 2002 (bringing the total number of reintegrated ex-combatants to 8,000 out of an estimated 25,000).

While some optimism for the country's prospects could be seen in the UN's decisions to close down the OCHA offices in Congo in June 2001 and to reopen the WHO Africa Regional Office in Brazzaville in October, UNDP reported that overall lack of funding was continuing to hamper its efforts to support the country during the post-war recovery phase. It also meant that UN agencies were not in a position to respond adequately to new emergencies (UNDP, August 2001).

*Updated May 2002*

# CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

## Background to the conflict

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### Two major wars took place from June to October 1997 and from September 1998 to December 1999 (1999-2000)

- Analysts have pointed to struggle over country's natural resources as reason for civil wars
- Conflict in 1997 pitted three politicians against one another: Pascal Lissouba and the Cocoye or Zulu militia; Denis Sassou Nguesso and the Cobra militia; Bernar Kolélas and the Ninja militia
- Despite reconciliatory efforts, violence flared again in late 1998 and early 1999
- Republic of Congo continually destabilised during 1990s by situation in neighbouring Congo-Kinshasa

"The Republic of Congo (ROC) recently suffered two wars, from June to October 1997 and beginning again in September 1998. War spread to the capital, Brazzaville, in December 1998." (UN November 1999)

"About 10,000 people are reported to have been killed and about 80,000 displaced during a civil war in the Republic of Congo (Congo Brazzaville) that lasted from June to October 1997. After the war had stopped, clashes continued to occur, until an additional cease-fire was reached in November 2000, which brought back stability to the country. Since then, Congo Brazzaville, both its government and NGOs has been engaged in trying to recover the huge material and societal damage resulting from the war.

[...]

Analysts have interpreted the turmoil in the Republic of Congo as a civil war fuelled by the struggle for control over the country's rich oil resources. According to this analysis rival factions within the country's elite have tried to grab the financial revenues for themselves and their dependents. The conflict has pitted three politicians, each with their own militia, against one another. These are: Pascal Lissouba, who has his stronghold in the south and exerts military and political pressure through his Cocoye, or Zulu, militia; Denis Sassou Nguesso, who has his stronghold in the north and depends on his Cobra militia; and Bernard Kolélas, whose power-base lies in the capital, Brazzaville, and who relies on the Ninja militia. The regional divisions coincide with different ethnic loyalties, giving the conflict an ethnic dimension.

[...]

Apart from being a new phase in the struggle for access to oil resources, the civil war that broke out in Congo Brazzaville in June 1997 also represented a new phase in the turbulent process of democratisation that had started in 1990. The introduction of a multiparty system and the reshuffle of power resulting from the 1992 elections increased tension among rival factions within the country's political elite. Due to mutual mistrust between the major political factions and their inability to form strong coalition governments the democratic mechanisms installed in 1992 never functioned properly.

The three major factions began to form their own militias. In late 1993, clashes occurred between Lissouba's Cocoye and Koléla's Ninjas causing the death of between 1,000 and 5,000 people. In 1994 President Lissouba and the two opposition leaders – Sassou Nguesso and Kolélas – signed an agreement providing for the disarmament of the militias and the formation of a coalition government. This reconciliatory process failed as Sassou Nguesso's political alliance refused to participate in the government. A similar pact signed in 1995 failed as Sassou Nguesso hindered the dissolution of his militia.

The civil war of June-October 1997 broke out despite the signing of a tentative cease-fire agreement on July 14, brokered by the International Mediation Committee headed by the President of Gabon, Omar Bongo, and the joint UN/OAU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mohammad Sahnoun. The war came weeks before a new round of elections scheduled for July 27 but which, due to the violence, never took place. In October 1997 Sassou Nguesso's forces, assisted by Angolan government troops, won control of Brazzaville and the country's seaport city, Pointe Noire. Subsequently, Sassou Nguesso ousted Lissouba and was declared president.

[...]

After his military victory and inauguration as president, Sassou Nguesso installed a transitional government in November 1997. He declared himself committed to national reconciliation and revealed plans to secure peace and stability. In January 1998 he convened a forum consisting of 1,420 delegates representing most political parties, although Lissouba's political party (ERDDUN) refused to participate. The Forum approved the beginning of a three-year transition period, which should end in presidential and legislative elections in 2001. During this transition period, a new constitution should be written. A 75-member transitional council, elected by members of the Forum from lists compiled by the Forum and the government, would act as the transitional parliament.

The first stages of the plan seem to have been completed on schedule. In November 1998 President Sassou Nguesso inaugurated a constitutional commission charged with the preparation of a draft version of a new constitution. The final version was scheduled to be submitted to voters in a national referendum in 1999. However, the schedule extended over time, partly due to continued fighting. In August 2000, president Sassou-Nguesso announced plans to submit a draft constitution to the interim parliament by March 2001. Presidential and legislative elections seemed to have been postponed until after 2001.

In spite of reconciliatory efforts after the 1997 civil war, violence continued to erupt in Brazzaville and elsewhere in the country. During the autumn of 1998, Lissouba's and Kolélas' militias carried out guerrilla style sabotage attacks in southern Congo, mostly against civilians who were thought to be Sassou Nguesso loyalists from the north. Sassou Nguesso's security forces, for their part, carried out mopping-up operations in an effort to eliminate Lissouba loyalists. These actions reportedly lead to large-scale human rights violations. Human rights abuses led several international donors, including the European Union, to suspend all non-humanitarian aid in 1998.

Violence flared up again in December 1998 and early 1999, when the Cocoye militia of Lissouba seized control over the Moukoulou hydroelectric dam, cutting off power to Pointe-Noire. In the summer of 1999, when electricity supply to most regions had been recovered, the fighting concentrated on control of the railway connection between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Clashes in Brazzaville lead to heavy artillery attacks by the national army against militiamen and citizens supposedly loyal to Kolélas in the southern districts of the city and in the Pool region. Thousands of people were killed in these attacks, which were described by foreign observers as 'ethnic cleansing'.

Sassou Nguesso' security forces were reportedly assisted in carrying out the counter- attacks by Angolan and Chadian troops. Sassou Nguesso was also said to rely on members of the former Hutu-dominated army of Rwanda, who fled to Congo Brazzaville after 1996. These Hutu-militiamen are being paid as mercenaries. The Ninjas of Kolélas and the militia under control of Lissouba were said to enjoy active support of the Angolan rebel movement, UNITA. In fact, the conflict in Congo Brazzaville has a significant regional dimension, as other states in the region have their eyes on the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda. Sassou Nguesso continues to be supported by the Angolan government, which not only backed him in the war of 1997, but still had troops deployed in the country in the spring of 2000.

The situation in Congo Brazzaville was further destabilised by the situation in neighbouring Congo DR (Congo-Kinshasa). Rebels who used to have their base in Congo-Kinshasa were forced to leave that country after the Kabila take-over, adding to the tension and increasing the number of armed people in Congo Brazzaville. Moreover, Rwandan and Ugandan troops were also said to be present in Kinshasa in June 1997, shortly after the Kabila take-over, and some of these troops reportedly joined the fighting in

Brazzaville when clashes broke out there. The regional involvement, therefore, follows the logic of economic interests, as well as of political manoeuvring on the international level. Rwandan forces were said to be intent on reducing French influence in Central Africa, resulting in a Rwandan tendency to support those rebel forces in Congo Brazzaville that were seen as anti-French. Informal alliances developed between certain governments and rebel groups in the region. As a consequence, a shift in the balance of power in neighbouring countries could have significant effect on events in Congo Brazzaville. For instance, Angola's support to Sassou Nguesso has been jeopardised by the weakening of the Angolan government's position following the escalation in the civil war against UNITA." (EPCPT November 2000)

*For more information see November 2000 report of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation (EPCPT) entitled Congo Brazzaville: A Democratisation Process Scourged by Violence [External link].*

### **Republic of Congo stands as one of the poorest countries in Africa (2000)**

- Despite oil reserves, Congo is considered one of world's least developed countries
- With Human Development Index of 0.553, it ranks 135th out of 174 countries listed in UNDP report of 1999
- Congolese national debt reported at US\$6 billion

"With its 2.8 million inhabitants (1998) and despite its oil reserves, the Republic of the Congo is considered as one of the world's least developed countries and is classified as a low-income, food-deficit country (LIFDC). With a Human Development Index of 0.553, it ranks 135th out of the 174 countries listed in the UNDP Human Development Report for 1999. On 31 March 2000, the World Bank put the Congolese national debt at US\$6 billion. The high level of debt has forced the Government to adopt a series of austerity measures over the past decade, with dramatic consequences on the living conditions of the population.

[...]

The Republic of Congo is characterized by a high rate of urbanization. More than 70 percent of the population lives on just 30 percent of the land in the south of the country, while 60 percent of Congolese dwell in the main centres (Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, Dolisie and Nkayi). Agriculture employs less than 35 percent of the active population, involves a mere 2 percent of arable land and contributes to just 13 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP)." (WFP 19 September 2000)

### **Republic of Congo experienced increased stability between 2000-2002**

- Fragile peace held in Congo in 2001
- The government conducted a 'national dialogue' to draft a new constitution
- Congo River reopened to traffic in May 2001 after three years of closure
- Continuing instability centred around refugees from DRC
- Efforts to demobilise militia fighters began with signing of peace agreement in late 1999
- Hundreds of weapons have been handed over, and the government announced a reintegration programme for former militia members
- Some groups have refused to demobilize

"Congo-Brazzaville's fragile peace continued to hold during the first nine months of 2001. 'Peace has been restored in villages where war once prevailed,' President Sassou-Nguesso stated in September [2001].

The government conducted a 'national dialogue' to draft a new constitution. Groups opposed to the president refused to participate. The national parliament adopted the new constitution in September. Citizens are scheduled to vote in a referendum on the new constitution in late 2001. The government announced plans to form a panel to investigate disappearances that occurred during the violence of the 1990s. Efforts to clear landmines continued in the capital, Brazzaville.

The country's economically important Congo River reopened to commercial traffic in May after regional violence forced its closure for nearly three years." (USCR 2 October 2001).

"A measure of stability returned to the country after cease-fire agreements between warring militia were signed at the end of 1999. Around half those militia were estimated to have been demobilized during 2000, with many being reintegrated into the army. However, a proposed national dialogue involving all sides to the conflict did not take place. Although most of those who had been internally displaced by the fighting were able to return to their homes, the country was hit by a new refugee crisis in the north as tens of thousands of civilians fled the war in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)." (AI 2001)

***Process of demobilizing some 25,000 militia fighters has been on-going since late 1999:***

"Following the signing of two cease-fire agreements in November and December 1999, the process of demobilizing an estimated total of 25,000 militia fighters began. These included members of the *Cocoyes* (loyal to former President Pascal Lissouba), the *Cobras* (loyal to President Dennis Sassou Nguesso), and the *Ninjas* (loyal to former Prime Minister Bernard Kolélas). All those who surrendered and handed in their weapons were guaranteed an amnesty by the government, including those responsible for serious human rights abuses during the armed conflict.

In April [2000] in the northern town of Owando, 700 weapons were reportedly handed in by the militia known as the *Faucons* (Falcons), loyal to former Prime Minister Joachim Yhombi Opango. In July, 800 members of the *Cocoyes* were reportedly demobilized in the western town of Mossendjo. In December, the follow-up committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the cease-fire announced that 13,000 weapons had been handed in and that 12,000 militia fighters had been demobilized during 2000.

However, some groups reportedly refused to demobilize, including militia in the Niari region, traditionally a stronghold of the *Cocoyes*. Many of those who had been demobilized found themselves homeless and without the means to support themselves properly. In October, the government announced a reintegration program, part-funded by the UN, aimed at reintegrating 5,000 former militia members into civil society." (AI 2001 Annual report)

**Denis Sassou-Nguesso elected president (March 2002)**

- Sassou-Nguesso elected president for the first time despite holding power for a total of 18 years
- Main challengers for the contest either withdrew or were living in exile

"Denis Sassou-Nguesso has been elected president of the Republic of Congo (ROC) for the next seven years, having garnered over 89 percent of the vote, Minister of the Interior Pierre Oba announced on Wednesday evening.

This was the first time Sassou-Nguesso has been elected to the presidency, an office he first seized in 1979 and held until 1992, and then seized again in 1997 and has held until the present day.

'My dear countrymen, through this important process, which took place in an exemplary climate of serenity and tranquillity, you have affirmed your strong desire to live in a united, free, democratic and peaceful Congo,' Sassou-Nguesso said on Wednesday. 'You have chosen me, you have elected me by a significant

majority in this first round of voting, as you had promised me. But this victory is above all yours - the Congolese people.'

Former Prime Minister Andre Milongo, considered to be Sassou-Nguesso's main challenger, withdrew from the race on Friday, 8 March, claiming irregularities. He urged his supporters to boycott the elections, but cautioned against resorting to violence.

Meanwhile, former President Pascal Lissouba, who defeated Sassou-Nguesso in the country's last presidential election, held in 1992, and former Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas, were barred from entering the race by the revised constitution, which requires candidates to have resided continuously in the country for at least two years before the election.

Both are living abroad in exile, having been tried and convicted in absentia for crimes allegedly committed during civil war that plagued the nation throughout the 1990s. The six remaining challengers posed little threat, according to regional analysts." (IRIN, 14 March 2002)

### **Parliamentary elections marred by hostilities and irregularities (May 2002)**

- Re-runs necessary in several constituencies because of irregularities and hostility by angry voters
- Government estimates that only 20 percent of the electorate turned out to vote
- Second round of legislative elections scheduled to take place on 23 June

"Hostilities and irregularities marred the first round of legislative elections held on Sunday in the Republic of Congo, the government said.

'Overall, things did not go as smoothly as the Ministry of the Interior would have liked,' a government on Monday (sic), adding that in the nation's capital, Brazzaville, 'a number of irregularities that could compromise the chances of this round of voting being validated were observed in several districts.'

Fresh polling will take place in four constituencies in Brazzaville's northern suburb of Talangai, where angry voters, alleging fraud, ransacked polling stations and made off with ballot boxes on Sunday, AFP reported. There will also be a re-run in a constituency in Ouenze, another district in the north of Brazzaville, where people were unable to cast their votes because the logos of some candidates were missing from ballot papers.

In the port city of Pointe Noire and elsewhere, polling was delayed by organisational problems as people could not find their names on the voters' list or did not have a voter's card, Reuters reported. In the southern Pool region, where the government has been battling anti-government militias, voting was postponed in eight of 14 electoral districts.

The turbulence had a serious impact on voter turnout, with government estimates citing 'no more than 20 percent' of the eligible electorate having voted. However, it did highlight the fact that 300 women were among the 1,200 total candidates competing for 137 seats in the national assembly.

Since 1998, the ROC has had a National Transitional Council consisting of 75 non-elected members. The council was created to replace the bicameral parliament existing prior to the 1997 civil war. The bicameral parliament chosen in this election will replace the council.

The International Foundation for Election Systems says there are 1.6 million registered voters of an estimated population of three million in the ROC. Results are due to be announced on Tuesday. A second

round of legislative elections is due to take place on 23 June, concurrent with local and municipal elections." (IRIN, 28 May 2002)

### **Key events since the return to power of Sassou Nguesso (1997-2002)**

"The return to power in 1997 of Congolese president Denis Sassou Nguesso in a bloody coup marked the start of a long process towards democracy, which approaches its final phases on Sunday with legislative elections.

Sassou Nguesso, president from 1979 to 1992, saw his 10,000-strong 'Cobra' militia, backed by Angolan forces, overthrow his predecessor, Pascal Lissouba, in October 1997.

But civil unrest continued for more than a year afterwards, officially coming to an end with the signature of a ceasefire at the end of 1999.

The country was plagued by civil war for much of the 1990s. Between June 1993 and February 1994, the Congo was torn apart by factional fighting after Nguesso's opposition United Democratic Forces refused to recognize the results of 1993 legislative elections. An estimated 2,000 people died in the clashes.

Nguesso legitimised his military seizure of power when he was elected president in March this year, garnering nearly 90 percent of the vote.

Following is a chronology of key events since Sassou Nguesso proclaimed himself head of state for the second time in 1997.

#### **1997**

**Oct 15:** Sassou Nguesso seizes power after the victory of his forces, backed by Angola, over those loyal to Pascal Lissouba. The ousted president and his prime minister, Bernard Kolelas, flee the country. Between 4,000 and 10,000 people are estimated to have died in the capital, Brazzaville, in the ensuing fighting.

**Oct 25:** Sassou Nguesso proclaims himself head of State.

#### **1998**

**Jan 5-14:** A unity and reconciliation committee lays out a 'flexible' three-year timetable for the transition period before general elections are held.

**Dec:** New clashes break out in Brazzaville and spread to other regions. The army and Sassou Nguesso's Cobra militia, supported again by the Angolans, are pitted against the Cocoyes and Ninjas, forces loyal to Lissouba and Kolelas.

#### **1999**

**June 17:** The International Federation for Human Rights accuses troops loyal to the government of massacring between 5,000 and 6,000 people on the grounds of political allegiance, ethnic or regional backgrounds.

**Dec 16:** Amnesty announced for all rebels who lay down their arms. The exemption does not extend to Lissouba and Kolelas.

A ceasefire is signed between the army and militia leaders, officially ending fighting which cost thousands of lives in a year.

## 2000

**May:** Kolelas sentenced in absentia to death on charges of torture and illegal imprisonment in the Ninja militia's private jails.

**Dec 1:** Around 13,000 weapons confiscated and 12,000 militiamen demobilised since the end of the fighting, according to the ceasefire supervision committee.

## 2001

**March 17-April 14:** A period of national dialogue culminates in a proposal for a new constitution and a "Convention for peace and reconstruction".

**Aug 31:** Parliament orders a committee of inquiry to probe reports of people disappearing during the country's civil wars.

**Sept 2:** After adding a series of amendments, the interim parliament approves the new constitution, providing for a presidential regime which confers significant power on the president.

**Dec 28:** Lissouba is sentenced in his absence to 30 years' forced labour for "high treason". It is the second such judgement against him, following a 1999 conviction of 20 years' imprisonment for a plot to kill Nguesso.

## 2002

**Jan 15:** Non-governmental organisations in Congo urge the international community not to support the country's electoral process, which they allege is rife with fraud.

**Jan 20:** A referendum on the constitution --- the first step towards holding democratic elections -- wins the support of 84.5 percent of voters, but the opposition says the poll was riddled with irregularities.

**March 9:** All the major opposition candidates have either pulled out of the presidential vote, just one day away, citing electoral fraud, or have been prevented from standing.

**March 13:** Sassou Nguesso is elected president, with 89.41 percent of the vote.

**April 7:** Factional fighting since the end of March in the Pool region near Brazzaville raises concern that upcoming legislative and local elections may be derailed. The UN says the fighting has forced at least 15,000 people to flee their homes.

**May 10:** A coalition of some 10 opposition parties announces it will contest the legislative elections, the first round of which is due May 26.

**May 15:** The Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCDDI) calls for the vote to be delayed in Pool, still riven by fighting between government forces and a local militia." (AFP, 22 May 2002)

## **Causes of displacement**

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### **Recurrent civil war during 1990s forced hundreds of thousands from their homes (2000-2001)**

- From 1993, country suffered three civil wars in six years
- By 1999, violence had forced as many as 800,000 persons from their homes
- June-October 1997 civil war resulted in the displacement of approximately 500,000 persons

"Ethnic-based political violence has destabilized Congo-Brazzaville for almost a decade.

Following disputed elections in 1993, the country suffered three civil wars in six years. In 1997, President Sassou-Nguesso, a northerner, overthrew the country's democratically elected leader, Pascal Lissouba, a southerner, sparking another deadly cycle of north-south violence. The conflict featured a wide array of armed combatants: Angolan government troops; Angolan rebel forces; exiled soldiers from Rwanda, Congo-Kinshasa, and Central African Republic; alleged international mercenaries; and myriad militia groups allied with warring politicians.

By 1999, violence had claimed an estimated 20,000 lives and displaced as many as 800,000 people - nearly one-third of the country's 2.7 million population. The capital was in ruins, and what remained of the country's infrastructure was severely damaged." (USCR 2001, p. 66)

"The people of Congo Brazzaville suffered severely from the devastating consequences of the civil war. The fierce fighting in the streets of Brazzaville, including indiscriminate bombing of crowded neighbourhoods, caused massive population displacements. During the June-October 1997 civil war, approximately 500,000 out of the 858,000 inhabitants of Brazzaville fled their homes. Humanitarian sources said clashes in January 1999 led to 30,000 displaced people in Brazzaville alone." (EPCPT November 2000)

### **An estimated 30,000 persons temporarily displaced from Mindouli, south of Brazzaville, during 2001 (October 2001)**

- 30,000 persons displaced by clashes between army soldiers and armed supporters of exiled prime minister in May 2001

"In May 2001, isolated clashes between army soldiers and armed supporters of the exiled former prime minister, Bernard Kolelas, temporarily pushed an estimated 30,000 Congolese from their homes in Mindouli, located south of Brazzaville. No other significant population upheavals were reported during the January-September period." (USCR 2 October 2001)

### **Thousands of civilians flee new fighting between the army and Ninja militia (April 2002)**

- Fighting breaks out between the army and 'Ninja' militia at the end of March 2002, following the alleged discovery of government plans to arrest the Ninja leader
- Police search areas of Brazzaville for illegal weapons and former Ninjas, creating panic among residents
- Ensuing fighting in parts of Brazzaville and in the Pool region displace an estimated 65,000 people, most of them out of reach of humanitarian organization
- Many of the newly displaced find refuge within their extended families, already struggling to survive on the bare minimum

"At least 15,000 people remained displaced in Pool region and perhaps 50,000 in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo (ROC) on Wednesday as a result of panic provoked by continued fighting in various localities of the interior of Pool region and the Kinsoundi neighbourhood of Brazzaville, UN agencies reported on Thursday. They cautioned, however, that as most displacement sites cannot be reached due to insecurity, these numbers may be higher.

'Despite high-level liaison by the UN, it has remained very difficult to obtain reliable information in particular on security conditions and secure access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance,' UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator William Paton told IRIN.

In Brazzaville, tens of thousands fled the southern parts of the city (Baongo, Kinsoundi, Makelekele) on Wednesday night following low-grade bombing in Kinsoundi during the afternoon. Although people were reported to be returning in large numbers on Thursday, the population in Kinsoundi remained trapped, according to humanitarian sources, because the army is restricting movement in and out of the area.

'While the displaced are currently finding refuge within their extended families, this is creating a significant burden on populations already living, for the most part, with the bare minimum,' Paton stated. 'It is a concern that families may not be able to absorb the displaced for a prolonged period of time.'

Petrol is reportedly available in the capital, but in very limited quantities, with long queues at the city's fuel stations. Prices of local produce (fruits, manioc, vegetables) have increased, in some cases almost doubling. Numerous incidents of looting have been reported, and check points were set up throughout Brazzaville on Wednesday night by army, police, special forces and militias.

Although Paton noted that 'considerable efforts have been made by authorities to assure people that the situation is under control,' the UN security management team has recommended that all missions to Brazzaville be suspended until further notice.

Humanitarian groups, meanwhile, expressed concern that the Congolese government has adopted an aggressive approach to the current situation, favouring vigorous pursuit of military solutions rather than negotiations; the arrival of a special unit of Angolan soldiers in Pool region and Brazzaville has caused further concern among some of these organisations.

[...]

Hostilities erupted in ROC at the end of March, when several government military positions in Pool region were reportedly attacked by so-called 'Ninja' militias, according to official sources. Ninja representatives have countered that the clashes were provoked when they discovered government plans to arrest their leader, the Rev Frederic Bitsangou (alias Ntoumi).

The ROC government claims that the Kingouari section of Makelekele is an area with a high concentration of former Ninja militiamen who were demobilised following the peace agreements of 1999, which effectively brought years of repeated civil wars to a conclusion.

During the afternoon of Tuesday 9 April, Brazzaville police launched a sweep of these southern neighbourhoods in search of illegal arms and former Ninjas, whom they feared could be awaiting a signal from Ntoumi to launch an offensive in the capital. Shots were at some point fired by the police – 'harmless warning shots', according to officials - which led to widespread panic among an urban population already unnerved by reports of extensive rebel activity in interior regions west and northwest of the capital.

Last month, Col Michel Ngakala, the High Commissioner for the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in ROC, accused Ntoumi of opposing the demobilisation of his men and thereby constituting a threat to peace. Although Ntoumi has expressed willingness to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for his men to be reintegrated, negotiations between him and the government have thus far been unsuccessful." (IRIN, 11 April 2002)



# POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

## Global figures

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### **At least 45,000 newly displaced since the end of March 2002 (May 2002)**

- In the two months from the end of March 2002, humanitarian organizations estimated that at least 45,000 people became displaced, with more than 20,000 of them remaining inaccessible in the conflict zone
- 15,000 IDPs were estimated to have reached Brazzaville, where they were living with family members
- More than 4,000 IDPs were reported to be living in sites in Bouenza region, neighbouring the Pool region

**"At least 45,000 displaced:** Since 27 March 2002, when fighting began in the Pool region of Republic of Congo, at least 45,000 civilians have been displaced. Informal surveys conducted by UN agencies and international NGOs indicate that a number of these have been able to flee to safer ground during the past month. However, more than 20,000 still remain in the zone of conflict, unable to protect themselves or receive assistance.

15,000 have reached Brazzaville, where they live with family members. They have received assistance in the form of non-food items. Measures are being put in place by UN agencies to register new arrivals, ensure access to free health care, and monitor the nutritional status of the population.

In neighbouring Bouenza region, over 4,000 live in sites along the border with Pool. An inter-agency mission has recently taken place to assess the needs of those populations. They are in a precarious nutritional state and do not have access to health care. The UN is starting assistance to this region in the upcoming days.

**Conditions unknown:** Conditions for most of those remaining inside the most affected area are unknown and cause for mounting concern. Numerous witnesses have reached Brazzaville and testified to rapes and deaths. Many report growing hunger in some areas due to lack of access to their crops." (UN RC/HC, 24 May 2002)

### **Prior to new displacements in 2002, estimates of the numbers of remaining IDPs ranged from "none" to 150,000 IDPs (2001)**

- U.S. State Department reports that all IDPs have returned home
- Amnesty International reports that almost all IDPs have returned home
- USCR reports in October 2001 that 150,000 persons remain internally displaced in Congo

"According to U.N. estimates, the 1998-1999 conflict displaced approximately 800,000 civilians; all IDPs returned to their homes during the year [2000]." (USDOS February 2001).

"Almost all of the estimated 800,000 people who were internally displaced by the armed conflicts of 1997 and 1998 were reported to have returned to their homes by the end of 2000. Many were in poor health after

being forced to live in forests where food was scarce and medical care virtually non-existent. The homes of many had been looted in their absence." (AI 2001)

"Humanitarian agencies ended most emergency relief programs in early 2001 and switched to rehabilitation and development assistance. An estimated 150,000 internally displaced Congolese were able to support themselves and no longer required special emergency aid, relief agencies concluded." (USCR 2 October 2001)

### **Some 800,000 persons internally displaced at height of crisis (2000)**

"Of the 810,000 persons who were displaced since December 1998, 580,000 remain internally displaced, the majority in forested and other rural areas." (UN November 1999)

"A series of skirmishes between militias loyal to the former government and forces of the Government in power since the previous war erupted into a new conflict in December 1998. The fighting proved more devastating than any before, causing the mass destruction of infrastructure and the loss of a huge number of lives. Again, vast numbers of people – an estimated 810,000, or 30 percent of the population – were displaced internally and externally. According to UNHCR some 20,000 people fled over the borders into neighbouring countries." (WFP 19 September 2000)

"By the end of the war a third of the population - 800,000 people were displaced from Brazzaville, the Pool, Niari, Bouenza and Lekoumou regions." (ICRC 2001)

### **New displacement of some 30,000 persons from Mindouli in May 2001 (June-October 2001)**

- Clashes between army soldiers and armed supporters of the exiled former minister led to temporary displacement of 30,000 persons

"In May 2001, isolated clashes between army soldiers and armed supporters of the exiled former prime minister, Bernard Kolelas, temporarily pushed an estimated 30,000 Congolese from their homes in Mindouli, located south of Brazzaville. No other significant population upheavals were reported during the January-September period." (USCR 2 October 2001)

"A serious security incident occurred in Mindouli (Pool region) 19-20 May. 600 former Ninja (militia) gathered in front of the Mindouli district office to protest the wounding of a Ninja by the army the previous day. 3,000 government forces were deployed in response. Two Ninjas and 5 civilians were killed in the reprisals, and much of the town was looted. The town was emptied of its more than 15,000 inhabitants. The situation is now under control, although not all of the population has yet returned." (UNCT 8 June 2001)

## **Geographical distribution**

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### **Major population displacements from Brazzaville and the southern provinces during 1998-1999 war (1999-2000)**

- 230,000 inhabitants of neighbourhoods of Brazzaville (including 200,000 from Bacongo and Makelekele) were displaced towards the North of the town

- 150,000 persons from Brazzaville went into hiding in the forests of the Pool region
- Towns of Dolisie (80,000) and Nkayi (60,000) were entirely emptied of their populations
- Most affected areas were Pool, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Niari

"Over the past few months, combatants on both sides have raped women and deliberately wounded civilians. As many as 40,000 of civilians living in the Bakongo and Makélé-kélé districts of the capital, Brazzaville, have fled their homes, and 150,000 more have gone into hiding in the forests in the Pool region. Others have sought refuge in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." (AI 25 March 1999)

"Some 230,000 inhabitants of neighbourhoods of the capital city (including 200,000 from Bacongo and Makelekele), were displaced towards the North of the town, into the interior of Pool region, and into neighbouring DR Congo. Several towns, including Dolisie (80,000), and Nkayi (60,000) – the third and fourth largest in the country – were entirely emptied of their population, and completely looted and considered damaged. Four southern regions – Pool, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Niari – were most affected, together comprising most of the southern half of the country. The coastal region was largely exempt, except for the region's capital – Pointe Noire – which experienced an influx of at least 100,000 internally displaced persons." (UN November 1999).

### **IDPs in Brazzaville no longer reside in camps; still, many reportedly remain there without work (2001)**

- Four remaining IDP camps in Brazzaville were closed in April 2001
- IDPs still in Brazzaville no longer require life-sustaining assistance
- Still, many are from rural areas and are without work

"...; while the numbers of displaced requiring life-sustaining assistance have fallen dramatically, tens if not hundreds of thousands are not living where they lived before. The forced flight and looting caused people to lose savings, assets, tools – in short, their capacity to withstand shocks and respond to changing circumstances. At least one study shows that significant numbers displaced from rural areas remain in Brazzaville without work (formal or informal), and are anxious to have work, credit and training. Many displaced suffer from trauma. There are many more female-headed households." (UNICEF 2001)

"In April [2000], the last of four sites for internally displaced persons in the capital closed and the last refugees from Congo-Brazzaville remaining in Congo-Kinshasa returned home with assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)." (USCR 2001)

"In the beginning of 2000, the ICRC (in cooperation with the Congolese Red Cross) still gave assistance to IDPs in camps in Brazzaville. Due to the return of [most of the] IDPs, these camps were closed in April 2000..." (ICRC 21 November 2001)

# PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

## General

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### **MSF survey reveals details about flight of families in 1998-1999 (November 2000)**

- Of 191 displaced families surveyed by MSF in Brazzaville, 150 had been displaced from Brazzaville itself
- 41 families originated from Pool
- Median duration of flight was eight months

"A survey of mothers of malnourished children carried out in October 1999 in the MSF feeding centres in Brazzaville enabled us to retrace the movements of 191 displaced families, including 1033 people. Among these families, 150 (79%) had been displaced from Brazzaville since December 1998 when the fighting restarted. 41 (21%) originated from Pool and had sought shelter in Brazzaville because of the poor living conditions in Pool.

The median duration of flight was 8 months. 89 families (47%) returned to Brazzaville because of health problems (malnutrition and illness) and 60 (31%) after hearing that the situation in the capital had improved. 109 (57%) of the 191 families reported having been held in the region of Pool against their will, and 124 (65%) said that they had been robbed. In total, 92 (48%) families reported the death of at least one family member since December 1998. 139 people had died (13.5% of initial sample) of which 48 (35%) were children aged under 5 years. The main cause of death was malnutrition." (MSF 18 November 2000)

### **Many IDPs were forced to find refuge in the forests during height of crisis (October 2000)**

This year, it [UNDP] said, UN agencies in the ROC were able to deliver food when epidemics arose or when IDPs emerged from the forest after years of hiding." (IRIN 25 October 2001)

"At the height of the emergencies, 70% of the internally displaced persons (mainly children, women and aged persons coming out from the forests) were reported to be severely malnourished." (UNICEF 12 October 2000)

# PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

## General

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### **Helicopter gunship attacks on villages cause unknown number of civilian casualties (June 2002)**

- Witnesses report helicopter attacks on civilians in at least 10 villages
- Although Ninja guerillas are the presumed target of the attacks, indiscriminate heavy firing has been reported

"The systematic use of helicopters to attack villages in the Pool region of the Republic of Congo shows 'a wanton disregard for civilian lives', Bill Paton, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Brazzaville, has said.

'We have first hand testimonies from several villages of helicopter attacks on civilians. We have the names of ten villages we are sure of,' he said on Tuesday.

The military uses MI-24 helicopters armed with bombs or rockets, and always with heavy machine guns capable of firing 3,000 rounds of 23 mm ammunition a minute. No one can yet estimate the casualties the helicopter raids have caused. One casualty of the attacks, now lying in a Brazzaville hospital, his back lacerated by shell shrapnel, told IRIN how helicopters attacked his village repeatedly.

The wounded man, Mayala Fidele, from the village of Zandu in Pool, said he heard bombing at Matoumbou, a village about 10 km away at midday on 11 May. 'We hid in the long grass around the village,' he said. 'We saw the helicopters circle us twice, dropping bombs in the village and shooting at houses and into the forest.'

He was wounded when the helicopters returned on Wednesday and strafed the area. Mayala and his family said they never saw the Ninja guerillas, the presumed target of the attack on Zandu." (IRIN, 3 June 2002)

### **Both parties to the conflict committing human rights abuses against civilians, protests UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (May 2002)**

- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses concern at reports of indiscriminate military attacks on civilian populations, the rape of women, abduction of young men from IDP camps and at the humanitarian situation in the besieged town on Kindamba
- The High Commissioner calls on the warring parties to grant free and unconditional access to humanitarian organizations to reach all those in need of assistance in the Pool region

"United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson issued the following statement today:

'I am deeply concerned at the deteriorating situation in the Republic of Congo, in particular in the Pool region, where both parties to the ongoing conflict are showing blatant disregard for the safety and human rights of the civilian population.

'Serious fighting has been reported in and around the towns of Kinkala, Kindamba, Ngoma Tsé-Tsé and Vindza. According to witnesses, government forces have launched air-attacks by helicopter against inhabited villages in the Pool region, and an unknown number of civilians have been killed and injured as a result of indiscriminate rocket and machinegun fire. Widespread destruction of houses and other property is also reported. Dozens of women have allegedly been raped by men in uniform. A number of young men are reported to have been abducted from camps for internally displaced persons. Their fate and whereabouts are unknown.

'Since 27 March 2002, when fighting began, some 45,000 civilians have been displaced in the Pool region, and humanitarian access to the most affected parts of the region has been denied for the last two months. The situation in the besieged town of Kindamba is reported to be particularly critical, with food and medical supplies running low. At the same time, the civilian population of Kindamba continues to suffer from armed attacks by the so-called Ninja rebels.

'I appeal to the Government of the Republic of Congo to take immediate steps to ensure the safety and integrity of the civilian population. I urge the warring parties to grant humanitarian agencies free and unconditional access reach all those in need of assistance in the region of Pool'." (UNHCHR, 28 May 2002)

### **Women and children in flight were often the victims of rape during 1998-1999 conflict (November 2000)**

- 1600 women and girls seen in two Brazzaville hospitals between May-December 1999 said they had been raped
- Most rapes occurred on route linking Kinkala and Brazzaville

"Between May and December 1999, 1600 women and girls who were admitted to the hospitals of Makelekele and Talangai in Brazzaville said they had been raped. Most rapes occurred on the route linking Kinkala and Brazzaville, named the 'corridor of death' by the survivors. The signing of the peace agreement in November 1999 did not stop these crimes from occurring. In March 2000, 22 rape victims were treated at Makelekele hospital, aged between 3 and 40 years old (nine of the victims were under 15). 21 of the rapes were committed by armed men and 13 by at least two people. In one case, the number of rapists was eight." (MSF 18 November 2000)

### **IDPs reportedly used as human shields during conflict (November 2000)**

"The conflict in Congo-Brazzaville, like those of Kosovo, Timor, or Sierra Leone has been characterised by repeated violence directed at the civilian population. The displaced, forced to flee their homes, found themselves trapped and used at times as human shields. The stories brought back of murders were numerous and rapes were committed on a massive scale and at times systematically." (MSF 18 November 2000)

## **Freedom of Movement**

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### **More than 5,000 people trapped in the town of Kindamba, Pool region (March-May 2002)**

- 5,000 people out of a population of 16,000 remained in Kindamba following the March 2002 attack by Ninja rebels
- The military facilitated the establishment of three protected sites in the town, but with insufficient amenities
- Civilian access to their fields and surrounding forests to obtain food became increasingly restricted by the military
- Houses have been looted and physical violence against civilians has been reported

"Before 31st March 2002, Kindamba was home to more than 16,000 people. When the town was attacked by Ninja rebels, 11,000 were able to flee to neighbouring villages or go into hiding in the forest.

5,000 persons stayed behind in Kindamba. Since then, only a few have managed to get out safely; but some have arrived in Brazzaville on foot, where they then bear witness. The military facilitated the establishment of three protected sites in the town centre (named Transcuba, Poto-Poto, and Défunt Antoine). Whereas each site was established near a clean water source, there are almost no latrines.

During the first week, the military allowed the displaced to access their fields outside the city centre during the day. The food thus gathered was shared between the civilians and the military. That same week, most houses in Kindamba were looted. Some were destroyed by the military, reportedly to facilitate the defence of the town against frequent Ninja attacks.

During the first weeks of April, the population was able to gather vegetables from their fields and the surrounding forests. But, for the last four weeks at least, the only possibility to get food has been to buy it from the military, and very few of the displaced have any money left at all. They abandoned what little they had when they fled their houses, and most houses have been looted.

People have reported that the army uses civilians for tasks such as cutting trees in and around Kindamba to prevent the Ninjas from hiding in them, gathering food (including their own), which is later sold by the military to the displaced themselves, and destroying their own houses with machetes so that the military can use the tin roofs for their own shelter. Some have reported that non compliance results in physical violence.

Women are being raped by more than one soldier at once, and threatened that they will be shot if they report it." (UN RC/HC, 20 May 2002)

# **SUBSISTENCE NEEDS (HEALTH NUTRITION AND SHELTER)**

## **General**

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### **Population still in great need even before outbreak of new fighting in March 2002 (January 2002)**

- Large-scale return of IDPs following the December 1999 peace agreement, especially to Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, increased the need to strengthen social structures and services
- Destroyed infrastructure was starting to be rebuilt
- Social services and food production remained severely affected in various areas

"The Republic of Congo (RoC) has seen dramatic changes in the humanitarian situation in Congo Brazzaville with the signing by the majority of belligerents of a cease-fire and cessation of hostilities agreement on 29 December 1999. The increasing number of people returning to their places of origin after one year or more in rural areas or in small villages, especially to Brazzaville and to Pointe-Noire, has increased the need to reinforce social structures to facilitate their settlement without difficulties. Health services, schooling, infrastructures and income-generation activities to avoid dependence to external or governmental aid are mentioned as main sectors of intervention.

The population is still in great need. Most of the country's infrastructure was destroyed during the fighting. A matter of even greater concern is the seriously weakened state of the social fabric following the mass exodus of over a third of the Congolese population, who were forced to flee from the fighting to take refuge in the bush and remained there for more than a year. Instability in the region and, more particularly, the clashes occurring in Equateur province, are threatening to upset the fragile peace that now reigns in the country. While the consequences of the war in the Republic of Congo has had a serious impact on the Congolese Red Cross Society (CRC), there are indications that the situation in the country has dramatically improved and the focus is now on working to heal the scars left by the recurrent wars of recent years. Considerable progress has already been made with the railway line linking Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire reopened and negotiations with international fund providers such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union resumed.

During the last conflict in late 1998 in the Republic of Congo, almost two thirds of the population were displaced to neighbouring regions or in the bush, which halted all productive activities in the district. Now that security conditions have improved substantially, the population has returned to Mfilou almost totally and find that the social services and its food production activities have been severely affected." (IFRC, 1 January 2002)

## **Health**

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### **Civilians trapped in Kindamba reported to be in poor health (May 2002)**

- Witnesses report evidence of disease and malnutrition
- By 20 May 2002, the UN and its partners had still not been granted access to Kindamba in order to assess humanitarian needs

"Although local authorities are making a special effort to monitor the health of the populations, there are numerous cases of pulmonary infections, skin diseases, and diarrhoeal infections. Witnesses report that children and adults are bloated, usually a sign of malnutrition. Women are giving birth without any medical assistance. The little medicines and medical equipment available is controlled by the military, who have managed to evacuate some of the sickest to Brazzaville by helicopter.

The United Nations and its partners have attempted on two occasions to fly to Kindamba to assess humanitarian needs. Each time they were denied because the military was unable to guaranty the safety of the plane and personnel." (UN RC/HC, 20 May 2002)

### **MSF has reported sleeping sickness to be at epidemic proportions in parts of the country (2001)**

- Plateaux province bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo has been one of centres of epidemic

"MSF, which has been working in Congo-Brazzaville since 1997, started up the sleeping-sickness programme when it noticed signs that the deadly disease may have reached epidemic proportions in parts of the country. The health system is in ruins after years of civil war and there is no reliable epidemiological data.

'We felt that we should start an intervention in Plateaux, since we suspected that province to be one of the centres of the epidemic,' Sonya explained.

The Plateaux province borders the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the other side of the Congo River, which marks the border, MSF [and] other NGOs have been running sleeping-sickness programmes for several years and treating thousands of patients. The new MSF programme has already saved ten lives up till now and seems set to save many more." (MSF 29 June 2001)

### **National polio vaccination campaign conducted in July-September 2001 (August-September 2001)**

- National Immunization Days took place during July, August and September 2001
- 628,698 children vaccinated in Republic of Congo
- Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF worked together to employ door-to-door strategy

"Tens of thousands of vaccination teams have fanned across central Africa, going door-to-door to protect millions of children against polio, in the first ever coordinated polio immunization campaign in the conflict-affected region. During several days in July, August and September, this massive effort will result in the protection of a targeted 16 million children against polio in Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon. The "synchronized" National Immunization Days (NIDs) campaign is a major step in the global effort to eradicate the crippling disease, as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are considered two of the few remaining bastions of the wild poliovirus.

President Joseph Kabila, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was joined in Kinshasa by the Minister of Health and other senior representatives of Congo, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr Ebrahim Samba, WHO's Regional Director for Africa, Rima Salah, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, and Carlo Ravizza, past President of Rotary International, at a special ceremony launching the "synchronized" NIDs on 5 July.

Results from the first round of synchronized NIDs, carried out between 5 and 9 July, are encouraging.  
[...]

- **Congo: 628,698** children vaccinated, surpassing the target population of 616,700." (UNICEF 7 August 2001)

"There were 23 polio cases last year. The Government continues to eradicate poliomyelitis, with support from WHO, CDC-Atlanta, Rotary, Italy and UNICEF. Polio coverage of 100% and 102% for vitamin A were achieved in 2000. The Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF jointly developed the current plan of three rounds of National Immunization Days, employing a door-to-door strategy to reach 600,000 children. The main challenges in eradicating polio from the country are access to interior rural areas and logistical limits such as fuel and vehicle shortages. In response to these constraints, UNICEF provided 30 motorcycles and emphasis was placed on reaching children in the difficult-to-reach areas, i.e. pigmy villages and other remote rural areas. Not a single case of polio has been reported so far this year and the coverage in the first round of the 2001 polio campaign against reached 100%. In addition to the vaccination efforts, UNICEF has also rehabilitated and re-equipped 58 integrated health centres throughout the country. Training and drugs were also provided to these health centres, financed by OFDA. This crucial activity needs to continue to cover all the 200 integrated health centres." (UNICEF 4 September 2001)

## **Nutrition**

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### **Malnutrition was one of most serious problems for IDPs during conflict in Republic of Congo (2000)**

- Death rate in Pool in 2000 was six times higher than normal in emergency
- Half of IDPs were malnourished in Pool
- Malnutrition was principle cause of death among IDPs
- Many women and children hiding in the forests were severely malnourished

"An ICRC survey [in 2000] recorded a death rate in the Pool six times higher than that normally considered an emergency. Half the displaced population was malnourished." (ICRC 2001)

"Malnutrition was the principal cause of death among the displaced. A third of children seen by doctors at the Centre Sportif in Brazzaville had global acute malnutrition. In total, more than 10,000 cases of acute malnutrition were treated in MSF's feeding centres. This figure does not take into account the medical activities of other aid organisations present in Congo in 1999." (MSF 18 November 2000)

"At the height of the emergencies, 70% of the internally displaced persons (mainly children, women and aged persons coming out from the forests) were reported to be severely malnourished." (UNICEF 12 October 2000)

## **Water and sanitation**

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### **Lack of access to drinking water noted by UNICEF (September 2001)**

- Available water sources are often contaminated

- Sanitation conditions are poor in both rural and urban settings

"While Congo has many water resources, there is a lack of access to safe drinking water in many areas. Available water sources are often contaminated and are major causes of communicable diseases. In general, the sanitation and hygiene conditions both in urban and rural areas are poor, and are given less priority attention by the people. In rural areas, the vast majority of the population has no toilets. In the Southern regions where populations have returned, one of the major challenges is ensuring access to safe drinking water supply and latrines as most of the facilities were destroyed during the war. This is important to protect the health of children and women and can have a major impact in reducing their mortality and morbidity. To date, UNICEF has:

- a) Constructed 16 large spring sources in co-operation with OXFAM UK, assisting 60,000 IDPs
- b) Constructed/rehabilitated 13 springs and 676 wells in Sibiti, Lekoumou Region with ACF
- c) Installed hand pumps in Bouenza, Niari and Lekoumou, with UNDP and ACF, for 30,000 people
- d) Constructed, together with CREPA (a regional NGO), water supply facilities and latrines in 9 primary schools in Brazzaville." (UNICEF 4 September 2001)

## ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### Issues of self-reliance

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#### **Remaining caseload of IDPs in Brazzaville no longer require life-sustaining assistance (2000)**

- Significant numbers of IDPs remain in Brazzaville without assistance, but also without work

"While the numbers of displaced requiring life-sustaining assistance have fallen dramatically, tens if not hundreds of thousands are not living where they lived before. The forced flight and looting caused people to lose savings, assets, tools – in short, their capacity to withstand shocks and respond to changing circumstances. At least one study shows that significant numbers of displaced from rural areas remain in Brazzaville without work (formal or informal), and are anxious to have work, credit and training. Many displaced suffer from trauma. There are many more female-headed households than before the war." (UN 20 November 2000)

# PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

## General

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### Mass return of IDPs took place during 2000 (2000-2001)

- Between 500,000 and 600,000 IDPs returned home in 2000
- Return happened with unprecedented speed and momentum
- Remaining four IDP camps in Brazzaville closed in April 2000
- 60% of returnees went back to their homes in urban centres
- Return took place in difficult conditions given large-scale destruction of socio-economic infrastructure

"Some 500,000 internally displaced Congolese also returned home [in 2000].

[...]

Humanitarian access dramatically improved. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons had returned home by mid-year. In June [2000], the UN noted that 'the speed and momentum of these events is impressive. The year 2000 has become a tremendous opportunity – a chance to begin rebuilding a durable peace.'

[...]

The vast majority [of IDPs] returned home en masse in the first four months of year." (USCR 2001)

"In the beginning of 2000, the ICRC (in cooperation with the Congolese Red Cross) still gave assistance to IDPs in camps in Brazzaville. Due to the return of the IDPs, these camps were closed in April 2000 and the humanitarian needs evolved from emergency to rehabilitation; direct emergency assistance (food distributions and feeding centers, mainly in Brazzaville and the Pool region) was replaced by rehabilitation programs such as seed and tools distributions, rehabilitation of health centers and the protection of water sources." (ICRC 21 November 2001)

"The cease-fire reached in November 1999 and the factions' compliance with during 2000 gave hope for recovery and reconciliation in Congo Brazzaville. More than 600,000 of 800,000 people displaced by the war had returned home by August 2000." (EPCPT November 2000)

"UNICEF assistance is now directed towards rehabilitation and development activities to support returned displaced persons. Humanitarian access has now been secured to all interior areas of the five southern war-affected regions (Brazzaville, Bouenza, Lekoumou, Niari and Pool), resulting in the return of over 700,000 (out of 810,000) displaced persons and refugees to their original home settlements. At this stage of this massive return, continued extension of humanitarian assistance is essential for their immediate resettlement and return to normal life." (UNICEF 12 October 2000)

"Many [IDPs and refugees] began to return after the signature of peace agreements in December 1999. On 30 April 2000 some 600,000 people were estimated to have returned to their home areas, most of them in urban centres (60 percent). Their resettlement is taking place in difficult conditions, however, given large-scale destruction of socio-economic infrastructure and looting of private property. But returnees are having to cope with food insecurity caused by the loss of their stocks and the absence of any agricultural production for two successive seasons. Attempts to revive food production in the affected regions are currently complicated by a lack of seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs.

With improved security in the country, United Nations agencies, NGOs and the Ministry for Humanitarian Activities have intensified joint missions in the newly accessible regions (70 percent of affected regions). What emerges from those evaluations is that more than 40 percent of returnees over the regions as a whole have lost their former socio-economic equilibrium. The level of vulnerability of these civilian victims of conflict calls for sustained humanitarian assistance in several sectors, including: health, nutrition, support to renewed food production, rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and the social reintegration of young people." (WFP 19 September 2000)

**IDPs displaced from Mindouli in Spring 2001 return home (August 2001)**

"(f) Following an improvement of the security situation in Mindouli (Pool region), an estimated 10,000 residents who fled their homes in late April, started to return. Following reports of cases of malnutrition amongst the children, WFP undertook an assessment and delivered 50 tons of emergency food supplies to the area. WFP also assisted 325 children through the SFC and TFC managed by MSF." (WFP 10 August 2001)

# HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

## General

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### Humanitarian access to critical areas blocked following outbreak of fighting in March 2002 (May 2002)

- For almost two months following the eruption of hostilities at the end of March 2002, humanitarian access was impossible to the most affected zones of Pool region
- More than 5,000 people trapped in the town of Kindamba faced the threat of starvation and disease
- On 28 May, an inter-agency assessment mission visited Kindamba for the first time
- Humanitarian organizations were able to deliver the first relief aid to Kindamba at the beginning of June 2002

**"Humanitarian access still blocked where most needed:** Aid agencies are ready to deliver food, medical supplies, and non-food items to the displaced population most in need. They have put together all logistical and material resources required to start assisting those populations. Access is possible to destinations outside the most affected zone, where a minority of the displaced have arrived, to Kingoué, Djambala and Kinkala. But humanitarian access to the most affected zones of Pool region has so far not been possible (to the zone inside these destinations), thus those most in need cannot be reached." (UN RC/HC, 24 May 2002)

"Since 31st March, more than 5,000 people have been trapped in the town of Kindamba, in the Pool region of Republic of Congo ('Congo-Brazzaville'). The international community has not yet been allowed to visit Kindamba to assess humanitarian needs. However, testimonies collected in Brazzaville have enabled the UN to construct an image of what life has been like for the besieged population of Kindamba. Packed into three displacement camps, they have faced the threat of starvation and disease. Their rights have been violated and their homes destroyed. It is unclear for how long this situation will continue." (UN RC/HC, 20 May 2002)

"The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, in concert with the UN country team in the Republic of Congo, which includes the World Food Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, the International Organisation for Migration and the World Health Organisation, today called on the warring parties in that country to enter into negotiations to guarantee safe humanitarian access to the most affected regions of the Republic of Congo, where tens of thousands of displaced people are believed to have found refuge in forests or small villages.

In the past several days there have been some positive movements on access. On 29 May, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso received Ms. Rima Salah, UNICEF's Director for West and Central Africa. Thanking UN agencies for their support, President Sassou-Nguesso pledged that his government would ensure unlimited humanitarian access, for the UN and other international aid agencies, to assist the population in the entire affected area.

On 28 May, a joint assessment mission comprising UN agencies and NGOs visited the town of Kindamba. They found approximately 2,000 people in poor condition without adequate shelter and sanitation. Another 14,000 more have fled from the town, mostly into the surrounding bush. This mission marked the first time

humanitarian partners were able to visit the Pool Region since fighting began on 27 March, despite repeated requests for access.

Sustained, secure and unconditional access throughout the Pool Region is needed to meet the needs of the displaced population suffering the combined effects of violence and two months without assistance. It is important to ensure that pledges of full access are turned into reality.

The humanitarian community is ready to deliver food, medical supplies, and non-food items to the displaced population most in need. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and agencies urged the warring parties to ensure the safe passage of humanitarian workers so that they can reach the displaced population of Pool to avoid a full-scale humanitarian disaster.

They also called upon the warring parties to cease all violations of the rights of the civilian population. They reminded the Government of the Republic of Congo of its obligations towards the civilian population as defined in international humanitarian law, and regretted that, in choosing a military strategy, both sides to the conflict have shown a wanton disregard for the humanitarian consequences of their actions." (UN OCHA, 30 May 2002)

A UN-chartered aircraft carrying 7.7 mt of food and non-food items landed at Kindamba in Pool region on Sunday, bringing the first relief aid to the beleaguered town since fighting erupted two months ago between government troops and so-called Ninja militiamen, the UN Humanitarian Coordination Office in the Republic of Congo (ROC) capital, Brazzaville has reported.

An UN inter-agency team, which accompanied the delivery, counted some 2,000 people in one site of town, which is in the grip of a tight military cordon. The team, which was in the town to evaluate the needs of the population, will present a list of the families present in it to the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN office said.

Food was distributed to 27 families. The remaining food, which could not be distributed due to lack of time, was handed over to the sub-prefect of the town - an army doctor with the rank of colonel. Emergency teams will only be conducting full-day missions and will not be on the ground overnight until security improves.

Despite the prevailing sense of urgency before the relief and evaluation effort began, the UN team did not find the health of the town's residents to be in an alarming state, according to the UN office.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had identified eight cases of malnutrition among children, and noted that since the fighting broke out on 27 March, people had been eating irregularly whatever food they could find, supplemented only by fruit, vegetables and tinned food they were sometimes able to buy from soldiers. "They lack proteins such as fish, chicken, red meat," the UN said.

The army had just "a few days ago" begun allowing residents into nearby fields to search for food", the UN reported. The army also controlled the allotment of agricultural implements, and monitored the movement of each person going to and from the fields. Farmers had told the UN that they had to return to town early from their brief forays, leaving them insufficient time to cultivate. They had said that they would be unable to engage in serious cultivation until they were allowed to return to their homes.

"FAO [Food and Agriculture Organisation] was present for an evaluation mission and will set up a pilot project for 30 families. Next, they will bring seeds and other items to enable cultivators restart their activities," the UN said.

Health and Sanitation

The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) are coordinating sanitation needs. IRC and UNICEF treated two wells and are working on an alternative way to supply the population with clean water.

WHO and UNICEF vaccinated 340 children aged nine months to 14 years against measles, 330 children up to 10 years old against polio, and 27 pregnant women against tetanus. A small health clinic has been left stocked with full medical and pregnancy kits, and health workers have been told to watch out for signs of any potential epidemic.

"The next mission will be to get the town's hospital rehabilitated," UN unit said. "The mission is planning to return to Kindamba at the end of the week." (IRIN, 4 June 2002)

### **Relative stability returned to country by end of 2000 (2001)**

- Stability had returned to most parts of the country by end 2000
- With improved access, aid agencies were able to distribute seeds and tools in the southern provinces
- Some parts of the North continue to be plagued with access problems due to conflict in neighbouring DRC

"Stability had returned to most parts of the country by year's end [2000]. Parts of the north, however, were adversely affected as the war in neighboring Congo-Kinshasa continued to spill over the border and sent tens of thousands of refugees fleeing into Congo-Brazzaville.

[...]

Improved humanitarian access also increased agricultural assistance to war-affected areas in the south. Aid agencies distributed seeds and tools, and the World Food Program (WFP) continued to provide food supplements to some 120,000 people. 'Although the security situation...has improved significantly, many civilians have no access to food, and even when it is available in markets it is too expensive for many people to buy,' a WFP official stated.

By October [2000], all areas of Congo-Brazzaville were accessible to humanitarian agencies except parts of the north where insecurity linked to the war in Congo-Kinshasa prevailed." (USCR 2001)

### **Access to areas previously cut off to humanitarian agencies occurred in parallel with return en masse (September 2000)**

- Improved security allowed for joint missions by UN agencies, NGOs and the Ministry for Humanitarian Activities in 2000
- WFP reported renewed access in 70 percent of areas affected by the conflict of 1998-1999 in September 2000

With improved security in the country, United Nations agencies, NGOs and the Ministry for Humanitarian Activities have intensified joint missions in the newly accessible regions (70 percent of affected regions). What emerges from those evaluations is that more than 40 percent of returnees over the regions as a whole have lost their former socio-economic equilibrium. The level of vulnerability of these civilian victims of conflict calls for sustained humanitarian assistance in several sectors, including: health, nutrition, support to renewed food production, rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and the social reintegration of young people." (WFP 19 September 2000)

# NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

## National response

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### **Government has launched various initiatives to improve economy and reduce poverty (2000-2001)**

- Government drew up Interim Post-Conflict Programme (PIPC) covering period 2000-2002 (2000)
- Government created a Ministry for Humanitarian Activities (2000)
- Agriculture Minister launched 2.5 billion CFA franc (1 US dollar = 700 FCFA) food security programme (2001)
- Government formulated poverty eradication strategy for examination by IMF (2001)

#### ***Interim Post-Conflict Programme and Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs:***

In response to the country's current crisis, the Government has drawn up an 'Interim Post-Conflict Programme' (PIPC) covering the period 2000-2002. The three-year programme aims to move out of the current situation of crisis management into a phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Accent is placed on profound economic reform, the re-establishment of basic social services and the reduction of poverty. Given its limited financial resources, however, the Government is finding difficulty in implementing the programme. Aware of the gravity of the situation, it has appealed to the international community to help in the achievement of socio-economic recovery.

As part of its crisis management efforts, the Government has created a Ministry for Humanitarian Activities which is working closely with humanitarian organizations in registering displaced persons and settling them on provisional sites. The Ministry is also promoting the return of refugee populations and their socio-economic reintegration into their home districts. It made a huge contribution to targeting beneficiaries for WFP assistance and to the monitoring and evaluation of food distributed in the various sites." (WFP 19 September 2000)

#### ***Food security programme:***

"Congolese Agriculture minister Celestin Gongarad Nkoua has launched a 2.5 billion CFA franc (1 US dollar = 700 FCFA) food security programme that would improve and diversify food production in the country, the state radio reported.

It said the project also aims at increasing basic food production in a sustainable way through water management using light systems." (PANA 20 June 2001)

#### ***Poverty eradication strategy:***

"The Congo government has formulated a poverty eradication strategy for examination by an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission expected in Brazzaville 26 October [2001], according to Finance Ministry officials.

The Director of International Economic Relations at the Ministry, Raphael Mokoko, said the programme's broad outline has been approved by the IMF management.

He said the programme takes into account contributions of financial partners and NGOs involved in national development, adding that government has set up a national poverty eradication Committee.

Congo Brazzaville has been listed among the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) since 1999.

Its external debt is said to be among the highest in the world in terms of per capita." (PANA 22 October 2001)

"The poverty situation which the majority of the population of Congo, face today has nothing to do with fate, said William Paton, Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme.

Speaking on the 2002-2003 poverty reduction support programme of the United Nations, Paton said it was possible for the people of Congo to free themselves from poverty by 2015, the Congolese Information Agency reported Tuesday [23 October 2001].

The plan aims at supporting efforts by the government and the people to consolidate national peace while fighting poverty until 2015." (PANA 23 October 2001).

## **International funding**

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### **European Commission supports disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants (2002)**

- The European Commission donates 750,000 euros for the reintegration of ex-combatants and weapons collection in the Republic of Congo
- The funds would be used to reintegrate 1,200 ex-combatants and collect 1,500 arms

"The European Commission announced that it has donated 750,000 euros (about US \$650,000) for the reintegration of ex-combatants and the collection of weapons in the Republic of Congo in 2002.

The funds would be used to reintegrate 1,200 ex-combatants and collect 1,500 arms, bringing the total number of reintegrated ex-combatants to 8,000 and collected firearms to 12,500 by the end of 2002, the Commission reported in a press statement. The areas to be concentrated on would be the regions of Pool, Niari, Lekoumou and Bouenza as well as northern regions.

The Commission warned ex-combatants that the programme was neither compensation nor entitlement. Rather, it added, it was a mechanism to protect civil society and for the consolidation of peace. The programme simply ensured the economic reintegration of unemployed ex-combatants, especially those still in possession of firearms, which they should voluntarily surrender for destruction, the Commission added.

In April 2001, a public ceremony was held in the country's capital, Brazzaville, to burn guns collected during the first phase of the same programme. The ceremony was dubbed 'the flame of peace' to symbolise the Congolese desire for peace." (IRIN, 4 March 2002)

### **UN activities curtailed due to lack of funding (October 2001)**

- As of 1 August 2001, only 34.4% of funding requirements had been funded
- UN agencies do not have enough resources to respond to new emergencies

- UN agencies are working together to initiate joint actions in face of poor donor contributions
- Ten UN agencies in Congo will expand activities when funding arrives

"A lack of funding has meant missed opportunities in the UN's drive to aid the Republic of Congo to recover from a devastating decade-long civil war, even though successes have been recorded in some areas of activity, the UN Development Programme reported in its 2001 mid-term review for the country. As of 1 August, the UNDP said, 34.4 percent of the requirements outlined in its plan had been funded. While in rehabilitated schools attendance increases have averaged 30 percent, 1,714 schools still need remodeling and re-equipment.

The UNDP also said it had distributed 'the totality of its available stock of condoms' and that due to the lack of money many planned AIDS awareness activities had not been implemented. A recent UN-commissioned study on AIDS in the country put the HIV prevalence rate at 14 percent in some localities and the cash crunch for activities in this area may have 'devastating impacts'. In addition, the shortage of funds hinders the UN's capability to respond rapidly and effectively in emergencies. This year, it said, UN agencies in the ROC were able to deliver food when epidemics arose or when IDPs emerged from the forest after years of hiding. 'Yet, without sufficient resources they are not currently in a position to respond to new emergencies,' the UNDP reported.

Given these limitations, UN agencies have been working together and with NGOs 'to multiply the impact of the limited resources at their disposal'. It said that every month new joint actions are identified and implemented. The FAO and UNDP have teamed up to help war-affected agricultural communities rebound from war; UNICEF and the UN Population Fund have rehabilitated 40 primary schools and 75 health centres, with WFP food for work programmes; FAO provided seeds and tools for distribution by the UNHCR to 5,000 families, including refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In addition, UNESCO and UNDP organised a soccer tournament in Brazzaville as a message of peace to over 30,000 youth and women.

While under-funded, the UN reported, it had achieved significant successes: these include the country-wide polio eradication campaign, the reintegration and vocational training of at least 7,000 ex-combatants and the collection of at least 10,000 weapons, as well as the provision of non-food aid to 87,000 refugees from the DRC.

'The 10 UN agencies active in ROC are convinced that additional funding will allow them to extend activities further in the rural areas,' it reported." (IRIN 25 October 2001)

### **World Bank approves two credits and makes post-conflict loan to Congo (July-October 2001)**

- One credit in amount of US\$37.5 million made for Post-Conflict Economic Rehabilitation Project
- One credit in amount of US\$5 million made for Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration
- Bulk of World Bank post-conflict loan of US\$40 million used to pay debt arrears to institution; remainder to finance small-scale projects for demobilized soldiers

"Two credits were approved for the Republic of Congo – the US\$37.5 million Post-Conflict Economic Rehabilitation project and the US\$5 million Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration project. They are on standard IDA terms: interest-free, to be repaid over 40 years, with a 10 years grace period.

The Post-Conflict Economic Rehabilitation Project, part of the Bank's Transitional Support Strategy (TSS) for the country, will assist in the transition from war to peace by providing urgently needed quick disbursing funds for the Government's 2000-2002 Interim Post-Conflict program. Specifically, it will

pursue and deepen structural reforms in the transition towards a market economy and build foundations for increased transparency, improved governance and accountability in public resources management.

The Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project will help demobilize and reintegrate about 10,000 ex-combatants into civilian life, while providing basic service rehabilitation and necessary social and economic infrastructure that will allow communities to return to peace-time activities. It will provide reintegration options to ex-combatants who have joined the ranks of the unemployed after the cease-fire agreement, help rehabilitate physical and social infrastructure and support the move to macroeconomic stability. The rehabilitation needs of the country – basic infrastructure such as roads, railways, electricity, water and telecommunications – are immense." (World Bank 31 July 2001)

"World Bank experts are in Brazzaville discussing with the Congolese authorities about the execution of the post-conflict loan aimed, a source of the Ministry of finance said Monday [22 October 2001].

According to the source, the loan will be used to enhance administrative and institutional capacities and assist authorities to resettle former civil war combatants.

The World Bank has given Congo a total of 40 million US dollars out of which 30 million US dollars was used to pay the country's debt arrears to the institution.

Besides reinforcing administrative and institutional capacities, the remaining 10 million US dollars will also be used to finance small-scale projects operated by former militiamen on both sides of the political divide who surrendered their weapons to the authorities." (PANA 22 October 2001)

### **ECHO offers 41.3 million Euro for anti-poverty and democratisation activities in Congo (May 2001)**

- Money to go to poverty eradication, democratisation and human rights projects

"La Commission européenne et le gouvernement de la République du Congo ont signé aujourd'hui à Brazzaville un programme de coopération d'un montant de €41.3 millions. L'allocation de ces fonds non-remboursables provient du 8e Fonds européen de développement (FED). La signature de ce Programme indicatif national pour la République du Congo (Brazzaville) a été retardée par les conflits internes que le pays a vécus entre 1997 et 1999. Le Commissaire européen chargé du développement et de l'aide humanitaire, M. Poul Nielson, a déclaré que « La décision de signer ce programme témoigne de la volonté de la Commission d'apporter son soutien au processus de développement et de démocratisation dans le pays. Les fonds sont destinés à la réalisation d'objectifs prioritaires tels que la lutte contre la pauvreté, la démocratisation, la promotion des droits de l'homme et l'Etat de droit ».

Ces fonds seront destinés à la réalisation des objectifs dans plusieurs domaines. Les reliquats des programmes de coopération antérieurs aux conflits devront permettre, à court terme, la mise en oeuvre d'un appui aux projets dans le domaine social, à l'élaboration d'un plan national des transports et au financement d'une étude qui permettra par la suite la réhabilitation de la route Brazzaville-Kinkala. La Commission a également initié le travail d'identification d'un programme dans le domaine de la promotion des droits de l'homme et de l'état de droit, complémentaire à ceux des autres bailleurs de fonds actifs dans ce domaine." (ECHO 17 May 2001)

### **France signs funding agreement for 620 million FCFA (approx. \$US 865,000) (February 2001)**

"On 2 February [2001], France signed a funding agreement with the Government of Congo amounting to 620 million FCFA (approx. \$US 865,000) for its project 'Support to the modernization and reinforcement of Congolese Civil Service capacities.'" (OCHA 28 February 2001)

### **IMF offers grant for government reconstruction and economic recovery programme (January 2001)**

"On January 11 [2001], the IMF officially approved the government's reconstruction and economic recovery program, to be partly financed by a credit of US\$14 million in emergency post-conflict assistance for RoC, previously approved on 17 December 2000." (UNCT 16 January 2001)

### **USAID funded various reintegration and reconstruction programmes in 2000 (January 2001)**

- BHR/OFDA funded five grants in health and food security sectors
- WFP, FAO, UNICEF, ACF, CRS, and IRC were some of the aid organisations that received U.S. money in 2000
- USAID to continue to provide agricultural support to Congolese in 2001
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"The reintegration of IDPs, returnees, and demobilized youths including former militia combatants is a priority for the Government of the ROC and the international community to support a durable peace....

[...]

BHR/OFDA funded five grants to the Republic of the Congo in FY 2000 in the health and food security sectors. Action Contre la Faim (ACF) received more than \$750,000 to provide therapeutic feeding to 3,500 severely malnourished residents, health services to approximately 74,000 people, and provide seeds and tools in the Pool region. BHR/OFDA provided more than \$1.3 million in FY 2000 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to assist 400,000 war-affected children and adults and restore health and clinical services and support agriculture in the Pool Region. BHR/OFDA is currently evaluating a proposed extension of the CRS grant for FY 2001. The U.N.'s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) received more than \$400,000 to distribute agricultural inputs and support coordination of emergency agricultural operations for 17,250 beneficiaries, and BHR/OFDA is evaluating a proposed extension for this program in FY 2001. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) received \$500,000 for nutritional surveillance and vaccination programs and for the provision of basic health care equipment and drugs to assist 200,000 people in the health sectors of the Pool, Lekoumou, Bouenza, and Niari regions. BHR/OFDA provided more than \$880,000 to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to implement a health rehabilitation project for 160,000 residents of the Dolosie region. In FY 2001, BHR/OFDA will continue to respond to the health needs of the population and to assist the Congolese in restoring their livelihoods especially in the agricultural sector.

In FY 2000, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) provided 7,400 MT of Section 416(b) food commodities (corn soy milk blend, rice, and soy oil) to the World Food Program (WFP) with a total donation value of more than \$5.7 million. The Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provided \$1,115,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), \$81,000 to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and \$239,975 to IRC for their emergency programs to assist Angolan and Congolese refugees in camps in the ROC. State/PRM also provided \$50 million to UNHCR and \$42.4 million to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) for their Africa-wide programs, a portion of which was used in the ROC, and more than \$1 million to UNHCR, UNOCHA, and IFRC to support regional refugee-related programs, including those

in the ROC. Further regional contributions to UNHCR to assist new Congolese refugees in neighboring countries or Angolan refugees in the ROC are currently being determined." (USAID 29 January 2001)

## **Selected UN activities**

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### **UNICEF responds to new IDP emergency (2002)**

- UNICEF's ongoing rehabilitation and development activities are disrupted by new fighting at the end of March 2002
- In collaboration with the UN Country Team, NGOs and the government, UNICEF immediately began emergency interventions to assist the newly displaced, particularly in the Brazzaville area
- Response is hampered by inaccessibility of interior areas

"UNICEF's activities related to rehabilitation and development have been disrupted and overtaken by the recent civil strife in Pool region and in Brazzaville. Immediately after the onset of the current crisis, UNICEF began monitoring the events and collecting information on the affected population in various areas, their movements and concentrations, their immediate needs, and started taking security measures and planning for immediate emergency response. Coordination meetings among humanitarian aid agencies are being held everyday to share information and coordinate planning and response, with priority given to the currently inaccessible interior areas. In addition, UN Country Team (UNCT) meetings are also held daily to discuss strategies and plans for security and assure co-ordinated humanitarian response of the UN agencies and NGOs. UNICEF is closely working with the Ministry of Health and Humanitarian Social Action and NGOs to provide immediate assistance to the IDPs. To this end, UNICEF has airlifted 40 tonnes of emergency supplies from its warehouse in Copenhagen. This was complemented by a plane-load of 19 tonnes comprising of the same items which UNICEF had in stock in Pointe Noire, the coastal town.

### **Planned interventions**

The objectives of the planned emergency interventions are to:

- 1) Provide co-ordinated and immediate humanitarian assistance to 70,000 IDPs through local and international NGOs (Caritas, IRC, CICR, and MSF). This will include systematic measles vaccination of all under-five children as well as nutrition surveillance.
- 2) Provide assistance to separated children, sexually abused women and girls, and traumatised children and women.
- 3) Provide immediate assistance to sick and wounded children and women in the reception centres, churches, public places and neighbourhoods.
- 4) Provide basic and essential household survival items to enable and encourage people to return to their looted homes, especially in Brazzaville areas.
- 5) Encourage children and teachers to go back to school particularly those in Brazzaville, while special remedial and non-formal classes will be established in the receptions centres.

### **Survival and protection of children and women**

The first phase of the emergency response will focus on the immediate survival and protection needs of the displaced children and women. This includes ensuring immunization of children, treatment of wounded/ill persons, and availability of essential medicines, ORS and high protein biscuits (BP5) for reception centres,

hospitals and primary health care units. These interventions will be complemented by basic essential non-food items such as blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, cooking utensils, water purification tablets.

### **Interventions co-ordinated with partner agencies**

UNICEF will collaborate and co-ordinate with the UNCT and NGOs for effective sharing of information, planning, emergency assessment missions and emergency response. UNICEF will work closely with the Government (Ministries of Health and Humanitarian Action, Education, and Interior), and local and international NGOs to reach the displaced persons in the interior areas." (UNICEF, 15 April 2002)

### **WFP emergency operation extended ahead of new fighting, but food distribution disrupted (January-May 2002)**

- General insecurity and the late arrival of contributions cause WFP's emergency programme for Congo-Brazzaville to be extended - just ahead of the new emergency at the end of March 2002
- In April 2002, WFP - together with other UN agencies and NGOs - was negotiating with the authorities for access to the Pool region, where the condition of IDPs was a cause for concern
- In April 2002, food distribution was disrupted in several locations due to insecurity

"A World Food Programme (WFP) emergency programme for the Republic of Congo that was due to end in March 2001, has been extended to 31 May due to late arrival of contributions and because of general insecurity, the agency said in its emergency report last week.

The operation will provide some 4,000 mt of food to 50,000 refugees in the towns of Loukolela and Impfondo, in the regions of Cuvette and Likouala, in the northeast of the country, WFP said.

Following an improvement in the security situation in Likouala, an assessment mission was carried out in the town of Betou in the northeast of the region in December. More than 27,500 refugees from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic were reported to be in Betou, WFP reported. 'WFP is looking into ways to assist them,' the agency added.

Meanwhile, WFP distributed more than 670 mt of food to some 30,100 vulnerable people in the Republic of Congo capital, Brazzaville; in Pool Region north of Brazzaville; and in Kouilou, Niari and Bouenza regions, all west of Brazzaville. WFP reported that more than half the distributions were made in support of seed protection and agricultural food-for-work programmes. In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund, WFP has also delivered 15 mt of food to 4,200 orphans." (WFP, 23 January 2002)

"(c) As of 30 April, none of the affected areas within the pool regions were accessible. An estimated 40,300 persons have been displaced from the Pool region, ICRC reported. The only location where an assessment has been made by WFP is Djambala. 4,5 tons of food have been delivered to the IDPs. The condition of the IDPs who remain within the Pool region is cause for concern. UN agencies, including WFP and International NGOs are continuing dialogue with government authorities to obtain free and unimpeded access to this region.

(d) Following a security incident along the railway line linking Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville on 2 April, the railway traffic was suspended. On 22 April, the traffic of cargo trains resumed. This situation has led to a shortage in gas, an increase of the price of locally produced food items and has negatively influenced WFP operations. Only 45 percent of the planned quantities have been delivered during the month of April. The WFP Kinkala sub-office has remained closed for security reasons, no food distribution was carried out in the Pool region. In Nkayi, Bouenza region the cycle of distributions has been disrupted by the insecurity in

the surrounding localities. In Brazzaville as well, food deliveries were interrupted during the first two weeks of April.

(e) WFP distributed 350 tons of food to 15,000 vulnerable people in Brazzaville, Kouilou, Niari and Bouenza regions during the month of April. Food assistance to agriculture activities has increased in line with the preparation of the forthcoming crops in Bouenza, Niari and Lekoumou regions. Through the FFW programme, WFP supported schools rehabilitation, in collaboration with UNICEF." (WFP, 17 May 2002)

### **WFP supports multi-agency HIV/AIDS initiative (2002)**

- WFP supports UN/ government plan to fight HIV/AIDS in the Republic of Congo - a pandemic it describes as 'a looming national catastrophe'
- UN, government and other agencies set up a life-saving nutrition project for people living with the virus
- The large displacement of people during the 1990s destroyed the public health-care system, exacerbating the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases

"In response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Republic of Congo (ROC) - described by the World Food Programme (WFP) as a 'looming national catastrophe' - United Nations agencies and the ROC government, together with other implementing agencies, have set up a nutrition project for people living with HIV/AIDS, and their families, that is proving to be a life-saver.

The pilot phase of this emergency response project was launched in November last year in the capital, Brazzaville, and Pointe Noire in the southwest, WFP said in its strategy paper on supporting the UN/government plan to fight HIV/AIDS in ROC.

Whereas WFP had planned initially to assist some 5,000 people living with HIV/AIDS, and their families, the pilot project is now catering for more than 17,350 people, comprising both patients and their families.

'To this day, about 1,735 people living with HIV/AIDS are participating in the project in our region,' Dr Jean Pierre Nkouendolo, head of the government regional programme against HIV/AIDS in ROC's southwestern region of Kouilou/Pointe Noire, told IRIN.

'The average [number of members] per household according to our investigation is between seven to 13, meaning [an average of] around 10 people per family. One can affirm without being mistaken that our project concerns more than 17,350 people affected with HIV/AIDS, including patients and their families,' he said.

A study carried out by UN agencies in the ROC last year revealed an HIV/AIDS-infection rate of between 10 and 12 percent of a population of 2,864,000. 'AIDS is the main cause of deaths amongst people between 15 and 49 years old,' WFP said.

The country has suffered three outbreaks of civil conflict within the last five years. These displaced over 800,000 people in the southern regions of Pool, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Niari, and prompted tens of thousands to flee into neighbouring Gabon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The large displacement of people led to the near collapse of the public health-care system, and exacerbated the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, WFP, which initiated the strategy, added." (IRIN, 27 February 2002)

## UN Country Team launches plan for 2002 (January 2002)

- Prior to new emergency in 2002, UN launched plan for Republic of Congo based on re-establishment of rule of law, poverty reduction, and emergency response capacity
- Focus was on development of income-generating activities, particularly for the vulnerable; re-establishment of basic social services; the fight against HIV/AIDS; and rebuilding government and community capacities
- UN Country Team had identified four emergency scenarios, to prepare itself to respond to potential emergencies

"The international community has been challenged to keep up with the pace of events in Republic of Congo in the 1990s. From single party rule to multiparty democracy, from a controlled economy to an open market, and now from war to what will hopefully be a lasting peace, events have unfolded with remarkable speed.

While life-saving and other emergency needs have now declined, there is a new urgency in international assistance - maximising the chances for a successful transition. The cease-fire accords signed in 1999 continue to underpin Congo's peace process. A genuine re-launching of Congolese democracy faces significant challenges in the months ahead, most notably the holding of a constitutional referendum, presidential and then legislative elections, all planned to take place before mid-2002.

The correlation between the maintenance of peace and economic stability is an important one. Economic and political recovery could be harmed by the long-term projected decline in the oil sector, ineffectiveness of the public service, stagnation of the national privatisation programme, damaged electricity supply and road infrastructure, and a lack of transparency in the government's economic management.

Based on its common assessment of the country's situation, the Country Team identified a set of cross-sector themes and objectives that require intervention across the board. In 2002 there are five cross-sector themes:

- 1. Responding to Emergency** – while the country continued to stabilise in 2001, the Country Team has nevertheless identified four emergency scenarios, to prepare itself to respond to potential emergencies;
- 2. Gender Equity** – women continue to be subject to widespread discrimination at home, in the workplace, before the law, and in public institutions;
- 3. HIV/AIDS** – the HIV/AIDS situation is a looming national catastrophe with an adult infection in 1995 of already 8% and rising since then; the UN threshold for containment of the disease is 4%;
- 4. Human Rights** – restoration of the rule of law is vital, underpinning the fight against corruption, emphasising the need for transparency in public office and an end to the culture of impunity;
- 5. Poverty Reduction** – the causes of poverty are many-fold.

For instance, the provision and quality of health and education services in Congo is among the worst in the developing world, particularly in marginalised rural communities. Already in 1995, before the last two civil wars, absolute poverty had reached 70% in Brazzaville, making poverty reduction a number one priority.

To address all these themes, the United Nations has planned activities in 10 Sectors. For each, we identify needs, outline objectives, detail action taken in 2001, and make reference to United Nations projects for 2002:

- 1. Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition** – despite the vast potential for agriculture, structural weaknesses, notably destroyed road infrastructure, render Congo a net importer of food, cultivating just two percent of arable land;
- 2. Children and Family** – children and families are slowly piecing together their lives after they were so violently torn apart during a decade of civil war, which caught children in the line of fire in so many ways;
- 3. Culture and Communications** – for stability, a culture of peace must prevail; the modernisation of the communications sector is urgently required to allow Congo to take advantage of technological advances;
- 4. Education and Science** – although Congo identified specific targets from the 1990 UN Global Conference on Education in Jomtien, by 2001 virtually no progress has been made;
- 5. Employment and Income-Generation** – the lack of employment opportunities or sustainable livelihoods is a major preoccupation of rural and urban populations, in particular youth;
- 6. Environment** – new threats to Congo's impressive, largely untouched environment are mounting daily;
- 7. Health** – no new medical staff have been hired since 1985, no epidemiological surveillance system exists, medical equipment and facilities are destroyed or at best archaic and decaying, and medicines are in short supply;
- 8. Refugees** – over 100,000 refugees require ongoing assistance and in some cases repatriation, and/or resettlement;
- 9. Reintegration of Ex-Combatants** – ex-combatants are potentially the most destabilising force in Congo, with over 10,000 still awaiting reintegration assistance;
- 10. Water, Hygiene and Sanitation** – the majority of Congolese do not have access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. Congo's highly urbanised structure, and relatively small population of almost 3 million, lends itself favourably to well-targeted and swiftly implemented projects. One- page summaries of 42 United Nations projects, seeking funding in 2002 and beyond, are presented by Sector (with a special inter-agency one for HIV/AIDS). Agency core budgets are not shown. Resource mobilisation needs for 2002 total US\$ 46.2 million." (UNCT, January 2002)

## **FAO donates seeds and tools to Congolese to increase agricultural production (October 2001)**

- FAO made donation of seeds and tools to 1,000 farmers in West Basin region of northern Congo
- FAO made donation of seeds and tools to people of Djambala and Lekana in the Plateaux region

The UN food agency, FAO, has donated seeds of food crops and ploughing tools to 1,000 farmers in the districts of Ewo, Okoyo, Mbama, Etoumbi, Kellé and Mbomo in the West-Basin region of northern Congo, the agriculture ministry in Kinshasa said Monday.

Congo's West-Basin region, which covers 26,600 square km, has 60,000 inhabitants, including 28,000 farmers, who actively grow coffee, rice, cassava, groundnuts, maize and sesame.

The donation comprises 10 tonnes of groundnut seeds, 5.2 tonnes of maize, 1,000 hoes and 1,000 machetes.

More than 300 commercial gardeners in Ewo district received 288 watering cans, 31 wheelbarrows, 64 spades and 96 rakes, the ministry said.

The regional director of agriculture and livestock in the West- Basin, Jean Bosco Tsila described the donation as a lifesaver for producers who were disturbed by the devastation of the June 1997 war plus recent floods in the region." (PANA 19 November 2001)

"The UN Food agency, FAO has donated seeds and gardening tools to citizens of Djambala and Lekana in Congo's central Plateaux region, the agriculture and livestock ministry said Tuesday [24 October 2001] in Brazzaville.

The donation includes ploughing tools, 610 sachets of type KCK cabbage seeds, 350 bags of sweet pepper seeds, 610 sacs of tomato seeds, 610 sacs of purple eggplants seeds, 1,220 sacs of pepper seeds, 64 bags of groundnuts, 26 bags of millet, 9 bags of soya beans seeds, 652 hoes, 649 machetes, 195 rakes, 215 spades, and 694 watering cans.

The regional director of agriculture and livestock, Daniel Ondongo described the donation as 'extremely precious for the people of Djambala and Lekana to help them increase agricultural production.'

Meanwhile, 97 young commercial gardeners from Mindouli, another Congolese city situated some 150km south of Brazzaville, have undertaken to set up a cooperative to increase their agricultural production in order to fight against hunger." (PANA 24 October 2001)

## **WHO reopens Africa regional office in Brazzaville (October 2001)**

- WHO opened Africa regional office in Brazzaville after forced relocation to Harare four years ago

"The WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) in Brazzaville, re-opened Wednesday [3 October 2001] almost four years after civil disturbances in Congo forced the relocation of the Organisation's personnel to Harare, Zimbabwe.

The first group of 15 returning AFRO staff, led by the Regional Director, Ebrahim Malick Samba, had arrived in the Congolese capital Tuesday to a rousing welcome by senior government officials and hundreds of city residents, who thronged the airport and AFRO's offices to receive the contingent." (PANA 3 October 2001)

## **OCHA closes office in Congo-Brazzaville in June 2001 (September 2001)**

"By end June [2001], OCHA had closed its humanitarian assistance operations and co-ordination role in Congo. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has resumed assistance for the reintegration of ex-combatants and militias and the World Bank is reopening its office in the country to resume its assistance for rehabilitation and economic recovery." (UNICEF 4 September 2001)

## **Selected Red Cross Movement activities**

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### **IFRC strategy focuses on disaster response and preparedness, and health care (2002-2003)**

- IFRC launches joint appeal for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), based on the needs of the national Red Cross societies
- Programmes includes improving the food security of returning IDPs in the Mfilou District in Brazzaville, through increasing agricultural production
- IFRC plans to strengthen the Congolese Red Cross Society's capacity to run a wide range of health care programmes

"In the Republic of Congo (RoC), based on the needs expressed by the national society, the Federation has formulated a country agreement strategy on the basis of the current situation in the RoC and on the premise that this situation will gradually improve. The strategy takes into account the extremely limited capacities of the national society and the scarcity of funds available at present. There is no doubt that structures need to be fully reorganized. Based on the positive experience carried out in DRC, the delegation is working toward the knowledge sharing with the DRCRC in organizational development. With the difficulties the country is currently undergoing, this restructuring process can only be carried out at the grassroots level.

The CRC has been committed to implementing the aims of the African Red Cross Health Initiative (ARCHI) once it has been established and accepted in the local context. The overall strategies with both Congolese national societies aim at developing activities with short-, medium- and long-term effects in the following areas:

**Disaster response and preparedness** The Federation will support the DRCRC and CRC implement food security programmes and re-launch the disaster response and preparedness programme in the branches located in the vicinity of the operational territories, providing first-aid training or retraining and supplying first-aid kits and other equipment. The Federation will provide assistance to the national societies to forge meaningful partnerships with the WFP and FAO; in RoC improve the food security situation of returning people to Mfilou District in Brazzaville by supporting the increase of agricultural production for 20 vulnerable families by 50 percent to ensure an adequate calorie intake. This activity will encourage the CRC to build on its earlier experiences and to strengthen its disaster preparedness at local, national and regional levels through the development of hazard maps of the high-risk disaster zones, set up an early warning and integrated disaster management structure within the ORSEC to respond, acquire, operate and manage equipment and stocks for rapid action and to participate and promote regionally co-ordinated disaster management activities.

**Health care** In the province of Bas-Congo in the DRC, the national society will, in the short term, continue supervision and distribution of medicines and medical supplies to 13 dispensaries. Using its strength in the field of first aid, the national society will promote community-based first aid (CBFA) training to target groups within the communities. In the RoC, Federation assistance to the national society will focus on

strengthening the capacity of the CRC to run health education exercises on malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition, a special programme to assist victims of sexual abuse, the primary health care rehabilitation programme in Kouilou region, and assist the branches in conducting hygiene and sanitation exercises in selected neighbourhoods.

Both national societies will be supported in activities relating to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and support to people living with aids (PLWAs) by scaling up efforts, increasing the knowledge of populations, and prevention through simple preventive measures. Using their solid experiences and networks in the regions, both national societies will be supported to implement activities related to Roll-Back Malaria to inform the population about malaria prevention and to promote and increase the use of impregnated bed nets in the target population.

Together with the UNFPA offices in both countries, the two national societies will be assisted in undertaking reproductive health programs with a view to strengthening the provision of reproductive health services for women victims of sexual violence, supply and support the reproductive health services of the ministry of health to provide quality health assistance to women victims of sexual violence, and to support the participation of Red Cross volunteers in the fight against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

The very successful poliomyelitis campaign in 2001 provided an opening to both national societies to establish fruitful partnerships with other organizations, strengthen the relations with government health ministries and create greater visibility for the two national societies. Having vaccinated over 11 million children under the age of five in DRC and 616,000 representing 20 percent of the total population in RoC, the Red Cross has gained the respect and recognition not only from the communities, their governments and partners but from the 850 volunteers from RoC and 1,120 from DRC who found inspiration and motivation in reducing the incidence of poliomyelitis in children. Using these experiences, the two national societies will again undertake polio campaigns in 2002 and 2003." (IFRC, 1 January 2002)

### **ICRC assists people displaced in the Pool area (2002)**

- In April 2002, ICRC, together with IFRC and the Congolese Red Cross, provided assistance to newly displaced persons sheltering in Kinkala, near Brazzaville
- Assistance focused on medical care and improved sanitary facilities

"Since 6 April, a team of relief workers from the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Congolese Red Cross has been assisting people displaced by armed clashes in the Pool area of the Republic of the Congo who are sheltering in Kinkala, a town south-west of Brazzaville. Following a survey of their needs, the team has provided them with medical care and improved sanitary facilities. The ICRC first opened an office in this city of almost 6,000 people in 1999.

The displaced people have gathered at three main sites: the Moundongo primary school (904 families or 4,520 people), premises provided by the Evangelical Church of the Congo (230 families or 1,150 people) and a Catholic church (60 families or 300 people). Since Kinkala hospital was deserted by its staff, Federation and Congolese Red Cross nurses have been dispensing primary health care in the city. The ICRC also evacuated three wounded civilians from Matoumbou to Kinkala.

The ICRC is currently building new latrines and showers for the displaced. in addition to improving and equipping those that already exist in order to forestall outbreaks of disease caused by poor hygiene. The water-supply is adequate for the moment thanks to 10 wells sunk in Kinkala last year by the ICRC, one in each of the city's neighbourhoods. The wells, outfitted with hand pumps, are in good working order and there is one located near each of the sites sheltering the displaced.

With food supplies beginning to dwindle, the ICRC has asked the United Nations World Food Programme to evaluate the situation. There has been little need for other relief supplies so far, although the ICRC distributed 200 jerrycans at one site.

In view of the steady stream of new arrivals to Brazzaville and the precarious conditions prevailing in the capital's southern section, the ICRC is keeping a close watch on the situation so as to be ready to provide further humanitarian assistance as needed." (ICRC, 11 April 2002)

*For more information on the ICRC in the Republic of Congo, [click here](#)*

## **Selected NGO activities**

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### **MSF conducts sleeping sickness programme in Plateaux region (November 2001)**

- MSF began providing assistance to Congolese populations in February 1999
- MSF worked in the northern and southern districts of Brazzaville as well as Brazzaville Centre Sportif transit centre during emergency
- MSF later started work in Pool, Kinkala and in Mindouli
- MSF began a sleeping sickness programme in the Plateaux region in 2001

"Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) began providing assistance to the populations in February 1999, first in the northern districts of Brazzaville, and then, when the displaced began to return in May, in the southern districts that were secured by government forces. Four therapeutic feeding centres were set up and medical screening and medical referral was carried out by MSF in the Centre Sportif.

In October 1999, 10 months after the onset of violence, aid agencies were able to access the south of the country. MSF began working in Pool – in Kinkala in November 1999, then in Mindouli in February 2000. We have collated the findings of qualitative and quantitative assessments to assess the health consequences of the war on the displaced population and the residents of Pool." (MSF 18 November 2001)

"With the MSF sleeping sickness programme now fully functioning in the Plateaux province of Congo-Brazzaville, the initial results indicate a very high prevalence of the disease. The project was first established in April this year [2001] and was fully functioning by mid-June.

Human African trypanosomiasis, better known as sleeping sickness, is a fatal neurological disease if left untreated. But even the current cure can kill.

'Up to now we have actively screened 1,570 people in Gombona town and surroundings', says country coordinator Sonja van Osch. 'There we found an overall prevalence of 6,5%. This is terribly high'.

MSF, which has been working in Congo-Brazzaville since 1997, started up the sleeping-sickness programme when it noticed signs that the deadly disease may have reached epidemic proportions in parts of the country. The health system is in ruins after years of civil war and there is no reliable epidemiological data.

'We felt that we should start an intervention in Plateaux, since we suspected that province to be one of the centres of the epidemic,' Sonya explained.

The Plateaux province borders the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the other side of the Congo River, which marks the border, MSF [and] other NGOs have been running sleeping-sickness programmes for several years and treating thousands of patients. The new MSF programme has already saved ten lives up till now and seems set to save many more.

'Once the active screening got started in the provinces, people got word from it and came to the referral hospital themselves', Sonya says. "This passive screening will form a significant addition to the outreach we do ourselves. People come from all over. Even foreigners who happen to be in the area come to our mobile clinics because they have heard about our programmes, even as far away as Cameroon or the Central-African Republic." (MSF 2001)

### **ACF has worked to support nutrition, food security, and water and sanitation schemes in Congo (2001)**

- ACF started mission in Congo in June 1999 with emergency nutrition activities
- ACF now conducts primary health activities in Mouyoundzi
- ACF also supports the rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructures in Brazzaville, Sibiti and Mouyoundzi
- ACF has conducted study on food security in southern regions of Congo

"ACF issued an exhaustive report on vulnerability and food security for the southern regions of the Congo (South Pool, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Niari). The survey aimed at determining the vulnerability of populations which are geographically, economically or politically isolated. It had two main goals: 1) get a thorough knowledge of the surveyed regions; 2) allow ACF and other organization to provide appropriate food security programmes. Finally recommendations are made for each identified vulnerability group (High-Medium-Low) based on a 'difficulties encountered/conceivable solutions table.'" (OCHA 31 January 2001)

"DOMAINES D'ACTION

#### **Programme médical:**

Programme de soins de santé primaire dans la région de Mouyoundzi; relance des activités de l'hôpital, des dispensaires: soutien au programme élargi de vaccination.

#### **Programme d'eau et assainissement:**

-Programme de réhabilitation et d'accès à l'eau potable à Brazzaville, Sibiti et Mouyoundzi: construction de sources d'eau alternatives (puits, captages, ...), éducation à l'hygiène, chloration de puits

-Programme de réhabilitation et d'accès à l'eau potable dans les hôpitaux de Sibiti.

[...]

Action contre la Faim a ouvert sa mission en juin 1999 au Brazzaville sur un positionnement 'urgence nutritionnelle', au départ sur Brazzaville puis sur Boko et Mindouli au fur et à mesure de l'ouverture de l'espace humanitaire. Acutellement, l'urgence passée, l'association centre ses activités sur des programmes de réhabilitation mais reste très attentive à la situation dans le Nord, en raison de l'afflux de réfugiés congolais (RDC)." (ACF 2001)

**IRC focuses on rehabilitation of health structures and assisting street children among other activities (May 2001)**

"The IRC Republic of Congo has its head office in Brazzaville as well as operational bases in Dolisie, Loukoulela and Betou. The IRC works closely with the government, United Nations agencies and local non-governmental organizations. The IRC's programs focus on rehabilitating health structures destroyed by the war, assisting street children in urban centers, providing shelter, water, sanitation, and health care to refugee populations, providing education and schooling facilities to refugee and local children, and protecting and ensuring the well-being of vulnerable members of the refugee and local populations, including female victims of sexual and gender based violence." (IRC 11 May 2001)

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