



# CONGO CRISIS

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been engulfed by conflict for over a decade and remains one of the world's worst and most forsaken humanitarian crises. Following years of economic and political decline, the war of 1998-2002 led to extreme violence, massive population displacement, widespread rape, and the collapse of public health services. Despite the signing of a formal peace agreement in December 2002, the adoption of a new constitution in 2005, and national and local elections in 2006, conflict and eruptions of violence have persisted in the eastern provinces, causing extraordinary loss of life. Renewed violence in August 2008, concentrated in North Kivu Province, and an escalation in LRA attacks in Orientale Province beginning in September 2008 led to wide-scale displacement. A resurgence in attacks against the civilian population occurred again during the joint military operations against the Hutu rebel force Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) throughout 2009.

## ■ Amongst the deadliest conflicts in the world

An estimated 5.4 million people have died as a consequence of the war and its lingering effects since 1998. In spite of the official end of the war in December 2002, approximately 500,000 Congolese have continued to die each year.

## ■ One of the cruelest conflict zones for women and girls

Tens of thousands of women and girls have been raped, sexually assaulted, attacked and abducted in North and South Kivu, targeted by all armed groups with unparalleled levels of brutality.

## ■ The educational system is failing

An international group of donor nations recently concluded that the educational system in DRC is failing and that most rural children do not attend school. Lack of access to primary education, remains a major obstacle to forward momentum in DRC.

## ■ Civilians are the main victims

Over the past months, civilians have been carrying the burden of the UN supported Kimia II operations. Civilians have been caught in the middle of military attacks by the Congolese army and retaliation attacks by the rebels from the FDLR. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee, thousands of women and girls have been raped, and thousands of Congolese have lost their homes.

## ■ 1/3 of the population in state of health emergency

DRC is in the bottom three nations in terms of life expectancy, education and standard of living, and these measures have declined by more than 10% over the past decade. Humanitarian agencies have identified 193 of the country's 515 health zones as in a state of emergency; representing more than a third of the national population.



# IRC in Congo

The International Rescue Committee is one of the largest providers of humanitarian aid in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 1996, we have been working to save lives, revive communities and strengthen local capacity for recovery. IRC is a leader in providing critical health and emergency response services to those displaced by violence. We are also one of the most experienced organizations working to address the crisis of sexual violence in Congo. Operating with 750 staff members in seven of eleven provinces, our effective programs are designed to make a long-term impact—helping Congolese reclaim their future through education, training, and community development.

- IRC's Emergency Response Team is helping thousands of people in need of emergency assistance in eastern Congo, providing medical equipment and drugs, emergency supplies, clean water, sanitation, educational programs, and aid for survivors of sexual violence.
- IRC works with thousands of people who have returned home after the conflict; providing medical care, drugs, re-building health centers and schools, providing educational programs, as well as aid delivery for rape survivors and vulnerable children according to the priorities of the communities.
- IRC is working with the Ministry of Health to provide essential health care for 3.6 million people, constructing and repairing hospitals and clinics, supplying them with equipment and medicine, and training health workers.
- IRC also works on more long term solutions, bringing together over 1.7 million people in 1,250 war-torn villages, to help them address local needs, design their own recovery projects and ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable have a voice in decisions and access to services.
- IRC has helped over 40,000 survivors of sexual violence and their families providing emergency care, counseling and other support services as well as seeking prevention measures and engaging in, advocacy to improve services and prevent violence nationally and internationally.
- IRC increases access to education and forms community-based parent groups to support and strengthen schools and keep children learning, even during emergencies.