



PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : REPUBLIC OF CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)

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Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project
Chemin Moïse Duboule, 59
1209 Geneva - Switzerland
Tel: + 41 22 799 07 00
Fax: + 41 22 799 07 01
E-mail : idpsurvey@nrc.ch

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Republic of Congo: High hopes for IDP return

Thousands of people displaced by fighting in the Republic of Congo may soon return home, encouraged by a new climate of peace that could finally end more than a decade of intermittent civil war.

The UN estimates that as a result of the most recent outbreak of fighting that started in March 2002, some 84,000 people were internally displaced at the beginning of 2003, with at least another 60,000 inaccessible to aid agencies inside the conflict-torn Pool region (UN OCHA, 10 Jan 03). In addition, various agencies believe that as many as 150,000 remain displaced from two previous rounds of civil war that ended in 1999 with a peace deal between the government of Denis Sassou-Nguesso and rebel groups.

Peace at last?

In March 2003 Sassou-Nguesso's government and 'Ninja' rebels loyal to Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, entered into a new agreement to restore peace to the Pool region. This was followed by the voluntary disarmament of more than 2,300 rebel Ninja soldiers, and shortly after by the emergence of Ntoumi from his forest hideout in Pool, from where he had directed a guerilla campaign against the government since 1998 (IRIN, 29 Apr & 21 May 03).

So far the peace appears to be holding. The government even expressed optimism that all IDPs, many of whom are sheltering in camps in and around the capital Brazzaville, would return to their homes in the Pool region by the end of July 2003. While this may have been over-ambitious, there are at least signs of movement in this direction. In June 2003, the first full-scale inter-agency humanitarian assessment mission in over a year went to Pool with the aim of facilitating the eventual return of IDPs from the region (IRIN, 2 Jun 03). Humanitarian access had previously been extremely limited, and humanitarian conditions were reported to be catastrophic (UN CT, 19 Nov 02). Congo's Ministry for Humanitarian Activities was expected to share its final plan for IDP return to Pool with the humanitarian community in the country at the beginning of August 2003, and make possible requests for agencies' involvement in the plan.

Massive humanitarian needs remain

The June 2003 assessment mission to Pool reported that food and medicine were in short supply, and that widespread rehabilitation of homes, schools and health centres was needed. The mission also called for food-for-work in order to support the resumption of agricultural activities, which had ceased almost completely as a result of the insecurity in the region (IRIN, 8 Jul 03). This came only a few months after WFP expressed concern at the growing numbers of IDPs from Pool requiring food aid, just as relief supplies were dwindling. Many of the newly displaced were, at the beginning of 2003, camping in churches and abandoned buildings in Brazzaville and living in "very precarious conditions" (WFP, 14 Jan 03). Similarly, UNICEF reported a "huge unmet need for humanitarian assistance" for the newly displaced in Brazzaville and other regions, including thousands of IDPs who had come out of hiding in the forests and were temporarily taking refuge in Kindamba (UNICEF, 24 Jan 03). The most urgent needs were for food, shelter and medicine. In nine IDP camps just outside Brazzaville, MSF reported that while there was a "relatively low prevalence of malnutrition," the population was very vulnerable, and health care services in the camps were inadequate to meet medical needs (MSF, 9 Apr 03).

Displaced people have consistently endured extreme hardship throughout Congo's civil war. During previous rounds of fighting, thousands of IDPs hid in the forests of the Pool region and struggled to survive with neither aid nor shelter. As a result, these IDP populations suffered heavy mortality and morbidity

rates. 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.

Of the “old caseload” of IDPs from the 1998-1999 fighting – up to 150,000 people according to some agencies’ estimates – most are said to live in Brazzaville and integrated into the local population. While their needs are no longer critical, the UN reported in 2001 that at least some of these IDPs were not able to find either formal or informal work in the city.

Protection concerns

All parties to Congo’s armed conflict have carried out widespread human rights abuses against civilians, often those fleeing the violence. IDPs have been indiscriminately killed, used as human shields, abducted and raped. Amnesty International reported that in 2002, abuses also included “forced displacement of local unarmed civilian populations, some of which were reportedly attacked, killed or injured by government forces using helicopter gunships” (AI, 9 Apr 03). At least 27,000 women and girls were reportedly raped during or after the decade-long conflict (PANA, 23 Jan 03).

A large proportion of people displaced since October 2002 were victims of Ninja militias who appear to have used violence to force people from their homes and take control of villages. While fleeing, displaced people also faced harassment and extortion on their way to Brazzaville. Once in the capital, the displaced lived in fear of being abducted by rogue police officers (PANA, 31 Oct 02). In June 2002, displaced people in a camp in Kindamba complained about violence perpetrated by soldiers guarding the camp, and severe restrictions on their freedom of movement; the guards suspected them of cooperating with the Ninja rebels (AFP, 6 Jun 02).

Constrained UN response

United Nations agencies have plans to bring much needed aid to displaced people in Congo. For 2003-2004, the UN has drawn up an extensive plan of action, involving many agencies, focusing on the emergency needs of displaced people, gender equity, HIV/AIDS, restoring the rule of law and reducing poverty. Programmes that will have most impact on displaced populations are to be implemented by UNDP (reintegration of IDPs from the 1998-1999 war, and an evaluation of the IDP situation), WFP (food assistance), FAO (agricultural assistance), UNICEF (nutritional monitoring/ psychosocial assistance/ child care reinforcement), and WHO (health facilities for returning IDPs).

However, the UN’s assistance efforts for IDPs have been seriously constrained both by lack of access and lack of resources. While access to the war-torn Pool region has finally improved, and the first full-scale humanitarian evaluation of the entire region in over one year was allowed to take place in June 2003, funding for humanitarian programmes remains problematic. Of the US\$ 28.3 million requested by the UN in its 2003 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Congo, a mere 9 percent was funded as of August 2003. In January 2003 UN agencies warned that they did not have enough relief supplies to assist the growing number of people displaced by fighting in the Pool region, and that funds were urgently needed to bring life-sustaining aid to IDPs (UN OCHA, 10 Jan 03).

Congolese war victims have been forgotten before. In August 2001, UNDP reported that the overall lack of funding continued to hamper its efforts to support the post-war recovery in Congo, and UN agencies were not in a position to respond adequately to new emergencies (UNDP, August 2001). In 1998-1999, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for 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.

Years of civil strife

Congo's most recent episode of civil strife began with presidential elections in March 2002, when President Denis Sassou Nguesso won a landslide victory. His main rivals, Pascal Lissouba and Bernard Kolélas, were declared ineligible to run under a revised constitution. The two were in exile abroad after being convicted in absentia for crimes allegedly committed during the civil conflict in the 1990s. Soon after, government forces claimed that military positions in the Pool region were attacked by Ninja militias loyal to Kolélas. By early April, tensions between the two sides escalated into heavy fighting in Pool, around Brazzaville, and by June in the capital itself.

Three years earlier, a peace deal ended fighting that had killed and displaced many thousands of civilians. In December 1999, Sassou Nguesso's government and rebel forces signed a peace agreement ending two bouts of civil conflict that had left tens of thousands dead and hundreds of thousands more internally displaced. During the 1998–1999 conflict, 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.

Previous peace efforts were not successful. Despite efforts to restore peace after a 1997 civil war, violence erupted in September 1998 when each of the country's main political leaders – Sassou Nguesso, Lissouba and Kolélas – mobilized militia groups after the national army fractured along ethnic lines: respectively, the *Cocoye* or *Zulu*; the *Cobra*; and the *Ninja*. Ethnicity fuelled the fighting, but the lure of Congo's considerable offshore oil wealth played a key part.

Congo has suffered intermittent civil strife since 1992. In that year, the country's first democratic elections brought Lissouba, a southerner, to power. Violent, ethnic clashes broke out the following year between government forces and opposition after disputed parliamentary elections. Although peace was restored by 1995, full-scale civil war broke out in 1997 and Lissouba and Kolélas, his prime minister, were deposed by forces loyal to Sassou Nguesso, a northerner, backed by Angolan government troops.

Updated August 2003

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

Background to the conflict

Two major wars: from June-Oct.97 and Sept.98-Dec.99

- 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)

August 14

“Denis Sassou-Nguesso was sworn in on Wednesday in the Republic of the Congo (ROC) capital, Brazzaville, as president of the ROC, following his election on 10 March with reportedly more than 85 percent of the national vote.

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 held until the present day.” (IRIN 14 August 2002)

Congo president asked Ninjas to surrender, but residents of Pool proposed own peace plan (November 2002)

- Sassou-Nguesso urged the Ninjas to surrender and offered a safe passage, giving them a month to act on this
- A peace committee formed by Pool residents stressed that their peace plan was more realistic
- This plan, drawn up in October 2002 called for an end to the fighting, the opening of talks, the creation of safe corridors to get humanitarian aid to displaced people, an end to the shelling and bombing by the government, and also introduced a new amnesty

“President Denis Sassou-Nguesso has urged a rebel militia force active in the Pool region bordering on Brazzaville to surrender in exchange for a guarantee of "safe passage" from the army.

However, a peace committee formed by residents of the densely forested area said on Tuesday that Sassou-Nguesso's call would fall on deaf ears and considered that a plan they have drawn up was far more likely to work.

[...]

Sassou-Nguesso told a public meeting on Monday, attended by more than 1 000 people from the Pool, that he was giving the militiamen known as the Ninjas a month to leave their bases.

"From 18 November to 18 December, we have ordered forces of law and order - the army, the gendarmerie and the police - to open corridors in all parts of the Pool, to let the young armed men to come out and come to Brazzaville.

"As president of the republic, I guarantee the safety of the young men and their leaders who surrender to the Brazzaville authorities," said the former military ruler.

The Ninjas, led by Reverend Frederic Bitsangou, better known as Ntumi, have refused to lay down their arms since General Sassou-Nguesso, a former military ruler, seized back power at the end of a four-month civil war in October 1997.

The president, who won an election in March and saw his supporters win a parliamentary majority three months later, said that an amnesty proposed in 1999 was still valid.

The presidential appeal was dismissed as propoganda by Bonaventura Mbaya, spokesman for a peace committee set up by politicians and people from the Pool, who submitted their own peace plan to the government on November 7.

"This is pretty much propaganda. The Ninjas can't surrender after a simple appeal, they can only surrender if there is dialogue," Mbaya said after the head of state's announcement.

"The peace plan we put to President Sassou-Nguesso is the only way of definitively bringing peace back to the Pool," he said.

The plan, drawn up in October at meetings of about 250 people from all political backgrounds, calls for an end to the fighting between government troops and the Ninjas, the opening of talks and the creation of safe corridors to get humanitarian aid to displaced people.

The conflict has driven thousands of villagers either to Brazzaville or the neighbouring Bouenza region.

Many have fled their homes for deeper in the forest, and such relief agencies as have managed to get access to them have described their conditions as appalling.

[...]

The president made no reference in his address to the plan drawn up by war-weary people of the Pool, which also urged the government to stop shelling the area and bombing it from the air, as well as introducing a fresh amnesty.” (AFP 19 November 2002)

Congo chronology for 2002

“20 January - A referendum is held on a new constitution, which, if adopted, would do away with parliament and the post of prime minister.

11 February - The World Health Organisation says that as at 5 February, 69 cases of the Ebola infection were confirmed in the Republic of the Congo (ROC) and neighbouring Gabon. By 1 February, 20 confirmed cases, including 12 deaths, reported in the ROC.

26 February - UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers meets government officials and visits refugees in remote northern areas of the Oubangui river, in the northeast of the country. Some 84,000 people, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) north-western Equateur Province, seek refuge along an 800-km stretch of the river to escape renewed fighting between government forces and the Mouvement de liberation du Congo.

10 March - Denis Sassou-Nguesso is elected president of the for the next seven years, having garnered over 89 percent of the vote. This is 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.

26 March - Swedish diplomats say their government has agreed to provide eight million kronor (US \$773,320) to UN agencies to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the ROC.

28 March - The US government gives \$65,000 to the director of health services of the ROC armed forces in support of HIV/AIDS prevention education within the military.

30 March - Fighting erupts between Ninja rebels (named after the Ninja warriors of medieval Japan) and government forces in the locales of Intsini, Kindamba, Kingoyi, Louloubou and Mayama, all in the Pool region, northwest of the capital, Brazzaville. Three days later, Ninjas attack a train along the line from Pointe Noire to Brazzaville. The Ninja are loyal to the Rev Frederic Bitsangou (alias Pasteur Ntoumi).

11 April - At least 15,000 people remain displaced in Pool region and perhaps 50,000 in Brazzaville, as a result of panic provoked by continued fighting in the Pool region, and the Kinsoundi suburb of Brazzaville. Pool becomes inaccessible.

2 May - The World Bank's board approves \$40 million for the emergency reconstruction, rehabilitation of roads, drains, school facilities and living conditions improvement projects in the country.

20 May - The office of the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator in the country reports that at least 5,000 people have been trapped since 31 March in the town of Kindamba, in Pool. The government still refuses to grant the international community access to the area to assess humanitarian needs of the population.

28 May - In a statement released in Geneva, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson accuses government forces and rebels of showing "blatant disregard" for the safety and human rights of the civilians trapped by fighting in Pool.

2 June - A UN-chartered aircraft lands in Kindamba, in Pool, with 7.7 mt of food and non-food items, bringing the first relief aid to the beleaguered town since fighting erupted in March between government troops and the Ninjas.

4 June - Interior Minister Pierre Oba announces that 51 of 137 available National Assembly seats have been determined in the first round of legislative elections. President Sassou-Nguesso's Parti congolais du travail (the Congolese Labour Party) wins 29 of the 51 seats.

5 June - A direct telephone line is reinstalled between the DRC and neighbouring ROC after a 15-year hiatus due to aged equipment that was too expensive to replace.

11 June - UN agencies say at least 20,000 people in urgent need of humanitarian aid remain in inaccessible areas of Pool. The UN only has access the towns of Djamballa, Kinkala, Madzia, Kibouende, the east part of the railway line (on the south side only), Kindamba and Bouenza region, west of Pool.

14 June - Armed men, believed to be Bitsangou's men, attack Brazzaville's Maya Maya airport. Some 10,000 people flee the city. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) evacuates dead and wounded without hindrance.

23 June - Calm prevails in Brazzaville as voters go to the polls in the second round of nationwide legislative elections. Voter turnout is low in several districts.

25 July - After a one-month postponement due to a series of political elections, the year's nationwide campaign to vaccinate 682,640 children aged five years and under against polio gets under way, with government assurances of access to all districts in Pool.

29 July - The UN country team puts the number of people displaced in Pool at 66,000 since fighting broke out in March.

8 August - WHO donates 1,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets to three Brazzaville hospitals. The recipients are Talangai Hospital in the north of the city, Blanche Gomez in the centre and Makelekele Hospital in the south. The contribution is part of the global "Roll Back Malaria" campaign [<http://mosquito.who.int>].

14 August - Denis Sassou-Nguesso is sworn in as president.

18 August - Sassou-Nguesso announces his new government. Twelve members of the newly appointed government retain their portfolios from the transitional government or assume new duties, while 12 others are dropped.

11 September - Rwandan genocide suspect Jean Nsengiyumva , alias Jean-Baptiste Gatete, is arrested in the village of Ngombe, north Brazzaville. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, wanted him put on trial for genocide and other crimes against humanity committed in 1994.

23 September - The EC announces it will allocate 50.4 million euros (\$49,447,440) to ROC for 2002-2007 in support of efforts to fight poverty and reinforce democracy.

24 October - Belgian State Secretary Eddy Boutmans announces that his government is to donate almost \$5 million towards the demobilisation and reintegration of soldiers and armed groups in seven African countries, among them Burundi, the DRC, the ROC, the Central African Republic, and Rwanda.

18 November - The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says the UN is assisting at least 8,000 people on the outskirts of Brazzaville who were displaced in October by fighting in Pool.

18 November - President Sassou-Nguesso give rebels fighting in the Pool region until 18 December to surrender.

29 November - Heavy rains backed by gusting winds displaced some 5,000 people in Loukolela and Mossaka in the central region of Cuvette, Makotipoko in the south-central Plateaux region, and the riparian communities in Sangha and Ngoko, in the northwest, the prefect of Sangha region, Fulgence Milandou says.

16 December - Angola's remaining 1,500 troops backing Sassou-Nguesso begin to pull out, ending a five-year presence in the country.

31 December - The ICRC announces that two of its employees, Thierry Baudina, 41, and Congolese Guy Alain Ngoualer, 37, kidnapped on 4 December by rebels in the Bouenza region in the southwest of the country, have been released.” (IRIN, 17 Jan 03)

Renewed commitment to peace by government and Ninja rebels in March 2003

- In March 2003 government forces and Ninja rebels reaffirm an earlier ceasefire agreement of December 1999
- One month later at least 2,300 Ninja rebels voluntarily disarm
- The move towards peace is further strengthened with the emergence of Ninja rebel leader, Frederic Bitsangou (alias Pasteur Ntoumi), from his forest hideout in the Pool Region in May 2003

“Ninja rebels and the government of the Republic of Congo (ROC) have entered into a new commitment to restore peace in the crisis-torn Pool region.

In a declaration issued in the capital, Brazzaville, on Monday, a spokesman for the Ninja rebel leader, the Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, agreed to end hostilities, disarm his fighters, and enable the restoration of state authority in Pool.

At the same time, Minister of State Isidore Mvouba said the government would guarantee an amnesty offered to the rebels. He said ex-combatants would be reintegrated into the national army and included in a special committee to be formed to establish peace in Pool.

Conflict erupted in the Pool region between government forces and Ninja rebels loyal to Ntoumi in late March 2002.

Tens of thousands of people were forced to flee the region, while the fighting there trapped many more. Those who managed to escape were usually able to receive relief support, but humanitarian access to the vast majority left behind in Pool has been sporadic if not impossible.” (IRIN, 18 Mar 03)

“At least 2,300 rebel Ninja soldiers have surrendered with their weapons in recent days in the Pool Region of the Republic of Congo, according to the communications department of the Congolese Armed Forces (Forces armees congolaises).

This followed a peace agreement reached on 17 March between the government in Brazzaville and the Ninja leader, the Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, the military said.

On Monday, 812 rebels handed their weapons over to military authorities in Missafou, a small town on the Congo-ocean railway, some 110 km southwest of the capital, Brazzaville. Last week, between Wednesday

and Friday, at least 1,500 rebels also surrendered in the town of Mindouli, some 200 km from Brazzaville.” (IRIN, 29 Apr 03)

“Congoese militia leader Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, left his forest hideout in the Pool Region on Monday from where he had been leading a guerrilla war campaign against the government since 1998.

‘Peace is the work of God. At the end of the day it is the people who are the winners,’ he said at an event marking his emergence from the forest at Vindza, 150 km northwest of Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo.

Present at the ceremony was Col Casimir Ombere, a member of the Peace Convention and of Reconstruction Follow-up Committee set up to consolidate the 17 March peace accord between the government and Bitsangou's Conseil national de la résistance movement. Bitsangou's return to the national fold seals this deal.

Bitsangou's militia, known as the Ninja, has been waging a guerrilla campaign against the government in Pool from where hundreds of thousands of people have fled. The Ninjas had first signed a cessation of hostilities accord with the government in December 1999.

With the war now seemingly at an end, Bisangou said he wanted ‘a true national dialogue’, because that so far organised by the government was merely ‘a monologue’. However, government spokesman Alain Akoualat said on Wednesday the dialogue had been a success and that former President Pascal Lissouba and former Prime Minister Bernard Kolela were free to return home from exile.

Moreover, Ombere said the government would respect the accords signed and support of measures aimed at peace. He asked the former rebels ‘not to dig up the hatchet of war’, and called on the media not to ‘not throw oil into the fire’.

Bitsangou and his militia began their rebellion in December 1998 to 2000, then again in May 2002 before fleeing into the forests in the south of the country.” (IRIN, 21 May 03)

Causes of displacement

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)

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)

Fighting in Brazzaville between the army and "Ninja" rebels caused new displacement (June 2002)

- In June 2002, Brazzaville was the scene of two military attacks in the northeastern outskirts of the town
- The fighting between Ninja militias and government forces displaced tens of thousands of people

"Details about the conflict were still sketchy by midday, but diplomats said were considering two theories: First, that Ninja militias sought to attack government military installations and equipment at Mayama. "Government tanks lined up and fired in the area, and light arms were fired as well," a diplomat in Brazzaville told IRIN. "The military often retaliates this way - with heavy and light arms - to scare and deter the Ninjas."

Fighting erupted in ROC in late March when so-called Ninja militias attacked several government military positions in Pool region, north and west of Brazzaville, government said. However, Ninja representatives have said that the clashes were provoked when they discovered government plans to arrest their leader, the Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi.

A second explanation put forth was that this was an attempted coup d'etat, or perhaps the result of internal problems between the Congolese and Angolan forces, whose troops are present to support President Denis Sassou-Nguesso." (IRIN 14 June 2002)

"[...] people have fled Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, following two days of fighting between government forces and Ninja militias that began on Friday, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Office in the country reported.

On Friday, it said, Brazzaville endured two sustained military attacks in the northeastern outskirts of the town. The first was against the military based near the international airport at Maya Maya, and the second targeted a police school and a station of the gendarmerie in the neighbourhood of Moukondo. Hundreds of rounds of rockets, mortars, and heavy-calibre machine-gun fire were directed on both areas, the UN reported. The Ninja tried repeatedly, in vain, to destroy the government military helicopters at the airport.” (IRIN 17 June 2002)

New wave of displacement caused by fighting, banditry and attacks on villages (2002-2003)

- In October 2002, Ninja atrocities force thousands of people from their homes in the district of Mbandza Ndounga
- Displaced head for Brazzaville and are harassed on their way
- In December 2002, attacks by armed bandits on villages in northern Pool force residents to flee, mostly to Brazzaville
- Displacement caused by clashes between government troops and Ninja rebels continue into 2003

“Atrocities by "Ninja" militiamen headed by pastor Frederick Bitsangou, alias Ntumi and harassment by Congolese government forces have forced the displaced persons to leave their homes in Mbandza-Ndounga, Goma Tse-Tse and Boko districts.

According to witnesses, the Ninja militiamen have been forcing the population to leave the areas so that they can take control of villages.” (PANA 31 October 2002)

“Displaced people arrived in large numbers in the south of Brazzaville on the 19 and 20 October [2002], others are still arriving. Most of them come from the district of Mbandza Ndounga or from localities on the road between Brazzaville and Kimpanzou (second road to Kinkala). The people report they were attacked by bandits and forced to move towards the capital. They were racketed along their way, are now very poor and tired from their long walk and stay in churches or abandoned schools. More than 1700 people have been registered in three places beyond the bridge of Djoué on the 23rd October. The UN has started humanitarian assistance for these IDP's. Those who entered the capital and those who stay in families in the surroundings, they will be registered and provided with assistance.” (UN RC 24 October 2002)

“Armed bandits attacked villages close to Inga (100km from Brazzaville) in the north of Pool region during the night from 16 to 17 December hitting areas that were not concerned by the conflict until now. Those attacks, threats looting and burning of houses made people flee to the main road connecting Brazzaville to Oyo (RN2) between Imvouba and Odziba. Some villagers stayed there, others came down to Brazzaville and integrated host families in the northern areas of Brazzaville.

During the night of 22 to 23 December, several villages were attacked in the area of Nganga-Lingolo (20km from Brazzaville). People left their villages and walked to Brazzaville, they entered the city and joined host families in the southern areas of the capital.

The humanitarian community is preparing strategies to respond to new influx of IDPs. The most limiting factor is the lack of resources, therefore UN is considering mobilizing donors interest through the promotion of the UN Plan for 2003-2004.

The humanitarian community is worried by the duration of the conflict. At the moment no signs of improvement are perceived, meaning that the return of the IDPs in their region can not be foreseen.” (UN Resident Coordinator, 31 Dec 02)

“Ten people died when ‘Ninja’ militiamen attacked a town in Congo Republic, the latest in a string of clashes between insurgents and forces loyal to the president of the oil-rich nation, police said on Tuesday. Police sources said the dawn raid happened on Monday in a town called Yamba, some 250 kms (150 miles) southwest of the central African nation's capital Brazzaville. They said Yamba's police commissioner was killed in the attack.

The so-called Ninja fighters, who take their name from an ancient band of Japanese warriors made popular by Hollywood movies, hide out in the forests of the Pool region and are led by renegade Pastor Frederik Ntoumi.

They have launched a series of attacks from their southern strongholds since President Denis Sassou Nguesso won an election landslide in March last year, a poll from which his main rivals were excluded.” (Reuters, 11 Feb 03)

POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

Global figures

UN estimate puts IDP total at 84,000 since March 2002, with at least 60,000 inaccessible in Pool region (January 2003)

“Populations were on the move in the Republic of Congo's Pool region in November and December of 2002 due to bombing, fighting, banditry and attacks on villages. In mid-December, attacks on villages near Inga and Nganga-Lingolo caused people to flee their homes to seek shelter with host families in the capital, Brazzaville. This was in addition to displacement caused by aerial bombing in Yangui by the military in mid-November. The UN estimates that at least 84,000 people have fled the fighting between the Ninja rebels and Government troops, which began at the end of March 2002. Many others have not been identified as internally displaced persons because they have not been registered or are staying with relatives. The exact number of people displaced within the Pool region remains unknown because humanitarian aid workers have been denied access to this region while military operations were underway. Their best estimate is 60,000.” (UN OCHA, 10 Jan 03)

Since fighting erupted in March 2002, a total of 75,000 people have been displaced (July-November 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
- In November 2002, the IDPs still did not return home, although the possibility was very real
- The total number was estimated at some 75,000 displaced by November 2002

"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)

“About 66,000 people are currently displaced in the Pool region, just northwest of Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, since fighting broke out in late March [2002], the UN country team reported on Monday.

It said the UN and partner agencies had registered and helped the one-third of this number, who was now living in Brazzaville and the surrounding districts. The remaining two-thirds, the team reported, were "most probably" living in Pool.

"We are receiving very sporadic and limited information which indicates that most are residing in the forests near their destroyed homes, and preparing their fields for the upcoming planting season," Laura Linkenbach, head of the UN coordination unit in the country, said.

Fighting erupted when so-called Ninja militias attacked several government military positions in Pool, the government said. However, Ninja representatives said the clashes were provoked when they discovered government plans to arrest their leader, the Reverend Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi." (IRIN 30 July 2002)

November 2002

"The United Nations country team considers that the return of persons from the Pool region, who are currently displaced, to their homes is a very probable scenario. The United Nations considers it a priority to be ready to respond to needs associated with this return in case the Government makes such an appeal. In this scenario, an estimated 66,000 persons would require direct assistance through support in nutrition and agriculture (in a number of cases they missed two farming seasons), assistance in matters of health and non-food items, and aiding the host communities to rehabilitate damaged infrastructures." (UN CT 19 November 2002)

To this 66,000, the latest group of displaced has to be added which fled violence southwest of Brazzaville in October 2002

“Atrocities by "Ninja" militiamen headed by pastor Frederick Bitsangou, alias Ntumi and harassment by Congolese government forces have forced the displaced persons to leave their homes in Mbandza-Ndouna, Goma Tse-Tse and Boko districts." (PANA 31 October 2002)

“Presently (15/11/02) more than 8600 displaced people have been registered in 7 sites south of Djoué bridge in Brazzaville suburbs, others entered the city.” (Email from UN Coordination Unit Brazzaville to NRC Geneva 15 November 2002)

Prior to new displacements in 2002, estimates of remaining IDPs ranged from 0 to 150,000 (2001-2002)

- 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)

November 2002:

"The residual IDP population from 1998-1999 war is very difficult to estimate given that the people are now absorbed in the local population." (Email from UN Coordination Unit Brazzaville to NRC Geneva 15 November 2002)

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)

Geographical distribution

More than 8,600 people were displaced after renewed violence in Pool region (October 2002)

- Ninja violence in the Mbandza Ndounga district forced some 8,600 people from their homes in October 2002
- These were sheltered and assisted in seven sites in Brazzaville
- The statistics on the IDP number in the sites are updated regularly by the UN together with ASU and Caritas

"Atrocities by "Ninja" militiamen headed by pastor Frederick Bitsangou, alias Ntumi and harassment by Congolese government forces have forced the displaced persons to leave their homes in Mbandza-Ndounga, Goma Tse-Tse and Boko districts.

According to witnesses, the Ninja militiamen have been forcing the population to leave the areas so that they can take control of villages.” (PANA 31 October 2002)

“The UN is assisting over 8000 IDPs in six sites in the south of the capital. A seventh site was noticed on Friday 08/11/02. Most of the people started arriving since mid October from the district of Mbandza-Ndouna, others come from Kinkala, Louingi and Boko districts. People report they were attacked by bandits and forced to move towards the capital. They were racketed along their way, and reached Brazzaville and its outskirts in very poor conditions. They gathered in churches or partially destroyed buildings. The Government officially opened five (5) sites to accommodate the IDPs.”

[...]

The statistics on the number of IDPs in the sites are updated regularly by the UN in collaboration with implementing partners ASU and Caritas.

The table below summarizes the information for each site as of Friday 08/11/02.

Site	Households	Persons
Mantsimou	441	1 371
Annexe Loua	365	965
IDR (Loua)	994	2 734
EEC-Sangolo	153	395
Catho-Sangolo	470	1 626
Kimbanguistes Massisia	242	698
Salutistes Massissia	121	267
TOTAL	2 786	8 056

(UN RC 12 November 2002)

15 November 2002 :

“Presently (15/11/02) more than 8600 displaced people have been registered in 7 sites south of Djoué bridge in Brazzaville suburbs, others entered the city.” (Email from UN Coordination Unit Brazzaville to NRC Geneva 15 November 2002)

Tables of national IDP figure and geographical distribution (31 July 2002)

TOTAL NUMBERS OF IDPs

Registered and assisted	22,277
Non-assisted	44,004
Total IDPs	66,281

IDPs Registered And Assisted

LOCATION	FIGURES
Brazzaville	11,264
Plateau (Djambala)	248
Lekoumou (Zanaga)	1,030
Bouenza (Kingue, Yamba, Mfoati)	9,735
Total	22,277

Breakdown of IDPs by Place of Origin

LOCATION	TOTAL POPULATION	PERCENTAGE	IDPs
Kinkala (commune)	16,801	30%	5,040
Boko (commune)	2,784		0
Mindouli (commune)	20,930	30%	6,279
Kibouende	6,495		0
Kinkala (district)	34,514	30%	10,354
Boko (district)	17,310		0
Mindouli (district)	53,906	30%	16,172
Kindamba	21,030	50%	10,515
Ngoma Tse-Tse	34,598	20%	6,920
Mayama	9,313	50%	4,657
Ngabe	24,506		0
Mbaza-Ndounga	14,162		0
Louingui	12,872		0
Loumo	7,036		0
Igne ex PK rouge	19,957		0
Vinza	12,690	50%	0
Total	308,904	21.5%	66,281

(UN OCHA 31 July 2002)

Some 20,000 people fled new fighting in Brazzaville between the army and "Ninjas" (June 2002)

- Fighting between Ninjas and government forces displaced some 20,000 people,
- The people fled to neighbourhoods in Brazzaville which were untouched and were assisted by the UN in sites

“[...] people have fled Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, following two days of fighting between government forces and Ninja militias that began on Friday, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Office in the country reported.

On Friday, it said, Brazzaville endured two sustained military attacks in the northeastern outskirts of the town. The first was against the military based near the international airport at Maya Maya, and the second targeted a police school and a station of the gendarmerie in the neighbourhood of Moukondo. Hundreds of rounds of rockets, mortars, and heavy-calibre machine-gun fire were directed on both areas, the UN reported. The Ninja tried repeatedly, in vain, to destroy the government military helicopters at the airport.” (IRIN 17 June 2002)

“On 14 June 2002, attacks on Brazzaville sparked the movement of an estimated 20 000 persons towards neighbourhoods untouched by the events. Some people gathered in displaced sites, where the United Nations and their partners distributed assistance in the form of food, non-food items and water.” (UNCT 19 November 2002)

Kindamba: some 14,000 people fled into forests, while 2,000 remained in the city (May 2002)

"We found that 2,000 people remain in Kindamba out of the 16,000 who were there two months ago. The other 14,000 thousand have fled, mainly into nearby forests," he added.

"The 2,000 that remain are in a single site in the centre of the city, not in very good condition: some signs of malnutrition, lots of rapes, no latrine, no medical care." (BBC 30 May 2002)

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

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

More than 27,000 women raped during ten years of conflict (January 2003)

- At the beginning of 2003, rape continues to be common in conflict zones like the Pool Region
- NGOs have often highlighted rape and other human rights abuses committed by the former 'Cobra' militia group loyal to President Sassou-Nguesso

“More than 27,000 women and girls were raped during or after the decade-long conflict in Congo, newspapers reported in Brazzaville Thursday, quoting a UNICEF report.

Rapes are still common in conflict zones like Pool region, where fighting has been going on since March 2002 between government forces and ‘Ninja’ militiamen headed by Pastor Frederic Bitsangou, alias Ntumi.

Other women and girls were also raped during the violence, which occurred in major urban centres like Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Dolisie, Nkayi in the south, Owando and Gamboma in northern Congo.

However, this high figure does not reflect the true picture of how many people were raped in Congo because some of the victims are sometimes ashamed of reporting to NGOs.

NGOs have on many occasions accused government troops, a majority of whom once belonged to President Denis Sassou-Nguesso former ‘Cobras’ militia group of raping women and girls, or violating human rights.

Congo's Justice Minister Jean Martin Mbemba said that he was informed about cases of rape, arbitrary arrest, torture and other atrocities that were being committed in various police stations.

Violence has persisted between government forces and various militiamen since 1993 when these were created by the three top Congolese politicians -- President Denis Sassou Nguesso, his deposed predecessor Pascal Lissouba and the exiled former Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas.” (PANA, 23 Jan 03)

All parties to the conflict have committed widespread human rights abuses against civilians, according to Amnesty International (April 2003)

- Abuses committed by all parties to the conflict include killings, 'disappearances' and abductions, torture, including rape, and other forms of ill-treatment
- Throughout 2002 unarmed civilians were forcibly displaced, and some were reportedly then attacked, killed or injured by government forces using helicopter gunships

“In January and February 2002 Amnesty International delegates set out to look into on-going human rights concerns in the Republic of Congo. At the end of the visit to the capital, Brazzaville, the delegates found that the violent past continued to haunt the Republic of Congo, despite official protests to the contrary.

[...]

Successive Congolese governments have attempted to hold on to power and to build political stability on a foundation weakened by a history of impunity and against a background of grave human rights abuses by their forces and those of their armed opponents. The current government hoped that by winning a

Constitutional referendum in January 2002, a presidential election in March and a parliamentary election in June it would eliminate all armed opposition. A month after the referendum, armed conflict erupted in the Pool region, south of Brazzaville. Indeed the general election which was initially scheduled for March 2002 had to be postponed. As fighting between government forces and armed government opponents escalated after the elections, all parties to the armed conflict carried out widespread serious human rights abuses, including unlawful and indiscriminate killings, 'disappearances' and abductions, torture, including rape, and other forms of ill-treatment. Other abuses which continued to be reported throughout 2002 included forced displacement of local unarmed civilian populations, some of which were reportedly attacked, killed or injured by government forces using helicopter gunships." (AI, 9 Apr 03)

Displaced faced harassment and threats before, during and after displacement (October 2002)

- During October 2002, people were displaced from Mbandza Ndounga by Ninja atrocities
- The displaced were racketed on their way to the capital Brazzaville
- Once arrived, the displaced have reportedly been living in fear of abductions by certain Congolese police officers

"Displaced people arrived in large numbers in the south of Brazzaville on the 19 and 20 October [2002], others are still arriving. Most of them come from the district of Mbandza Ndounga or from localities on the road between Brazzaville and Kimpanzou (second road to Kinkala). The people report they were attacked by bandits and forced to move towards the capital. They were racketed along their way, are now very poor and tired from their long walk and stay in churches or abandoned schools." (UN RC 24 October 2002)

"Atrocities by "Ninja" militiamen headed by pastor Frederick Bitsangou, alias Ntumi and harassment by Congolese government forces have forced the displaced persons to leave their homes in Mbandza-Ndounga, Goma Tse-Tse and Boko districts.

According to witnesses, the Ninja militiamen have been forcing the population to leave the areas so that they can take control of villages.

The Ninja rebels killed several villagers who tried to oppose their installation in their areas.

The displaced villagers had to walk for two to three days to reach Brazzaville. They are temporarily living in [...] makeshift shelters at the Rural Development Institute (IDR) and in the parishes of the Evangelical Church in Loua and Mansimou.

Relatives in Brazzaville are hosting others because living conditions in the camps are very precarious.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), Action Secours d'Urgence (an NGO belonging to the Evangelical Church) and UNICEF have been providing basic drugs to the displaced persons.

Meanwhile, the displaced are reportedly living in fear of abductions by certain Congolese police officers.

The displaced, whose number is steadily rising, have called on the Congolese government to rapidly end hostilities so that they could return to their respective villages.

About 100,000 people have been forced to leave the Pool region since fighting between Ninja militiamen and the Congolese army Started in March 2002. These have fled to the neighbouring regions of Bouenza, Plateaux and Brazzaville." (PANA 31 October 2002)

Helicopter gunship attacks on villages caused 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 guerrillas, the presumed target of the attack on Zandu." (IRIN, 3 June 2002)

Both parties to the conflict committed human rights abuses against civilians (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

IDPs in camp severely restricted in their freedom of movement by camp guards (June 2002)

- Displaced sheltered in a camp in Kindamba faced violence and restriction of their freedom of movement by camp guards
- The deputy governor of Kindamba backed the soldiers pointing to suspected cooperation between some civilians and the Ninjas
- The restriction made it difficult for the displaced to go into the fields and find food

"Some 2,000 Congolese who have fled fighting in the country's troubled Pool region now face violence at the hands of soldiers "guarding" a camp for displaced people near Brazzaville.

Daniel Francois Moutsoupa, a retired teacher who fled his home in March [2002] when fighting broke out between government troops and the renegade Ninja militia, has complained bitterly about the refugees' treatment at the camp in Kindamba, southwest of the capital.

"Our movements are tightly controlled by the soldiers who guard the camp. Under these conditions, it is difficult to go into the fields and find food," he told AFP.

The soldiers stand guard with Kalashnikovs at the two entrances to the camp from where they carefully control the slightest movement of the refugees, especially the men, whom they suspect of supporting the Ninjas.

Every day they draw up a list of those who leave the camp to look for scarce cassava in the surroundings forests.

"We have to tell them exactly where we are going and when we will be back," Moutsoupa said.

The deputy governor of Kindamba, Colonel Jean Michel Senga, believes the soldiers are right to stringently control movements in and out of the camp, as he suspects some civilians of cooperating with the Ninjas.

"A lot of the population cooperate with the Ninjas. That is why we restrict the movement of the men," he said.

[...]

Some of the women at Kindamba have been raped by the soldiers, according to a shopkeeper at the camp.

"At the beginning of the crisis, women were raped here. Now things have improved. The soldiers who have been deployed recently are more disciplined," said Edouard Babakana." (AFP 6 June 2002)

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

Tens of thousands of IDPs in urgent need of relief assistance (January 2003)

- More than 8,000 IDPs who emerged from the forests in early 2003 are in urgent need of food, medicine and shelter
- In Brazzaville and Bouenza regions more than 35,000 temporarily settled IDPs are, at the beginning of 2003, in desperate need of humanitarian assistance

“People from all segments of the population have demanded that the armed conflict in the Pool region stop. The government is currently searching for solutions to an end of the armed conflict by opening up opportunities for the Ninjas to disarm and come into Brazzaville. As a result of this peace campaign, the situation in Kindamba, Kimba and Vindza districts is increasingly less tense with less confrontation between Ninjas and the military. More than 8,000 displaced persons that found refuge in the forests have begun to come out and have temporarily concentrated in 7 sites in Kindamba. They urgently require relief assistance, particularly food, non-food supplies, tarpaulins for temporary shelter, medicines, vaccines and BP-5 biscuits for survival. Concerted efforts to bring all children back into the education system must also be given priority. A successful peace campaign will be followed by the massive return of at least 35,000 people or 7,000 families to their original towns and villages in the Pool region. As expected, more areas will be opened-up for humanitarian aid agencies to reach the IDPs that remained hiding in the remote forest areas of the Pool region.

Displaced families, women and youth also need to be supported with economic activities (e.g. training and micro-credit assistance) in order to build their capacity to cope with current difficult living conditions and sustain their daily existence.

[...]

There is a huge unmet need for humanitarian assistance for the displaced that have moved to Brazzaville and other regions. UNICEF emergency supplies are now depleted and need to be replenished to serve the more than 35,000 displaced persons who are temporarily settled in the Brazzaville and Bouenza regions and in the villages and districts of Lekoumou, Plateaux, Bouenza, Niari and Pool. In addition, those newly arrived IDPs (estimated at 2,500 families) to Brazzaville housed by host families or relatives need immediate assistance.” (UNICEF, 24 Jan 03)

Conditions in seven IDP camps in Brazzaville critical (November 2002)

- The main problems were related to water, sanitation and shelter
- All seven sites were at the limit of their capacities

“The major problems on those sites are water, sanitation and shelter. No severe health problems have been reported yet but the risk is still there given the insufficient sanitation installations.

The most reported illnesses are malaria, severe respiratory infections, diarrhoea and skin diseases.

[...]

The water sources are not sufficient. Presently, people use the available water and add chlorine. In three (3) of the sites, the lack of clean water problem could be resolved with bladders and pumps. For the other ones, other solutions will be required (water tank).

The shelters are insufficient. Some existing shelters need to be improved by sheeting the roofs in some sites.

All sites are at the limit of their capacities. One possibility is to improve conditions on existing sites by increasing shelter (tents, sheeting of existing buildings) and water. The other solution is to find other sites that have larger shelter and water capacities.” (UN RC 12 November 2002)

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)

Food

Growing number of Congolese IDPs need food aid (January 2003)

- By January 2003 the number of IDPs needing WFP food increases 100 percent since fighting resumed in October 2002, to a total of about 30,000
- Newly displaced people are encamping in churches and abandoned buildings, and are reliant on relief food for survival
- WFP also extremely concerned about the estimated 60,000 IDPs inaccessible in the forests of Pool
- WFP complains that food stocks are inadequate to meet the needs

“WFP is concerned about growing numbers of people who need food aid after being displaced by fighting in the Republic of Congo.

Last December, over 1,800 newly displaced people escaped from RoC's conflict area near the capital Brazzaville, seeking safety and assistance at [WFP] camps.

With more victims arriving every day, the number of IDPs needing WFP food has increased 100 percent since fighting resumed in October 2002.

To cope with the sudden influx, over the next six months the agency urgently needs an estimated 4,000 metric tons of food aid.

WFP currently provides relief food for some 30,000 victims of the continuing conflict between government forces and rebels in the Pool region.

CAMPED OUT

The newly displaced population is encamped in churches and abandoned buildings in Brazzaville, Bouenza Plateaux and Niari.

‘The living conditions of these people are very precarious,’ said Sory Ouane, WFP's Country Director for RoC.

‘They fled fighting bringing absolutely nothing with them. Their survival depends on the provision of relief food.’

‘We already have cases of malnutrition among children and elderly people,’ [Ouane added] ‘Their lives are at stake if we are forced to suspend operations for lack of funds.’

Most of the displaced people walked for several days in the forest to avoid armed men before they found refuge in the camps.

In the rush to escape, people lost everything. Some families were separated, creating female-headed households and unaccompanied children.

DWINDLING STOCKS

Without urgent new donations, WFP fears that by March 2003 food rations will be reduced from the standard level of 2,167 kilocalories per person per day to 1,500 kcal.

Further cuts will be imposed until all stocks are exhausted, at which point the programme will be suspended.

OUT OF REACH

WFP is also concerned with another estimated 60,000 people trapped in the forest and off limits to aid workers.

Since the conflict began last March, thousands of people who fled the fighting hid in the forest, unable to find safe passage to peaceful areas.

So far, all efforts to negotiate humanitarian access to the Pool region have failed.

‘We are extremely concerned about the fate of these people,’ Ouane said. ‘We don’t know their condition, but we fear the worst.’

‘Even if we eventually gain access to them, our lack of funds might prevent us from giving them the help they need.’ ” (WFP, 14 Jan 03)

Health and Nutrition

Inadequate health care services in Brazzaville IDP camps, says MSF (April 2003)

- Between October 2002 and April 2003, more than 10,000 IDPs from Pool resettle in nine camps just outside Brazzaville
- In an assessment in the camps, MSF finds a relatively low prevalence of malnutrition, but finds that primary health care services were inadequate to meet the medical needs of the population

“In Congo-Brazzaville, the conflict between government and Ninja rebels in the Pool region restarted in March last year. Since October 2002, over 10,000 IDPs from Pool have resettled in nine camps just outside the Brazzaville city limits.

Last week the MSF team conducted an exhaustive survey of all children-under-5 in these camps. The survey revealed a relatively low prevalence of malnutrition. However, as this is a very vulnerable population and also in order to keep an eye on their humanitarian situation, MSF initiated a mobile dry supplementary feeding centre. This feeding programme is targeted at vulnerable groups within the IDP population including children below 130cm, pregnant and lactating women and the elderly.

During its assessments, the team also learnt that primary health care services were inadequate to meet the medical needs of the population; access and availability of drugs for malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory infections were poor. In order to address this gap in humanitarian assistance, the team now supports health posts in specified IDP camps with drugs, training and supervision to ensure optimal quality and free preventative and curative care services.

In late March, the government of the Republic of Congo and Ninja authorities signed a peace agreement. This agreement provides the basis for officially opening the borders of the Pool region and it should end the fighting and torching and looting of villages.

However, the IDP population remains sceptical of the security situation, and for the time being are not returning home. Meanwhile, MSF has recently made its first exploration into the region. Over the course of coming weeks, the aim is to further assess the security situation in the Pool and informally evaluate the medical needs of resident and returning populations.” (MSF, 9 Apr 03)

Ebola outbreak declared over after claiming 136 lives (June 2003)

- Lethal ebola virus erupts in Cuvette-Ouest region at the beginning of 2003, and kills 136 people by mid-April

“Health Minister Alain Moka announced on Thursday an end to the latest outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Republic of Congo.

He told reporters in the capital, Brazzaville, that there had been no deaths due to Ebola, a virulent haemorrhagic fever with no known cure, since 22 April.

He said sufficient time had passed to allow an official declaration of the end of the outbreak that erupted at the beginning of 2003 in the Cuvette Ouest Region, 500 km north of Brazzaville.

Moka said a public information campaign conducted by his ministry and the ministry of communication helped prevent further spread of the disease.

‘However, more work remains to be done to consolidate the gains we have made so that in the event of future epidemics we will have a population and professional staff with a good understanding of how to react,’ he said.

He added that countrywide training of medical staff would take place with funding provided by the World Bank. At the end of May, the African Development Bank, the continent’s foremost financial institution, granted the Congo US \$500,000 for the government to acquire information-gathering material and to train staff in its use, and to procure communication equipment to help fight the spread of Ebola.

By early May, the number of Ebola cases identified in Cuvette Ouest had risen to 175, with 136 deaths, the bank said.

Authorities were first alerted to a possible Ebola outbreak when a band of gorillas in the region began dying in December 2002. Tests carried out on the bodies confirmed that they had died of Ebola. The latest outbreak was believed to have been caused by villagers eating primates infected by Ebola.

Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with body fluids of infected persons or other primates. Between 50 percent and 90 percent of Ebola victims die.” (IRIN, 6 Jun 03)

Up to one-third of the displaced in affected regions suffer from malnutrition (November 2002)

- Evaluation of the nutritional conditions among the displaced in the Pool and Bouenza regions revealed that between 10 and 30% suffer from severe to moderate malnourishment

“In April 2002, events in the Pool region again caused the displacement of persons toward Brazzaville and the Bouenza, Lekoumou and Plateaux regions. A number of families have been found blocked in forest areas within the Pool. An evaluation of nutritional conditions in camps for displaced persons there revealed that between 10 and 30% of them suffer from malnutrition (severe and moderate) in the Bouenza region, compared to 9.85% in Lekoumou.

Humanitarian organizations already fear a humanitarian catastrophe in the area, compounded by the destruction of essential social services and the lack of food supplies. In fact, as a result of the war, several

farmers have missed at least two harvests (market gardening and subsistence). The United Nations intends to pay particular attention to these populations once access conditions in the Pool improve.

[...]

Recent events in the Pool region have again caused the displacement of persons to the surrounding regions of Bouenza, Brazzaville, Lékoumou, Plateaux, and the forests in the Pool. Evaluation of the nutritional conditions among the displaced in the Pool and Bouenza regions revealed that between 10 and 30% of the children suffer from severe to moderate malnourishment; in the Lekoumou region the rate is 9,85%." (UN CT 19 November 2002)

Conflict and displacement are factors fuelling the spread of HIV/AIDS (July 2002)

- Conflict and displacement contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, Save the Children said in a new report
- Young people were most at risk, with children becoming particularly vulnerable when forced from their homes
- In the Republic of Congo, armed conflict increased the prevalence of HIV/AIDS with a "torrent of rapes committed"

"Conflict is a root cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS, and it is promoting up the transmission of the virus, says the international aid agency, Save the Children.

A report, entitled "HIV and Conflict: A Double Emergency", issued at the international AIDS conference being held in Barcelona, Spain, said conflict situations were fuelling the rapid spread of HIV as a result of the exploitation of women forced to resort to sexual bartering due to food scarcity; people being forced from their homes; low levels of HIV awareness; an absence of sexual and reproductive health services; and an increased likelihood of use of unscreened blood.

"Agencies responsible for the provision of food and livelihood security, including the United Nations World Food Programme [WFP], must take steps to ensure that people have enough food to reduce the risk of young girls and women being forced into trading sex to survive. "Lack of targeted funding from donor countries means there is little or no access to HIV prevention and treatment services in many conflict-affected countries," Save the Children reported.

Young people were most at risk, with children becoming particularly vulnerable when forced from their homes, it said. Children were affected not only by contracting the virus but also by having to head families after the death of one or more parents.

"Unless HIV in conflict situations is addressed, we are likely to see HIV clustering zones in sub-Saharan Africa in the medium term, fuelling infection in nearby peaceful areas," it said.

[...]

In the Republic of Congo, the "cycle of armed conflict", which began in the early 1990s and continued to the present day, had increased the prevalence of HIV/AIDS with a "torrent of rapes committed", said an indigenous advocacy organisation, l'Association Panafricaine Thomas Sankara.

Of 4,890 women surveyed in the capital, Brazzaville, 1,745 had been raped during and after the war of December 1998, the association reported. The ROC military constitutes the group with the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS, with at least half of the beds at the Pierre Mobengo Military Hospital being occupied by soldiers with the virus." (IRIN 10 July 2002)

Displaced trapped in Kindamba reported to be in poor health (May 2002)

- Witnesses report evidence of disease and malnutrition

"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." (UN RC/HC 20 May 2002)

"UN and NGO aid workers found 2,000 displaced, almost all women, children and the elderly, packed into one site in the town's centre. The town's other 14,000 inhabitants have fled, mainly to nearby forests. That day was the first they were allowed to go to out the fields surrounding the town to collect fruits and vegetables. A small market had been improvised within the camp. Civilians stated that before 28 May they had been eating very irregularly, sometimes buying food from the military. Conditions are dire. The site has only one -- open -- latrine located in the middle of the dense living area. A makeshift health centre had been set-up outdoors on two tables within the site, but lacked any supplies. Diarrhoea was especially common." (UN RC 31 May 2002)

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

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

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)

Public Participation

People displaced after June fighting were reluctant to vote (June 2002)

- Displaced were traumatised and unwilling to vote in the second round of the parliamentary elections
- The first round took place on 26 May 2002 and was marred by fighting in the Pool region
- All elections in the affected districts of Pool have been postponed until the return of stability and an estimated 20,000 IDPs

"Would-be voters in Congo's parliamentary elections who have been displaced by heavy fighting between rebels and government forces appear reluctant to venture out to the polls on Sunday, candidates said.

"I just spoke to my voters who were displaced by fighting last week. They are all traumatized and do not seem ready to vote on Sunday," said Thierry Mounkala, a candidate from a western Brazzaville district, Mfilou, where fighting took place between government forces and rebels last Wednesday.

The fighting sparked by an attack by "Ninja" rebels on the international airport west of the Congolese capital also affected western Brazzaville's La Base and Moukondo districts.

Residents fled their homes to take refuge in neighboring districts or church shelters.

[...]

Most residents of western Brazzaville, who fled when the fighting broke out, had returned home on Wednesday, an AFP reporter said. However several thousand living in the vicinity of the airport were still staying away.

Moungala, a member of the opposition Union for Democracy and the Republic (UDR), said: "The voters of Mfilou told me they wanted to go home. They are traumatized because their homes were looted by men in uniform who prevented them from going home."

On Wednesday the party applied to the electoral commission and interior ministry for a postponement of the vote in Mfilou and in one Moungali constituency.

It will be the second round in the central African country's first legislative elections in a decade. The first round, which took place May 26 [2002], was marred by fighting in the Pool region southwest of Brazzaville, where the army is hunting down Ninjas.

Voters in eight of 14 voting districts in the southern region of Pool were unable to cast their ballots in the first round because of the unrest.

Independent Mfilou candidate Stanislas Ebata-Mongo said he had suggested that the displaced voters from his constituency be lodged in a high school so that they could vote despite their displacement. "They were reluctant for security reasons," he said." (AFP 20 June 2002)

"All elections in the affected districts of Pool have been postponed until the return of stability and an estimated 20,000 internally displaced residents." (IRIN 24 June 2002)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

Government hopes all Pool IDPs will return home by end of July 2003

- The situation in Pool improved following the March 2003 peace agreement, leading to a resumption of administrative activities across the region and the steady return of IDPs
- A recent inter-agency humanitarian assessment mission to Pool reported a need for food and medicine supplies, as well as widespread rehabilitation of homes, schools and health centres, and the need to resume agricultural activities

“With the resumption of administrative activities across the troubled Pool Region in the Republic of Congo, the government has expressed hope that all internally displaced persons (IDPs) would be back in their homes by the end of July.

A statement issued by the government on Friday after a ministerial meeting in the capital, Brazzaville, said there had been a steady return of IDPs who had fled fighting in Pool since March 2002.

The improved situation in Pool followed a peace agreement signed on 17 March between the government and ‘Ninja’ rebels of Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, which ended a year of hostilities. Tens of thousands of people fled the region, while fighting trapped many more. Those who escaped were usually able to receive relief support, but humanitarian access to the vast majority left behind in Pool has been sporadic if not impossible.

The council of ministers requested that a cost evaluation for the return be conducted, and called on the UN system to help in the exercise.

The government also asked relevant authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure a smooth opening of the 2003-2004 schoolyear in October.

Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso called on all ministers involved in restoring peace in Pool to ensure that all youths handed over weapons in their possession in order to be allowed to return to school.

A recent joint UN-NGO-government humanitarian assessment mission to Pool found that food supplies and medicines were in short supply, and that widespread rehabilitation of homes, schools and health centres was needed.

The mission also called for food-for-work activities to support the restart of agriculture, rendered nearly impossible during the year-long hostilities.” (IRIN, 8 Jul 03)

Security was main obstacle for return for people displaced during October 2002 (November 2002)

- Some 8,600 people displaced after Ninja violence in October 2002 are unable to return due to insecurity in home areas

“Atrocities by "Ninja" militiamen headed by pastor Frederick Bitsangou, alias Ntumi and harassment by Congolese government forces have forced the displaced persons to leave their homes in Mbandza-Ndounga, Goma Tse-Tse and Boko districts.

According to witnesses, the Ninja militiamen have been forcing the population to leave the areas so that they can take control of villages.” (PANA 31 October 2002)

“Presently (15/11/02) more than 8600 displaced people have been registered in 7 sites south of Djoué bridge in Brazzaville suburbs, others entered the city. Those people want to return to their villages but their security can not be assured yet.” (Email from UN Coordination Unit Brazzaville to NRC Geneva 15 November 2002)

Displaced were forced to return home, just before parliamentary elections (June 2002)

- The Congolese authorities decided two days before the elections to forcibly send home people displaced during the June 2002 violence
- Most of the displaced moved to host families in town when they were asked to leave the camps
- Many of them did not return to their homes until 15 August 2002, the day after the announcement of the end of the transition government

“At least 10,000 people have fled Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, following two days of fighting between government forces and Ninja militias that began on Friday, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Office in the country reported.” (IRIN 17 June 2002)

”Congolese authorities decided on Friday, two days before the second round of the country's parliamentary elections, to forcibly send home people who had sought refuge in churches during the recent fighting in the western part of Brazzaville.

The second ballot will be held on Sunday to enable voters to fill the remaining seats at the national assembly.

Clashes took place on 14 June between government troops and Ninja militiamen led by Father Frederik Bitsangou aka Ntumi in the areas of Mfilou, La Base and Moukondo, near Brazzaville airport.

The fighting drove thousands of civilians to neighbouring areas. Most of the displaced stayed in churches and private homes.

On Thursday, Congolese communication minister Francois Ibovi said at a news conference that attacks by "terrorist gangs" could not put into question the electoral process.

However, opposition candidates called on the government to postpone the elections by a week in areas affected by the fighting, to enable people to recover from the trauma caused by the clashes.

[...]

In the second round, voters will elect another 78 MPs. There will be no elections in eight constituencies in the southern Pool region, where clashes are going on between government troops and Ninja militiamen.” (PANA 22 June 2002)

Many did not return until 15 August 2002:

“In June 2002 the IDPs [...] were asked to return to their homes. Most of the people who were in sites moved to host families in town when they were asked to leave the sites. Many of them did not return to

their homes until 15th of August (day after announcement End of transition government).” (Email from UN Coordination Unit Brazzaville to NRC Geneva 15 November 2002)

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)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Aid workers abducted while assessing IDP needs are released after three weeks (December 2002)

“Two staff members of the international Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who had been held since 4 December were released yesterday in the Bouenza region, in southwestern Congo.

Both men, a Frenchman aged 41 and a Congolese aged 37, were in good health when they were reunited with their ICRC colleagues.

The ICRC is relieved to see them return and gratified that reason has prevailed. It warmly thanks all those who have helped bring about a happy resolution to a difficult situation.

The men disappeared while assessing the needs of displaced people in the Bouenza region.” (ICRC, 29 Dec 03)

Humanitarian access to the Pool region continued to be limited (August-October 2002)

- In August 2002, the UN requested access to four towns, but was allowed to go only to Kindamba and Kinkala
- In October 2002, the UN continued the negotiations to gain access to the Pool region, but the security situation was deteriorating

August 2002:

“Still in close contact with government officials, the UN continues to negotiate and coordinate humanitarian access to the most affected zones in the Pool region. The UN has requested humanitarian access to four towns (Kindamba, Mayama, Kimpello and Kinkala) in the Pool district, but for the moment, the UN has only been granted humanitarian access to two key towns - Kinkala by road and Kindamba by air. The newly appointed government has expressed willingness and openness to discussing security concerns and humanitarian access to the Pool region.” (UN RC 24 August 2002)

October 2002:

“Still in close contact with the government officials, the UN continues to negotiate humanitarian access to the Pool. On the 26th of September 2002, the UN requested humanitarian access to the area of Kindamba and to the district of Mindouli in the Pool Region. Access to the Pool by road or rail has been denied by the authorities until now for security reasons. No road access to the Pool region has been given since end of June. The last humanitarian UN mission in the Pool took place in the beginning of August in Madzia where food distribution was completed.

The security situation in the Pool region is not improving. Repeated attacks on trains and trucks have been reported.” (UN RC 24 October 2002)

See our map section for a [map on the humanitarian access to the Pool and surrounding regions \(map of 24 August 2002\)](#)

Humanitarian access to Pool region very limited and will worsen as rainy season starts (July 2002)

- Access to the Pool region has been hampered by the insecure situation
- The UN estimated that some 20,000 people live in the forests and urgently need humanitarian assistance
- Humanitarian access to the interior will become more complicated as the rainy season approaches, beginning in October

“Lack of humanitarian access to central Pool region, the epicenter of the fighting, is still very limited by insecurity. Having been repeatedly destroyed during the civil wars over the last decade, this region has the country’s worst human development indicators as well as the most overwhelming humanitarian needs. The UN presently estimates that there are still at least 20,000 people living in the forests of the Pool region who urgently need humanitarian assistance but cannot be accessed by humanitarian aid agencies.

Humanitarian access to the interior will become more complicated as the rainy season approaches, beginning in October, due to the poor state of rural roads, intermittent traffic along the Pointe Noire-Brazzaville railway line, and the short single grass airstrip in the area.” (UN OCHA 31 July 2002)

“The UN remains in contact with governmental officials on a daily basis to coordinate access to the most affected zones in Pool region where humanitarian assistance is needed urgently, depending on Government assessment of security. At present, the UN has access to the towns of Djamballa, Kinkala, Madzia, Kibouende, the east part of the railway line (on the south side only), Kindamba and Bouenza region (west of Pool region). However, the UN still does not have access to many areas of great concern in the Pool region including Mayama, Vinza, Kimba, and the west part of the railway line such as Mindouli (between Matoumbou and Loutété). The UN estimates there are still at least 20,000 persons in the Pool region inaccessible to humanitarian aid agencies, which urgently require humanitarian assistance.” (UN RC 11 June 2002)

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 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)

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)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

National response

Camp management in Brazzaville shared by displaced and government (November 2002)

“The UN is assisting over 8000 IDPs in six sites in the south of the capital. A seventh site was noticed on Friday 08/11/02. Most of the people started arriving since mid October [2002] from the district of Mbandza-Ndouna, others come from Kinkala, Louingi and Boko districts.[...]

For the management of the sites three levels have been identified:

First level: on the site 10 people (displaced and host) form the local coordination committee. The committee will be made taking into consideration the skills available on the site and encouraging the participation of women.

Second level: on each site the local supervision will be done by a staff from the Ministry of Humanitarian Action in collaboration with a representative from implementing partners.

Third level: national coordination committee will be made up of the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and the humanitarian partners, with one focal point for each sector (health, nutrition, food, water & sanitation, security, shelter, education, statistics & population).” (UN RC 12 November 2002)

Government creates Ministry for Humanitarian Activities, responsible for IDPs (2000-2002)

- 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)

International funding

USA, China offer support to Pool Region IDPs (April - July 2003)

- In May 2003, US government donates over US\$ 54,000 to provide shelter, school kits and non-food items for thousands of IDPs from Pool camped near Brazzaville
- This is supplemented in July 2003 by an additional 1,000 mt of food aid for IDPs from Pool, worth over US\$ 930,000
- Chinese government also gives some US\$ 26,000 to help the return home of IDPs from Pool

"The US government has made a supplementary contribution of 1,000 mt of food aid for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Pool Region of the Republic of Congo, the US embassy announced on Wednesday in the capital, Brazzaville.

The food aid, valued at US \$933,000, will be channeled through the UN World Food Programme (WFP). Part of the contribution will be used to support the rehabilitation of schools and health centres damaged during a year of civil war.

The improved situation in Pool followed a peace agreement signed on 17 March between the government and "Ninja" rebels of Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, which ended a year of hostilities.

Tens of thousands of people fled the region, while fighting trapped many more.

The US contribution comes as WFP regional director for east and central Africa, Holdbrook Arthur, is on mission in the Congo.

On 4 July, the Congolese government announced that it hoped to have all IDPs from the Pool Region returned to their homes by the end of July." (IRIN, 10 Jul 03)

"The US embassy in the Republic of Congo announced on Tuesday a contribution of 30,500,000 francs CFA (US \$54,668) in support of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Pool Region who have sought refuge near the capital, Brazzaville, to escape fighting between Ninja rebels and government forces.

The money would be used to put up 90 temporary shelters and to purchase school kits and non-food items for distribution to thousands of IDPs currently camped some 17 km south of Brazzaville.

The US has chosen the international NGO Agence de cooperation technique et de developpement (ACTED) to install the temporary shelters, capable of housing about one dozen persons each, and which the IDPs could easily dismantle and transport once they return to their villages of origin.

The US has also chosen the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to distribute school supplies and non-food items to the IDPs.

No date for the return of the IDPs has been set, although the government has appealed to UN agencies and NGOs to help in mounting such an effort." (IRIN, 7 May 03)

“The People's Republic of China has given 15 million Congolese francs (US \$26,016) to assist the return of displaced people to their homes in the crisis-torn Pool region of the Republic of Congo (ROC).

ROC Social Affairs Minister Emilienne Raoul told IRIN on Wednesday the Chinese contribution was in response to a government appeal to help for around 77,000 people who fled fighting in Pool for Brazzaville and other neighbouring districts.

The government and ‘Ninja’ rebels signed an agreement on 17 March to restore peace to Pool.

Since hostilities broke out in Pool in March 2002, much of the region has been devastated. An estimated 90,000 of the region's 200,000 population have been displaced.” (IRIN, 24 Apr 03)

EC grants Euro 2 million to assist IDPs and help stem ebola outbreak (March 2003)

- Part of the EC funds will provide IDPs from the Pool Region with clean water, hygiene facilities, health services and nutritional support.

“The EC has approved €2 million (US \$2.16 million) to help the Republic of Congo (ROC) meet humanitarian needs arising from the spread of the Ebola haemorrhagic virus and war.

Of this sum, the EC said from Brussels, €500,000 would be targeted at controlling the current Ebola epidemic, and €1.4 million spent on improving the conditions of people affected by conflict in Pool Region (with €100,000 held in reserve). It said the aid would be channelled over the next six months through the EC's Humanitarian Aid Office, ECHO, which is directed by Commissioner Poul Nielson.

[...]

The ROC people are also suffering from the conflict between the army of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso and the Ninja militia led by Frédérique Bitsanou aka Pasteur Ntoumi. Ongoing hostilities in Pool Region have affected almost 200,000 vulnerable and displaced people. About 100,000 people living in the conflict zone are currently inaccessible to aid workers.

ECHO funds will provide displaced people with clean water, hygiene facilities, health services and nutritional support. The funds will also enable aid workers to actively seek out vulnerable people affected by the conflict and living in rural areas. About 5,000 families will be provided with essential items such as soap, blankets, jerry cans and plastic sheets. Vulnerable families affected by the conflict will be provided with the seeds and tools necessary for agricultural production.” (IRIN, 14 Mar 03)

UN urgently seeks funds to bring essential aid to IDPs (January 2003)

- UN appeals for some US\$ 60 million at the beginning of 2003 for peace-building in the country
- Part of the funding would be used to provide emergency assistance to the estimated 150,000 IDPs displaced by fighting in Pool
- In November 2002, the UN country team warns that agencies lack the necessary resources to assist the growing number of people in need, especially those newly displaced by the ongoing fighting in Pool

“United Nations aid agencies on Monday appealed to donors to provide some 60 million dollars (56 million euros) to help build a lasting peace in the war-torn Republic of Congo.

‘A durable peace is really within reach. We’re not talking of a huge amount of money, but it would really help to consolidate the peace. They deserve it,’ said Raymond Janssens of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

‘Democratic institutions have been put into place. It is definitely time to comfort this with international assistance’.

Part of the funding would be used to provide emergency assistance to some 150,000 people displaced by fighting in the Pool region near Brazzaville since March 2002, according to the UN aid coordinator for Congo, Sory Ibrahim Ouane.

The fighting has opposed government troops to a diehard militia that refused to disarm since the decade-long civil war officially ended in 1999.

The UN currently provides aid to some 84,000 displaced people in the region, but a further 60,000 remain out of reach of aid workers because of concerns about security.

Jacques Bandelier, the representative in Congo of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), said there was also a ‘critical need’ of funds to disarm and reintegrate ex-fighters into society.

The UN also hopes to attract funding for projects aimed at fighting poverty, improving the status of women, reinforcing the rule of law, protecting human rights and fighting AIDS.” (AFP, 22 Jan 03)

“In November, the UN country team warned that, as the destruction of crucial social services and a lack of food supplies compound the difficulties of displaced persons, the humanitarian situation in Republic of Congo could become dire. However, agencies do not have enough relief supplies to assist the growing number of people in need and lack the resources to assist newly displaced persons as fighting continues in the Pool region. WFP has only enough food to assist people for the next 4 months while UNICEF and WHO expect that their emergency stocks will last only 1 to 2 and 2.5 months, respectively. Funding shortfalls have been a persistent problem for UN agencies in the Republic of Congo, as the UN Plan 2002 received just 35% of the funding required for humanitarian agencies to meet the needs of tens of thousands people in 2002.

UN agencies in the Republic of Congo are urgently seeking funding for their plan for 2003-2004 to bring life-sustaining aid to internally displaced persons.” (UN OCHA, 10 Jan 03)

See also the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Great Lakes Region and Central Africa : Mid-Year Review, UN OCHA, May 2003 [\[Internet\]](#)

UN Plan for Congo for 2003-2004: projects related to IDPs

UN plan for the Republic of Congo for 2003-2004 (November 2002)

- The UN aims in its appeal for 2003-2004 at consolidating sustainable peace and helping Congolese development
- It will focus on the emergency needs of displaced, gender equity, the HIV/AIDS situation, the restoration of the rule of law, as well as the reduction of poverty
- To implement these goals, activities have been divided into ten sectors, inter alia, agriculture and food, children, communications, health as well as water and hygiene
-

“The United Nations' plan, its goals and specific objectives for the Republic of Congo (RoC) in 2003 and 2004 aim at consolidating sustainable peace and helping the Congolese to move forward.

Humanitarian Context

During 2002, the RoC succeeded in strengthening its democratic institutions. The holding of presidential and legislative elections, and the disarmament and reintegration of an additional 3,000 combatants are just a few examples of the progress achieved during the year.

However, the consolidation of peace was hindered by an upsurge of violence in March 2002 in the Pool region. An estimated 80,000 persons fled their homes. Between April and June 2002, humanitarian organizations provided emergency assistance, evaluated humanitarian needs, registered displaced populations, and distributed food, non-food and medical assistance to displaced persons in the Pool region and surrounding areas. Again in June, attacks on Brazzaville sparked the movement of about 20,000 persons. Some of the displaced gathered in displaced sites and were assisted by the United Nations (UN).

Since March, a number of areas in the Pool region have still not been provided with humanitarian assistance due to security concerns. At the time of writing, the UN and its partners have only been able to assist a third of the estimated displaced population.

Responding to the needs of the most vulnerable remains a high priority for the UN in RoC. As in the earlier edition, the UN Plan combines elements of a UN Consolidated Appeal Process and elements of the UN Development Assistance Framework.

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 2003/4 there are five cross-sector themes:

1. Responding to Emergency Needs - According to the most likely scenario for 2003, an estimated 66,000 persons would require direct assistance to support nutrition, agriculture, health and other non-food needs, as well as aid to host communities to rehabilitate damaged infrastructures.

Other pressing needs, such as access to basic services, need to be addressed urgently to sustain peace and to support the Congolese in moving toward sustainable development.

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 rate in 1996 of 7.8%, well over the threshold of 4% set by the UN for containment of the disease.

4. Human Rights - restoration of the rule of law is vital for the development of RoC. It calls for underpinning the fight against corruption, emphasising the need for transparency in public office and ending 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 RoC is among the worst in the developing world, particularly in marginalized 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.

Strategy

To address these themes, the UN has planned activities in 10 Sectors. For each, the UN Plan identifies needs, outlines objectives, details action taken in 2002, and makes reference to UN projects for 2003/4:

1. Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition - despite the vast potential for agriculture, structural weaknesses, notably destroyed road infrastructure, render RoC 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 RoC to take advantage of technological advances.

4. Education and Science - although RoC 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 RoC's impressive, largely untouched environment are mounting daily.

7. Health - no new medical staff has 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 RoC, with over 8,000 still awaiting reintegration assistance.

10. Water, Hygiene and Sanitation - the majority of Congolese do not have access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation.

RoC'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 UN projects, seeking funding in 2002 and beyond, are presented by sector (with a special inter-agency project for HIV/AIDS). Resource mobilisation needs for 2002 total US\$ 46.2 million.

GLOBAL GOALS OF UN ASSISTANCE 2003/4

Contribute to consolidating sustainable peace by supporting institutions emerging from the rule of law, poverty reduction, and response capacities to emergency situations.

Focus on assisting:

1. Development of income generating activities, particularly for the vulnerable;
2. Re-establishment of basic social services;
3. Global mobilisation for the fight against HIV/AIDS;
4. Rebuilding government and community capacities.” (UN OCHA 19 November 2002)

UNDP will continue to focus on reintegration of displaced populations (November 2002)

- UNDP will assist communities affected by war in the reintegration of households and the restoration of peace
- The project contributes to the reintegration of displaced and already attained results, such as the rehabilitation of schools, water infrastructure, support for micro-projects, aid in health insurance schemes, as well as infrastructure construction

Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Partners: NGO, UN agencies and private sector

Beneficiaries: 580 000 persons

Duration: January 2003 – December 2004

Global objective:

Assist communities victimised by war with their own efforts to reintegrate households, restore peace and return to normal and durable conditions

Specific objectives:

Increase the means of existence and the revenues of communities, especially for women and youth

Increase access to basic social services for those communities who remained without those services because of war

Encourage mutual trust and social reintegration, especially for youth

This project contributes to the reintegration of displaced populations during the 1997-1999 wars. This ongoing project has already attained the following results:

The rehabilitation of 15 schools totalling 83 class-rooms improving schooling conditions for nearly 15 000 pupils;

The implementation of 50 water sources and other water infrastructure bringing drinking water to nearly 250 000 persons;

Financial support for 107 micro-projects creating more than 14 266 jobs targeting women and youth;

Support to the creation 1 micro-health insurance scheme;

Rehabilitation of two health centres and sanitary blocks;

Construction of 4 bridges;

Rehabilitation of 533 km agricultural feeder roads.

During 2002, the resumption of armed conflict in the Pool region has led to a new and massive displacement of population and the destruction of many basic community infrastructures. Needs for the reinstallation of population, reconstruction of infrastructures and revival of agro-pastoral activities in this region are enormous. To face these needs and to pursue ongoing rehabilitation activities the project must raise additional funds to consolidate the progress towards improved life conditions, especially in the fields of drinking water, education, health and income generating activities.

Budget (United States Dollars)

Sub-contracts for income generating activities and social services	4 857 311
Sub-contracts for consultations and community mobilization	600 000
Monitoring and capacity building	550 000
Promotion of the fight against HIV/AIDS in the schools of Congo	112 000
Project management	500 000
Budget total	6 619 311
<i>Already financed</i>	
UNDP	1 175 000

<i>World Bank</i>	<i>1 000 000</i>
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>449 956</i>
<i>Italy</i>	<i>230 355</i>
<i>Gouvernement of Congo</i>	<i>200 000</i>
<i>Chevron - Texaco</i>	<i>39 000</i>
<i>Nomeco</i>	<i>25 000</i>

Total requested budget 3 500 000”
(UN CT 19 November 2002)

UNDP will coordinate activities so as to reduce poverty and consolidate peace (November 2002)

- UNDP will continue to facilitate and coordinate activities by UN agencies and their partners
- Functions which will continue to be performed include, inter alia, the collection and dissemination of information on the development situation in the country; the coordination and facilitation of 10 inter-agency missions to evaluate and assist the IDP population; and the conduct of studies, through contingency planning exercises, of the zones likely to receive refugees and/or IDPs

"Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Partners: UN Country Team, UN system, international and local NGOs, government

Beneficiaries: UN Country Team, partner agencies, government, the population of Congo

Duration: January 2003 - December 2004

Objective: Facilitate coordinated programming and implementation of activities by United Nations agencies and their partners so as to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the consolidation of peace. If/when necessary, to support the coordinated response to humanitarian needs.

The UN Coordination Support Unit, since its inception in August 2001, has facilitated the UN agencies and their partners in their efforts to better coordinate their activities aimed at support poverty reduction and the consolidation of peace in Republic of Congo. In addition, the UN Coordination Support Unit was created after the closure of OCHA’s office to ensure appropriate response capacity in the event that humanitarian needs were to emerge in the country. While peace and security have improved greatly since 1999, the renewal of armed conflict in April 2002 has demonstrated the continued need for a quick and coordinated response to humanitarian needs by the international aid community, a process that has been facilitated by the Coordination Support Unit.

Among the many activities carried out by the UN coordination unit, an inter-agency contingency planning exercise in March 2001 proved to be a useful preparation for the humanitarian response needed to the resurgence of civil conflict in April 2002. Other functions performed by the UN coordination unit which will be continued throughout 2003 and 2004 include:

Coordination, production and presentation to the international donor community the inter-agency UN Plan, which presents the joint UN programme for recovery and development assistance, as well as capacity building for response to emergencies; Production of 15 UN Updates on the situation in Republic of Congo (humanitarian and emergency situation included when applicable) and 5 “UN Newsletters” on UN country team activities;

Leadership and coordination of the “UN Inter-Agency - Emergency Initiative to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Republic of Congo” including heading 5 field mission to establish direct links with local authorities in extremely impacted areas;

Training for UN staff and UN partners on the UN Reform process and efforts at increased coordination;

Collection and dissemination of information on the development situation in the country;

Support to resource mobilization efforts, including the organization of donor visits;

Financial tracking of funding received by UN agencies to carry out their activities in RoC;

Coordination and facilitation of 10 inter-agency missions to evaluate and assist the IDP population; and Studies, through contingency planning exercises, of the zones likely to receive refugees and/or IDPs to identify needs for improving infrastructure, preparing local populations and identifying storage sites for food and non-food items for eventual emergency requirements." (UN CT 19 November 2002)

WFP plans to provide food assistance to affected populations (November 2002)

- WFP will provide emergency food assistance for affected populations and support socio-economic recovery
- To assist in improving food security, WFP plans to provide 10 554 tons of food to 185 000 targeted beneficiaries

Agency: World Food Programme (WFP)

Partners: UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, CARITAS, ASU, IRC, MSF, ADPM, ADEM, ADESCO and women's associations

Beneficiaries: 185 000 beneficiaries

Duration: January 2003 - December 2003

Objective: Provide emergency food assistance for war-affected populations and support socio-economic recovery

Between 1997 and 1999, the Republic of Congo was embroiled in two armed conflicts that caused substantial losses in human lives and material as well as resulting in a massive displacement of people. After signing the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities accords in 2000, displaced populations returned home, socio-economic recovery started, and the reconstruction of the country began.

WFP's intervention helped to improve and preserve the nutritional status of thousands of persons as well as support the relaunch of agricultural activities and rehabilitation of basic socio-economic infrastructures. In spite of the improvements, different field evaluations carried out by WFP and its partner agencies revealed that generally speaking the food situation is still precarious.

To assist in improving food security, WFP plans to provide 10 554 tons of food to 185 000 targeted beneficiaries through support in the following programmes during 2003:

Extend relief assistance for war affected persons and vulnerable groups

Rehabilitation of rural access roads

Seed production and multiplication

Rehabilitation of schools and basic sanitation structures

Support to school canteens

Assistance to persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families

The recent outbreak of hostilities in the region of the Pool (since March 2002) has forced thousands of people to take refuge in the forests or to flee to other secure areas. Humanitarian organisations fear a catastrophic humanitarian situation in this region, and WFP will therefore pay particular attention to these populations as soon as access conditions have improved.

Budget (United States Dollars)

Purchase, transport and stocking of food	7 085 347
Direct support costs	853 700
Indirect support costs	619 245
Total requested budget	8 558 292"

(UN CT 19 November 2002)

FAO plans to assist returnees with the rehabilitation of animal husbandry (November 2002)

- In general, the reduction in agricultural and animal production, after the war, has worsened the already dire food security situation for the rural population
- FAO will support the repopulation of the concerned regions, supplying sheep and goats as a means of income source diversification

“Agency: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs, UN agencies

Beneficiaries: 10 000 vulnerable households

Duration: January 2003 - December 2003

Objective: Support repopulation of the concerned regions, supplying sheep and goats as means of income source diversification

The lack of a solid basis and appropriate framework for breeding small ruminants, further worsened by the sociopolitical crisis in recent years (1997-1999), resulted in many rural producers losing most of their agricultural goods, including livestock, which was their main source of food and income. In general, the reduction in agricultural and animal production, after the war, has worsened the already dire food security situation for the rural population

Each time they returned to their villages, farmers tried to relaunch agricultural activities to the best of their abilities. While vegetable growing activities have experienced a renewal since the end of the war, animal production remains far below pre-war production levels. Due to its scarcity, the market price of meat remains extremely high, and as a result the level of animal protein intake is very low in rural areas. This is also the case in urban areas, where meat is mainly imported from Chad and the Republic of Central Africa, and where the price of meat is also very high making it inaccessible to most households.

The present project will assist :

- 3 500 vulnerable families, each receiving 4 sheep (3 females); and
- 3 500 vulnerable families, each receiving 4 goats (3 females).

This project does not plan to distribute veterinary products because the animals distributed will be healthy adults. Beneficiary families will provide evidence to ensure that the animals will be given adequate food. When possible, the sheep (10 000) and the goats (10 000) will be purchased locally.” (UN CT 19 November 2002)

FAO supports farmers in Plateaux region after influx of displaced (November 2002)

- The large influx of displaced has created a greater demand on the seed stocks than the reserves could cover.
- The absence of potato seeds on the market makes it hard for farmers to resume their activities, endangering the entire production cycle
- FAO will support the revival of potato production in the Plateaux region

“Agency: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs, other UN agencies

Beneficiaries: 100 seeds producers, potato farmers of the area

Duration: January 2003 – December 2004

Objective: Support the revival of potato production in the Plateaux region. Specific objectives will be to:
Provide sufficient number of quality seeds to farmers of the area
Increase production through farmer's increased yield levels
Offer farmers new production and conservation techniques

Introduced in Congo during the colonial era, potato production is well adapted to the local conditions of the Plateaux, especially the region of Djambala and Lékana, which offers the most favourable growing conditions. In response to recent events, many farmers from Djambala have moved to the Ngabe district, where they have tried to produce potatoes in their host community.

To date, potato production in these localities have posed difficulties to both farmers and technicians, the more important being:

The degeneration of the seeds over 15 years,

The frequent attacks of fungus and bacteria on the plants.

The present situation is very concerning because the large number of people who arrived from the Pool region have thereby creating a greater demand on the seed stocks than the reserves could cover. The absence of potato seeds on the market makes it hard for farmers to resume their activities. Hence the area cultivated, and the resulting production levels, have dramatically decreased (from 2657 tonnes in 1996 to 300 tonnes in 2002), putting in danger the entire production cycle of this crop in the area." (UN CT 19 November 2002)

UNICEF plans to develop system of nutritional monitoring and support in affected regions (November 2002)

- Between 10 and 30% of the displaced children in the Pool and Bouenza regions suffer from severe to moderate malnourishment; in the Lekoumou region the rate is 9,85%
- UNICEF will reinforce the abilities to cope with nutritional problems through the development of a system of nutritional monitoring and support for the malnourished
- During 2003-2004, development activities must also be relaunched, focusing on community organisation and nutritional training, development of basic community structures and thus the establishment of community groups for immediate intervention

Agency: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Partners: Relevant ministries, NGOs, civil society associations, community groups

Beneficiaries: Health and social agents, NGOs and communities of Brazzaville and the areas affected by armed conflict

Duration: January 2003 - December 2004

Objective: Reinforce abilities to cope with nutritional problems at home using local food

Recent events in the Pool region have again caused the displacement of persons to the surrounding regions of Bouenza, Brazzaville, Lékoumou, Plateaux, and the forests in the Pool. Evaluation of the nutritional conditions among the displaced in the Pool and Bouenza regions revealed that between 10 and 30% of the children suffer from severe to moderate malnourishment; in the Lekoumou region the rate is 9,85%.

After the Pool regions open to aid agencies, a major humanitarian catastrophe is expected following the destruction of basic social services. Health professionals in the different regions affected by the conflicts

generally do not have the necessary competences to take care of the malnourished and many health centers lack all equipment. In this situation, a system of nutritional monitoring and support for the malnourished must be developed in the conflict affected regions. This system would provide a training refresher on nutrition issues for health and social professionals, while at the same time facilitate the identification of severe or moderate malnourishment cases as early as possible. Through early detection they can be referred to proper facilities, either in an emergency or general context. Communities are the main players in solving their nutritional problems, and their participation - as well as the participation of NGOs - is essential to the success of this project.

During 2003-2004 the emergency situation must be addressed, but development activities must also be relaunched. A broad approach to deal with nutritional problems among children and the community will ensure the development and spread of decentralisation activities for nutritional monitoring, produce weaning food supplement and/or enriched baby food and rehabilitate basic structures. The strategy includes community organisation and nutritional training, development of basic community structures and thus the establishment of community groups for immediate intervention.“ (UN CT 19 November 2002)

UNICEF will implement psychosocial assistance project for women and children in Pool region (November 2002)

- UNICEF will provide psychosocial and mental assistance to 100 000 children and women traumatized by the conflict
- UNICEF has developed a psychosocial rehabilitation project by introducing a counselling package among the services offered by integrated health communities centers with trials in various decentralized areas in the country
- The project strategy will include the organization of communities, rehabilitation of psychosocial capabilities, and the training and building of 1000 transitional community and school centres

“**Agency:** United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Partners: Relevant ministries, NGOs; civil society associations, community-groups

Beneficiaries: Populations of Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, and the four other southern regions affected by the armed conflict

Duration: January 2003 – December 2004

Objective: Assure psychosocial and mental assistance to 100 000 children and women traumatized by the armed conflict in Congo to allow their psychological, social and economic reintegration

After numerous armed conflicts in the country, the presence of many children living in particularly difficult situations has become a major obstacle in Congo. Trauma, weakened traditional solidarity, parental identity-crises, and reduced appreciation of ancient traditions have all led to a situation where children leave their families to live off the streets, putting them at risk of HIV/AIDS, becoming AIDS-orphans, turning to juvenile delinquency and related social situations. This phenomenon is increased and broadened by poverty.

Together with the government, UNICEF has developed a project of psychosocial rehabilitation by introducing a counselling package among the services offered by integrated health communities centers with trials in various decentralized areas in the country.

Following the recent events in the Pool, there are an estimated 150,000 displaced persons in Bouenza, Brazzaville and Lékoumou, which have fled into the forests and are cut off the rest of the country. A survey on the conditions of the children in the displaced camps in Bouenza showed that 30 to 40% suffered from traumatic stress which further aggravating the already present nutritional problems. The opening of the

Pool-region is expected to expose a major humanitarian catastrophe and the majority of basic social services are expected to be destroyed. In 2003-2004 emergencies will undoubtedly need to be addressed, but longer-term development approaches should be continued to address the ongoing problems facing children and communities. Development and extension of decentralized psychosocial rehabilitation, rehabilitation of basic infrastructures and promotion of activities fighting poverty development-activities are all reflected in the project strategy. This project strategy will include the organization of communities, rehabilitation of psychosocial capabilities through a culture of peace and of conflictmanagement, and the training and building of 1000 transitional community and school centres.” (UN CT 19 November 2002)

UNICEF will assist in development and integration of youth in Kouilou region (November 2002)

- Massive displacement of population in the conflict affected areas led to a marked and sudden demographic expansion in the Kouilou region
- UNICEF will support the reinforcement of the abilities of families and communities to care for children aged 0 to 8 years and teenagers in highrisk communities
- Activities will include, inter alia, the reinforcement of activities to promote high-quality health care at home, the setting up of preschool-centres with the communities; the reintegration of children in schools and their social-professional environment; and the promotion of affordable sanitation structures and the construction of drinking-water points

“**Agency:** United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Partners: Relevant ministries, NGOs, civil society associations, community groups

Beneficiaries: Populations in the peripheral quarters of Pointe Noire and the rural areas in the regions affected by armed conflicts

Duration: January 2003 – December 2004

Objective: Reinforce abilities of families and communities to care for children aged 0 to 8 years and teenagers in highrisk communities

After recent the conflicts, a massive displacement of population in the conflict affected areas led to a marked and sudden demographic expansion in the Kouilou region. This population flood was followed by neither construction of reception facilities nor sanitation infrastructures, especially in rural areas. The precarious living conditions, promiscuity, unhealthy lifestyles and the lack of clean drinking water have all had a direct role in the increased number of diseases in children and vulnerable persons. Furthermore, a considerable number of children and teenagers remain outside the education system, resulting in more and more children living or working on the streets.

An integrated approach for young children’s survival and development in multi-sector activities has proved useful in the past, and will be the project strategy’s key-elements:

reinforce activities to promote high-quality health care at home and impregnated mosquito-nets;

set up preschool-centres with the communities;

build and organize multi-purpose centres to raise teenager’s and young people’s awareness of questions concerning HIV/AIDS, reinforced by a multimedia-campaign;

organize community-schools in the multi-purpose centres for formal academic instruction of marginalised communities;

reintegrate the children in schools and their social-professional environment; and

promote affordable sanitation structures (ventilated Sanplat latrines) and construct drinking-water points”

(UN CT 19 November 2002)

WHO envisages the improvement of health care in affected regions (November 2002)

- During 2000 and 2001, reopened health facilities encouraged populations to return to their usual residences and made it easier for them to re-create normal life conditions
- Since these services deteriorated, WHO will improve access and quality of primary health care of 60 Integrated Health Centres

"Agency: World Health Organisation (WHO)

Partners: General Health Direction

Beneficiaries: 500 000 inhabitants

Duration: January 2003 - December 2004

Objective: Improve access and quality of primary health care of 60 Integrated Health Centres

The programmes implemented in 2000 and 2001 assisted many health centres and hospitals affected by conflicts to become functional again. The reopened health facilities encouraged populations to return to their usual residences and made it easier for them to re-create normal life conditions. But the services had so deteriorated, that the newly opened health centres only offer basic curative care and quality is not always granted.

Faced with these needs, and employing the strategy of reinforcing sanitation districts and integrated activities, this project will improve access to and quality of primary health care by assisting and supporting 60 integrated health centres. This improvement will take place through:

The rehabilitation of physical health centres structures depending upon their individual needs;

Supplying medicines, material, technical equipment, and various consumables;

Carrying out training/refresher courses for the staff;

Establishing procedures and technical guidelines for anticipated Integrated Health Centre activities; and

Follow-up of implementation and evaluation of activities.” (UN CT 19 November 2002)

WHO will implement health support programme for returning IDPs (November 2002)

- In order to preserve returning displaced from major health risks, a comprehensive support programme for the return of the populations has to be established
- WHO will reduce the health risks connected to the degradation of the environment in the Pool region resulting from armed conflicts
- The main activities are the limited rehabilitation of infrastructures, acquisition and supply of essential medicines, reorganisation of health cares in health centres, implementation of basic sanitation measures and drinking water supply for households and epidemic surveillance

“Agency: World Health Organisation (WHO)

Partners: Ministry of health, UNICEF, UNFPA, NGOs

Beneficiaries: Pool region population

Duration: January 2003 – December 2003

Objective: Reduce the health risks connected to the degradation of the environment in the Pool region resulting from armed conflicts

After political-military events in 2002 in different Congo regions, particularly in Pool and Brazzaville, there were massive spontaneous displacements of populations into the forests in the interior regions, to Brazzaville and the neighbouring regions . Until this day some of the villages in the region are inaccessible

for security concerns. A quick evaluation on the sanitation situation has been carried out. The survey collected population data, ascertained sanitation priorities and identified vital basic needs. In fact the crisis in the Pool has emphasised several epidemical risks:

Interruption of essential health services (health care, vaccination ...);

Displacement of populations and their concentration in certain areas;

Public service interruption (water supply, disposal of wastewater and waste collection for households including faecal waste, etc.).

As the population gradually returns to their homes and in order to preserve them from the above-mentioned risks, a comprehensive support programme for the return of the populations has to be established. This project will reinforce the population's capacities in order to improve health service, epidemic monitoring, control and monitoring of drinking water and basic sanitation measures. The main activities are the limited rehabilitation of infrastructures, acquisition and supply of essential medicines, reorganisation of health cares in health centres, implementation of basic sanitation measures and drinking water supply for households and epidemic surveillance." (UN CT 19 November 2002)

Selected UN activities

Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation mission in Pool aims to facilitate eventual return of IDPs from the region (June 2003)

"The first full-scale humanitarian evaluation of the entire Pool region of the Republic of Congo since the outbreak of civil unrest in March 2002 is currently underway.

The inter-agency mission, comprised of several UN bodies and NGOs, seeks to identify the main humanitarian needs in the domains of health, nutrition, education, and shelter, with the objective of facilitating the eventual return of tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the region.

According to the Congolese government, at least 77,765 IDPs from the Pool region have been recorded, primarily in and around the national capital, Brazzaville, where 63,344 IDPs are living either with host families (40,960) or at designated sites (12,384). The region of Bouenza, southwest of Pool, is also host to an estimated 20,678 IDPs.

The mission, which began on 29 May, is due to be completed on or around 7 June, depending on road conditions and any other unforeseen complications, at which point findings will be consolidated and analysed by participating agencies." (IRIN, 2 Jun 03)

UN assistance efforts for IDPs constrained by lack of relief supplies (January 2003)

- Aid agencies are unable to assist IDPs in the Pool region due both to lack of access and lack of resources
- Lack of resources has also constrained assistance for recently arrived IDPs in the capital, Brazzaville
- At the end of 2002, agencies warn of a dire humanitarian situation in the country

"Aid agencies in the Republic of Congo (ROC) do not have enough relief supplies to assist the growing number of people displaced as populations in the Pool region have been forced to flee repeated bombings, banditry and attacks on villages, according to the United Nations.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on 10 January that at least 84,000 people had fled fighting that erupted at the end of March 2002 between Ninja rebels and government troops. The exact number of people displaced within the Pool region remained unknown, because aid workers had been denied access to the region while military operations are under way, OCHA said, although best estimates placed the figure at 60,000.

However, ‘even if there was access, the UN would have problems because of the lack of resources’, one UN official told IRIN on Monday. Furthermore, many of the most-recently arrived internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the ROC capital, Brazzaville, had neither been registered, nor had they received any assistance because resources were insufficient.

In December, the UN country team warned that the humanitarian situation in the country could become dire. The World Food Programme has only enough food (rice, peas and oil) to assist people for the next four months, and has already stopped all rehabilitation programmes in order to focus on emergency assistance for those deemed most vulnerable. Meanwhile, the UN Children's Fund and the World Health Organisation expect their emergency stocks to last only one to two months and two-and-a-half months, respectively.

As for prospects for the near future, the UN team in the ROC was not optimistic. ‘At the moment, no signs of improvement are perceived, meaning that the return of the IDPs in their region cannot be foreseen,’ it said in its December assessment.” (IRIN, 13 Jan 03)

Wide-ranging UNICEF activities benefit IDPs (2003)

- UNICEF addresses needs of IDPs in numerous sectors: non-food assistance and shelter; health and nutrition; basic education; water and sanitation; and child and women protection.

“Non-food assistance and shelter

To date, UNICEF has been able to serve over 17,000 displaced families (52,000 persons) from the Pool region, through the distribution of non-food supplies: sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets, cooking pots, plastic plates and cups, soap, jerry cans, buckets, water purification tablets, bowls, lamps and tarpaulins. During the June events in Brazzaville, 17 churches were used as temporary refuge for the displaced persons in Brazzaville, which were supplied with tarpaulins. The construction of temporary shelters in 7 reception sites in southern Brazzaville is underway to accommodate the newly arrived IDPs, and is being undertaken in co-operation with ACTED, a partner NGO. With the peace campaigns, two hundred Ninja rebels who disarmed were provided with non-food assistance items (sleeping mats, mattress, mosquito nets, cooking utensils, soaps, jerry cans, soaps, buckets, education kits).

Health and nutrition

At the period of transition from a post conflict to a rehabilitation and development situation, the major achievements include:

[...]

20,000 ill and wounded IDPs, the majority of whom being children and women, were treated in the health centres and hospitals supplied with emergency medical kits. UNICEF provided medicines and equipment to 13 PHC units, 17 health posts established in the churches during the 14 June events in Brazzaville, 7 health posts located in the reception centres in southern Brazzaville, including 5 district hospitals, the Makelekele and Centres Hospitaliers Universitaires (CHU) general hospitals in Brazzaville. Despite ongoing civil conflict in the Pool region, polio vaccination has protected 39,000 displaced children of up to 5 years of age with the assistance of NGOs and military forces in the war zone areas. Measles vaccinations were also

undertaken in reception centres as well as in the villages where humanitarian agencies have access. This is an effort to prevent measles outbreak. UNICEF, in conjunction with UNFPA, initially provided delivery kits for pregnant women in the 13 PHC units in Brazzaville. UNICEF is working together with the Association Medicines Afrique (AMA, partner NGO) for the follow-up of health needs of the IDPs in all reception centres in Brazzaville as well as in the regions of Bouenza and Lekoumou.

Achievements in the nutrition area include:

Major reduction of malnutrition rate among the children under five from 35% to 15% with the initiation of various nutrition activities,

[...]

Five thousand displaced and malnourished children were regularly screened in reception centres and health posts. BP-5 biscuits were provided to them while therapeutic milk was provided to severely malnourished children in hospitals.

Basic education

Major achievements in the education sector include:

[...]

7,000 displaced school children from the Pool region were inserted into primary and secondary schools close to their temporary residences and were provided with education kits,

[...]

Water and sanitation

Major achievements include:

[...]

Access to safe drinking water for the 50,000 returnee population in the Lekoumou and Bouenza regions with the construction of 14 communal water supply sources and 20 India Mark II hand pumps,

[...]

Construction of 43 latrines in IDP reception sites in the Bouenza region, 20 latrines in the reception centres in Brazzaville and 6 latrines in Kindamba district, Pool region. Hygiene education campaigns were undertaken in the sites in co-operation with CARITAS and CRS, partner NGOs.

Child and women protection

[...]

In the recent armed conflict situation in the Pool, UNICEF is closely working with MOH, MSF and ACOVLF to protect displaced women and children through the following:

- a) provision of trauma counselling for over 2,000 persons including 580 school children affected by the armed conflict,
- b) training of 115 teachers and volunteers on psycho-trauma counselling,
- c) 45 rape cases were reported and assisted with medical, laboratory testing including HIV/AIDS tests,
- d) trauma counselling was also provided in the reception centres, and
- e) 43 unaccompanied children were assisted in tracing their parents in the sites.” (UNICEF, 24 Jan 03)

UN agencies assist IDPs in seven sites in Brazzaville (November 2002)

“Health

Healthposts have been opened or reinforced by the UN agencies for each site. Chlorine has been distributed to clean the water and the healthposts have been supplied with medicines. In each site the epidemiological survey sheets have been distributed and are monitored weekly. [...] Negotiations underway between the hospital management and humanitarian partners to reduce the medical cost for the displaced people.

Food

Rice and vegetable oil have been distributed twice by the UN and Caritas on the six sites, to cover the needs until 17 November [2002]. These rations have been completed with a Government donated salted fish, rice and salt.. Salted fish, bread, powder milk, sugar, salt and sardines have been distributed by ASU to complete the regular assistance.

NFI

The UN agencies distributed buckets, blankets, mats, mosquito-nets, soap, plates, beakers, BP5, micropur and medicines. Those Non Food items were distributed to 1191 households (3767 people) until 5 November.

Water and Sanitation

[...]

The UN distributes materials and provides technical assistance as to how to build latrines. Latrines are constructed, but the number is still insufficient, material for 19 latrines were distributed in the six sites.” (UN RC 12 November 2002)

UN assist in return of displaced and prepared coordinated effort for future returns (November 2002)

- Since August 2002, if the security situation allows it, the UN assists the return of IDPs through food and non-food assistance
- In case of mass return, an estimated 66,000 persons would require direct assistance through support in nutrition and agriculture, assistance in matters of health and non-food items, and aid in the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructures

“Since the month of August [2002], in areas where security conditions allow, the United Nations is assisting the return of displaced persons to their home localities through food and non-food assistance. In September, the United Nations also started a preparation exercise for a coordinated and collective response to the eventual return of displaced persons to the Pool region.

A United Nations priority: Preparing a coordinated effort to assist the return of displaced persons from the Pool region to their original homes.

The United Nations country team considers that the return of persons from the Pool region, who are currently displaced, to their homes is a very probable scenario. The United Nations considers it a priority to be ready to respond to needs associated with this return in case the Government makes such an appeal. In this scenario, an estimated 66,000 persons would require direct assistance through support in nutrition and agriculture (in a number of cases they missed two farming seasons), assistance in matters of health and non-food items, and aiding the host communities to rehabilitate damaged infrastructures.” (UN CT 19 November 2002)

International humanitarian community continues to assist IDPs from Pool region (August 2002)

- Aid agencies have continually monitored and assisted IDPs who have fled the Pool region to the surrounding areas and Brazzaville town

- The UN country team estimates that approximately 20%, or 66,000 persons, of the Pool population is currently displaced, one third of which is living in Brazzaville or the districts surrounding the Pool region, and two thirds of which are assumed to be living in the Pool region where they reside in forests

“Aid agencies have been continually monitoring and assisting IDPs from the Pool region who have fled to the surrounding areas and Brazzaville town. Missions to evaluate humanitarian needs of the IDPs and distribute food and non-food items have been carried out in the areas of Djamballa (9-11 July), Zanaga (18-20 July) and Bouenza (18-28 July). Health and nutrition agencies concentrated efforts on reinforcing and opening the medical system in Brazzaville, Bouenza, Zanaga and in the Pool in order to meet the needs of the IDPs. The UN is planning food and supplies distributions over the next few weeks for 5240 IDP families in Brazzaville and 2000 families in the Zanaga/Sibiti region.

The UN country team estimates that approximately 20%, or 66,000 persons, of the Pool population is currently displaced, of which approximately one-third of the IDPs have been registered and assisted in Brazzaville or the districts surrounding the Pool region. The majority of the remaining two-thirds displaced persons are assumed to be living in the Pool region where they reside in the forests and prepare their fields for the upcoming planting season.” (UN RC 24 August 2002)

WFP :

“As of 31 August, WFP had assisted almost 38,400 displaced people from the Pool region. Assistance was supplied in Brazzaville and in the regions of Pool, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Plateaux. During the month of August, WFP's food assistance has been mostly targeted towards displaced groups who settled in Bouenza region, as the area became easily accessible by road. Following a needs-assessment carried out in the Bouenza region, a second delivery of relief food has been made in favour of 2,275 households. The nutritional situation of these IDPs has been stabilised through the regular delivery of food aid.

In addition, WFP is providing food to 5,350 displaced households currently in Brazzaville. Over 300 tons of food were supplied following a re-evaluation of their needs. In Lekoumou region, a food distribution for 400 households has been made in Zanaga after a UN assessment mission was carried out on 29 August. This was the first distribution to the Pool IDPs in this locality.” (WFP 20 September 2002)

Concerted effort to vaccinate Congolese children, including displaced, against polio (July 2002)

- In July 2002, over 600,000 Congolese children under the age of five were targeted for polio vaccination
- While recent fighting and instability in both the Pool Region of the Congo and in Brazzaville resulted in displacement, special measures were taken to ensure that all displaced children were vaccinated
- The second and third rounds of the polio campaign in the Congo took place from 29 August-2 September and from 3-7 October 2002

“From 25-29 July [2002], 682,640 Congolese children under the age of five will be targeted during the Congo's first round of the cross-border, synchronised polio vaccination campaign for 2002. More than 3,000 vaccination and mobilisation teams of the Congo's Ministry of Health - supported by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, Rotary International, the International Federation of the Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Centre for Disease Control-Atlanta - will vaccinate all Congolese children aged 0-59 months against polio and will also administer Vitamin A to all children aged 6-59 months.

The Congo's door-to-door Polio National Immunisation Days are synchronised with those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Gabon and Sao Tome e Principe in a regional effort to interrupt transmission of the virus. And, while recent fighting and instability in both the Pool Region of the Congo and in Brazzaville resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of Congolese to other regions, special measures have been put in place to ensure that all displaced children are vaccinated. The second and third rounds of the polio campaign in the Congo will take place from 29 August-2 September and from 3-7 October [2002].

The polio eradication campaign in the Congo is part of a global effort to rid the world of polio. Overall, in the 14 years since the Global Polio Eradication Campaign was launched, the number of polio cases has fallen by 99.8%, from an estimated 350,000 cases in 1988 to only 537 cases in 2001. In the Congo, no cases of the wild polio virus have been detected since 2001.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus, and mainly affects children under 5 years of age. It is easily transmittable in unsanitary conditions that often occur amongst displaced populations. The virus enters the body through the mouth and multiplies in the intestine. It then invades the nervous system and can cause total permanent paralysis in a matter of hours.” (UNICEF 29 July 2002)

UN humanitarian operations are at full-scale in Bouenza region, Brazzaville and Kindamba by May-June 2002

- In the Bouenza region, the UN and NGOs provide food, non-food items and medicine for displaced and host families
- In Brazzaville, different UN agencies supply food, non-food and medical assistance to those displaced with ration tickets
- On 2 June 2002, UN aid agencies, following a 28 May 2002 evaluation mission, fly to Kindamba six times, carrying food and non-food items
- In Kindamba, WFP distributes, inter alia, 7.7 tons of food aid to 270 families; 350 children are vaccinated against polio and measles; 28 pregnant women receive anti-tetanus vaccinations; and a medical care and crisis management unit for psycho-social trauma is set up
- WHO, UNICEF and the IRC coordinate sanitation needs; IRC and UNICEF treat two wells and work on an alternative way to supply the population with clean water
- The UN and partners return to Kindamba a 3rd time on 8 June 2002 to continue distribution of food and non-food items, and to provide advice in the health, water, sanitation and agricultural sectors

Bouenza region

“UN agencies and NGO partners are at work in Bouenza region, situated west of Pool, where at least 4,200 displaced have found refuge so far. A first inter-agency evaluation was conducted there on 25 May, and visited as many sites as possible (some are 'walk-ins'), in and outside villages such as Loutété, Mfouati, Yamba and Kingoué, to assess needs and deliver medicines. The second part of the mission started on 27 May and will last a week. The UN has transported an all-terrain truck from Brazzaville to Nkayi (by train), and on 30 May a three-vehicle convoy left for the villages carrying 20 tons of food, non-food items and medicines. There are food items for 1,676 families along the Loutété-Kingoué axis, along with full medical and reproductive health kits, vaccinations ('on-the-spot') and non-food items such as cooking utensils.” (UN RC 31 May 2002)

[...]

“A one week humanitarian mission returned 4 June from the Loutété-Kingoué axis. Over 50 tonnes of food items (rice, oil, salt, BP5 biscuits) and 5 tonnes of non-food items (full medical kits, educational kits, mattresses, jerry cans, mosquito nets, etc) were distributed to 1676 families, including hosting families (approximately 6500 persons in total). The majority of the displaced arrived in the region during the first week of April 2002. The lists of the displaced registered by NGOs indicate most of the displaced are with hosting families, with only a minority in organized sites outside villages such as in Kitou.” (UN RC 11 June 2002)

Brazzaville

“When the displaced first began to arrive in Brazzaville, in early April [2002], a planeload of mainly non-food and some food items was brought from Denmark immediately, and a full distribution made to all. Originally, 28,000 displaced persons were registered in Brazzaville, including some displaced in-city. In-city returns, and more careful registration reduced the list to 20,000, who have been issued ration tickets. New arrivals are added to the lists as they arrive. Different UN agencies supply food, non-food and medical assistance to those with tickets. Food distributions have taken place in the four most affected neighbourhoods to date, with about 65% of the registered displaced proving vulnerable enough to receive free food. Free medical care has been arranged and is available to all through the local health system, with support from the UN. Special assistance is also provided to pregnant women, including birthing kits to take with them to health facilities when the time comes. Condoms are also provided.” (UN RC 31 May 2002)

Kindamba

"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." (UN OCHA, 30 May 2002)

“UN starts airlift to Kindamba: Following a 28 May evaluation mission, on 2 June UN aid agencies together with IRC flew back and forth to Kindamba six times, carrying ten tonnes of food and non-food items. During the day, WFP distributed 7.7 tons of food aid to 270 families; 350 children were vaccinated against polio and measles; 28 pregnant women received anti-tetanus vaccinations; a medical care and crisis management unit for psycho-social trauma was set up; medical consultations were carried out on 23 persons; doctors assisted 4 rape victims; and 9 people were air-evacuated to Makélékélé hospital in Brazzaville. In collaboration with the Red Cross, an epidemiological surveillance system was created to identify contagious diseases, such as "paralysie flasque aïgue", and target interventions. Deplorable sanitary conditions were improved through the construction of 4 latrines and 2 showers, while the 2 wells the only sources of water in the town were treated with chlorine. An educational evaluation team explored the possibilities of re-opening schools, but with all of the teachers having fled Kindamba. Alternative educators were identified among the displaced population to continue schooling in the short term.” (UN RC 11 June 2002)

"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)

"The UN and partners returned to Kindamba a 3rd time on 8 June to continue distribution of food and non-food items, and provide specialist advice in the health, water, sanitation and agricultural sectors. Health experts carried out MUAC (middle upper arm circumference) tests on approximately 185 children and found 30% were suffering from mild malnutrition levels and a full 14% were severely malnourished. Medical consultations identified 16 persons who required medical evacuation to Brazzaville. A pilot agricultural programme was started in which 28 families were given seeds and planting tools; however security remains a primary concern and the population currently is afraid to venture more than 2-3 km. from town to plant, cultivate or harvest crops. UNICEF through the Red Cross in Kindamba now maintain 5 latrines, 6 showers and 2 wells." (UN RC 11 June 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)

Selected Red Cross Movement activities

ICRC assists people displaced by fighting in Pool Region (2002-2003)

- Since the outbreak of fighting in 2002, ICRC has been assisting more than 10,000 IDPs living at eight locations south of Brazzaville with shelter, water/ sanitation facilities and non-food items
- 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

"Last Friday, the ICRC completed a further aid distribution programme for displaced persons living at eight locations south of Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo.

ICRC teams had spent ten days distributing soap, clothing and children's sandals to some 4,400 families, or almost 10,000 people.

This programme follows other ICRC activities at these locations. Already this year, ICRC water and habitat teams have installed over 100 showers, built or renovated three wells and set up shelters at various sites. In addition, the ICRC has provided four 15,000-litre bladder tanks for drinking water, while four ICRC tanker trucks have supplied 120,000 litres of water per week. Like the provision of soap, all these activities aim at improving health by improving hygiene.

The people the ICRC is helping come from Pool, a region south of the capital, and took refuge in the area following fighting in 2002. The ICRC is planning its assistance using lists maintained by the people responsible for each site and by village chiefs among the displaced persons." (ICRC, 15 Jul 03)

"On 18 April, the ICRC completed the distribution of emergency supplies to displaced persons living south of Brazzaville.

The supplies consisted of 5,420 blankets, 3,290 sleeping mats, 3,290 mosquito nets, 2,670 cooking pots and 1,870 buckets, and priority was given to people who had missed the October 2002 aid distribution carried out by other organizations. Since that date, the number of people at these locations has doubled to 11,000.

Most of the recipients come from Pool province and had moved to the Brazzaville area because of the fighting. They are living at eight locations near the southern entrance to the capital, and along the main road, *Route Nationale No. 1*. The ICRC delivered supplies to one or two of these locations every day from 10 to 18 April.

Certain categories of person received additional aid. These included those with limited scope for earning an income, widows with dependent children and elderly people with no family to look after them.

At one location occupied by over 3,500 displaced persons, ICRC engineers repaired a well equipped with a hand-pump, disinfected another well and installed 52 showers. At another location, the ICRC set up 30 showers for 2,000 people.” (ICRC, 24 Apr 03)

"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](#)

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)

Selected NGO activities

MSF supports rape victims (2000-2003)

- Sexual abuse and violence were widespread during the conflict in Congo
- In 2000, MSF set up a programme for victims of sexual violence in Makélékélé hospital, offering medical and psychological consultations as well as free administrative and social assistance
- In 2003, MSF launched a grassroots programme in Brazzaville to raise awareness of the problems of sexual abuse

“Today one rape in two involves a minor: children, sometimes even babies. Boys as well as girls are raped. Nor are the elderly, pregnant women, or mothers spared. Every social category is affected.

On International Woman's Day, March 8, MSF in Congo Brazzaville launched a grassroots programme to raise awareness to the problems of sexual abuse.

500 wooden silhouettes of women were installed in the streets of Brazzaville and a Congolose theatre group performed on a truck travelling from one neighbourhood to another. Badges, leaflets, posters with the slogan 'Tika / Bika viol, je dis non!' (Tika / Bika, I say no to rape!) were distributed throughout the city.

Sexual abuse and violence was particularly severe during a year-long flare-up of the civil war beginning in December 1998. Between May 3 and December 31 1999, 1,200 women went to the emergency unit of the Makélékélé hospital declaring they had been victims of rape. The majority of the violence was perpetrated on the road from Kinkala and Brazzaville - a road that became known as 'the corridor of death'.

After this period, the numbers decreased but the problem remains important. MSF started a program in the Makélékélé hospital in March 2000. Between March 2000 and December 2002, 548 victims of sexual violence were helped at this hospital by MSF teams. MSF organises medical and psychological consultations and provides administrative and social assistance that is both free of charge and anonymous.” (MSF, 11 Mar 03)

To read more about MSF's work in Congo-Brazzaville, [click here](#)

Local NGO assists return of IDPs to Pool Region (2003)

- In July 2003, Action de secours d'urgence, part of the evangelical church in Congo, launches initiative worth more than US\$ 720,000 to assist return of IDPs to Pool
- Assistance will include food aid, shelter and agricultural equipment for some 2,500 recently returned families

“Action de secours d'urgence (ASU), the humanitarian arm of the evangelical church in the Republic of Congo, has launched a campaign to assist the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to the Pool Region, church president Alphonse Mbamba told IRIN on Wednesday in the capital, Brazzaville.

The initiative, valued at 400 million francs CFA (US \$721,449), will include food aid, material for rebuilding homes, construction machinery, cooking utensils, mosquito nets, medicines and farming equipment. It will target some 2,500 families who have recently returned to their villages in the districts of Mbanza Ndounga, Louingui, Boko, Loumo, Kinkala, Ngoma Tse-tse, Kindamba, Mindouli and Vinza.

Mbamba said his group's assistance was only a small contribution to resolving a much larger problem, and that active participation of the government and other NGO partners was imperative.

ASU deputy director Ange Ndandou added that in collaboration with Rev Dominique Ntsibatala of the Congolese army, a peace education and anti-drug programme was being conducted for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, who would also be provided with basic supplies to support their return to civilian life.

On 4 July, the Congolese government announced that it hoped to have all IDPs from the Pool Region returned to their homes by the end of July.

The improved situation in Pool followed a peace agreement signed on 17 March between the government and 'Ninja' rebels of Rev Frederic Bitsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, which ended a year of hostilities. Tens of thousands of people fled the region, while fighting trapped many more." (IRIN, 10 Jul 03)

The Salvation Army aided displaced fleeing fighting (June 2002)

- The Salvation Army established three feeding stations around Brazzaville for the displaced

"Reporting from Brazzaville, the head of The Salvation Army in the country, Commissioner Antoine Makoumbou, reports that people are streaming into the city to escape the fighting.

[...]

With little resources at hand, The Salvation Army has quickly established three feeding stations around Brazzaville - at Bacongo, Loua and MOUNGALI - where evacuees are provided a basic ration of rice, salted fish, soap, salt and milk powder. A plea for assistance in providing emergency food has been received at the organisation's International Headquarters in London. An immediate US\$17,500 has been dispatched to purchase critically needed food until a full assessment of the needs can be completed." (SA 5 June 2002)

References to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Known references to the Guiding Principles (as of August 03)

Reference to the Guiding Principles in national legislation

None

Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages

None

Training on the Guiding Principles

UN OCHA IDP Unit held a two-day workshop on the Guiding Principles in Brazzaville. The objectives were two-fold: the first was to raise awareness of the Guiding Principles among key

government actors, UN agencies, international NGOs, and civil society representatives at the national level. The second objective was to identify perceived or potential operational gaps in responding to the problem of displacement, with particular emphasis on the return and resettlement process following recent positive political developments.

Date: 20-21 March 2003

Document: Training Report, UN OCHA IDP Unit and Response Coordination Branch, March 2003

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