



Congo

The ICRC has operated in the Congo since 1994, first through the Kinshasa regional delegation and since 1998 as a separate delegation. The ICRC promotes respect for IHL and human rights law by the authorities in their treatment of civilians and detainees. It encourages the inclusion of IHL in the instruction of the armed forces, police and *gendarmérie*. The ICRC provides civilians affected by the conflict with agricultural tools and seeds; improves water, sanitation and health care facilities; and restores contact between separated family members, where necessary reuniting children with their families. It also helps strengthen the operational capacities of the Congolese Red Cross.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	927
Assistance	3,028
Prevention	1,740
Cooperation with National Societies	411
General	-

► **6,107**

of which: Overheads **373**

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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PERSONNEL

13 expatriates
110 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2006, the ICRC:

- maintained assistance programmes for people in Pool and kept up protection activities alongside them; initiated work to improve access to potable water for 35,000 people; supported 9 health care facilities; improved the economic security of some 17,000 people through agricultural and fish-breeding programmes;
- closed its Kindamba office and prepared to close the Mindouli office, as part of a phased withdrawal from the Pool region;
- visited detainees in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire;
- continued providing tracing and family-reunification services, notably for Rwandan refugee children separated from their families;
- participated in the Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capabilities (RECAMP V) conference in Brazzaville;
- cooperated with the Congolese Red Cross in restoring family links.

CONTEXT

In 2006, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso succeeded Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as president of the African Union (AU) and participated in negotiations to resolve ongoing crises on the African continent. Congo was also elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. In May, Brazzaville was the venue for the Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capabilities (RECAMP V) conference, a joint initiative of the AU and the European Union (EU).

Preparations for the 2007 legislative elections got off to a slow start, with essential issues such as a population census remaining unresolved at the end of the year. The return from exile of Bernard Kolelas, an emblematic figure in Congolese politics who had been sentenced to death *in absentia*, prompted speculation about his possible political role.

Congo edged closer to qualifying for further debt relief under the World Bank/International Monetary Fund debt relief initiative for heavily indebted poor countries. Meanwhile, France cancelled debts owed to it by the country, and the World Bank approved a loan to revive the Congo's economy.

A solution to the deadlock in the Pool region remained elusive. The government and the National Resistance Council (NRC) led by Reverend Ntumi failed to find common ground on political partnership. Consequently, implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programme in the region could not get under way, and a substantial number of small arms remained in circulation. Reconstruction and development had all but stalled, infrastructure and services remained woefully inadequate and unemployment high. The repair of the Brazzaville-Kinkala road with EU funding offered hope of a fresh boost to trade and the local economy.

The situation in Pool no longer qualified as a humanitarian crisis but rather as a transition period marked by relative stability and calm, albeit marred by acts of banditry. Vulnerable populations living in isolated areas continued to rely on humanitarian assistance provided by the few international humanitarian organizations permanently present in the region, notably the ICRC, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development.

Congo was hit by serious flooding in November, causing loss of life, landslides in urban areas and widespread damage to property.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)		CIVILIANS AND PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM		
Detainees visited	661	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	13	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	2,460
Number of visits carried out	12	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	17,120
Number of places of detention visited	7	Habitat structures	Beneficiaries	60
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		<i>Health</i>		
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		Health centres supported	Structures	9
RCMs collected	1,545	Consultations	Patients	47,189
RCMs distributed	1,923	Immunizations	Activities	13,529
People reunited with their families	4			
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	18			
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	8			
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2006	17			
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>				
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	3			
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	3			
UAMs/SCs cases still being handled at 31 December 2006	10			
DOCUMENTS ISSUED				
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	7			

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC maintained a permanent presence in Pool, with expatriate and local staff operating from offices in Kindamba, Kinkala and Mindouli. Recurrent acts of banditry by armed groups at the end of 2005 compelled the organization to suspend its activities for six weeks at the beginning of 2006. They resumed once the security situation had improved. The ICRC closed its Kindamba office in June as part of a strategy to hand over responsibility for civilian welfare to the government and began preparations for the closure of its office in Mindouli, planned for January 2007.

In Pool, the effects of successive conflicts and lingering political uncertainty kept basic infrastructure (health facilities, water supply systems, schools and roads) in a state of ruin or disrepair, leaving the already impoverished population without the means to meet its basic needs.

Through structural support to the health, water, agricultural and fish-breeding sectors, the ICRC improved access of civilians to essential health services and enhanced the economic security of some 17,000 people. Assistance programmes carried out as part of a protection strategy enabled the organization to remain close to the population and to gain a clear understanding of its security and living conditions. Alongside these programmes, the ICRC impressed upon the authorities the need to assume their obligations towards the population.

The ICRC worked to spread knowledge of and enhance compliance with IHL among weapon bearers and the general public, notably by encouraging respect for protected persons in the event of hostilities. A constructive relationship was maintained with weapon bearers from all parties to promote understanding and acceptance of the organization's mandate and working methods.

ICRC delegates made regular visits to detainees in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, chiefly those held for reasons of State security. They checked that conditions of detention and treatment of detainees met universally recognized minimum standards.

The ICRC carried out a number of activities in collaboration with the Congolese Red Cross, chiefly in relation to the restoration of family links. Together with the Pointe-Noire branch, it conducted a successful pilot project to collect and distribute RCMs in the area. The Kindamba and Mindouli branch offices were rebuilt with ICRC support. The National Society also received support in its efforts to raise public awareness of HIV/AIDS.

The ICRC participated in regular coordination meetings with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other organizations providing aid or development support to the people of Pool.

CIVILIANS

Protection of civilians

Living conditions in Pool remained inadequate and in some cases precarious for particularly vulnerable sections of the population. Although the security situation stayed relatively stable, there were occasional reports of civilians being subjected to intimidation, extortion, looting, theft and other acts of violence by weapon bearers. Law enforcement agents were poorly equipped and courts still inoperative in Pool, making it difficult to enforce the rule of law. Civilians in certain locations were displaced for short periods following incidents triggered by tensions within the NRC or between militias and the armed forces.

The ICRC remained in close proximity to the population in sensitive areas of Pool. Its strategy was to assist people in need while obtaining a clear picture of their security and living conditions. Sustained dialogue was kept up with all parties to make them aware of their obligations towards the population, such as safeguarding access to basic services and humanitarian and development aid.

Restoring family links

Over the year, unaccompanied children from Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda were monitored by the ICRC. All but three children re-established contact with their families through RCMs and, where possible, were reunited with them.

Regular contact with UNHCR and government authorities facilitated the exchange of information and ensured that activities did not overlap. While ICRC efforts focused on children not accompanied by any family member, UNHCR concentrated on support to children separated from their parents. Refugees continued to rely on the RCM service to correspond with their families in their home countries, while people living in remote areas without other means of communication used the service to maintain contact with relatives abroad.

- ▶ 1,540 RCMs collected from, and 1,913 distributed to civilians, including 5 from and 11 to unaccompanied/separated children
- ▶ new tracing requests opened for 18 people (9 females and 9 minors at the time of disappearance); 8 people located; 17 people (8 females and 9 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 3 unaccompanied/separated children registered; 3 reunited with their families; 10 cases of such children still being handled
- ▶ 4 people reunited with their families (including the 3 above-mentioned unaccompanied/separated children)
- ▶ 1 person issued with an ICRC travel document

Food and economic security

The majority of former IDPs had returned to their places of origin in 2004. This created problems of its own, with many obliged to rebuild their lives from scratch and already impoverished communities having to share scarce resources with the returnees. Meanwhile, the absence of a durable and inclusive peace agreement kept long-term and economic recovery programmes at bay.

- ▶ 2, 460 people (492 households) received essential household items

Cassava and fish-breeding programmes

The authorities, who implemented a cassava programme jointly with the ICRC, became increasingly concerned by the threat to food and economic security posed by the unchecked spread of the mosaic virus affecting cassava plants. They distributed food seed and allocated some funds for the multiplication of healthy cassava varieties, but their concern did not translate into tangible action, such as assuming their full share of responsibility in the programme.

In the departments of Pool and Plateaux, the local agricultural authorities and the ICRC continued work on six plots in which

12 cassava varieties were screened for tolerance to the mosaic virus, productivity and adaptability to the local agricultural and ecological conditions. Varieties selected were multiplied and distributed. While the results from the cassava plants grown from the cuttings distributed to 95 associations in October 2005 were encouraging, they revealed that the development of the cuttings depended on local conditions.

Additional associations received healthy cuttings for multiplication and tools such as ploughs. Some 900 farmers from associations that received ICRC support in 2005–2006 attended 30 sessions on the virus and methods of combating it. Local agents of the Ministry of agriculture in Pool and Plateaux received logistical support to help them intensify their field activities and services to the rural population.

Civilians in Pool were able to improve their diet and economic security thanks to the revival of fish-breeding and related activities. The programme was undertaken in close collaboration with the local fisheries sector. Through the programme, fishing associations received support in the form of fishing equipment and materials for the restoration or construction of fish ponds and 120 of their representatives attended 6 seminars on the setting up and management of fish ponds.

By the end of 2006, the programme had proved to be a real success, having become a stable supplier of juvenile fish in the districts concerned. Several individual fish breeders got their supplies from associations supported by the ICRC, as did a private investor, who leased and restored the Mindouli fisheries centre.

A total of 17,120 people (3,837 households) benefited from agricultural/micro-economic initiatives:

- ▶ 7,765 people (1,553 households) benefited from the cassava programme;
- ▶ 9,355 people (1,871 households) benefited from the fish-breeding programme.

Contingency stock

An emergency stock to cover the household needs of 10,000 IDPs for a month remained in place.

Water and sanitation

Access to safe drinking water continued to be a problem in Pool. Efforts to repair existing but unsafe water sources and build new ones achieved mixed results owing to the

authorities' lack of involvement and the almost total absence of development agencies in the region. As most people were managing to meet their basic water needs, ICRC support focused on improving water quality rather than on constructing a large number of water points as had been planned.

Alongside this, the ICRC raised the authorities' awareness of the need to allocate adequate resources to the maintenance of water systems. It also encouraged them to consolidate partnerships with other organizations working in this sector so as to streamline the management of water supply projects.

- ▶ 25,000 people to benefit from improved access to water through the ongoing construction of spring catchments and wells with hand pumps and the rehabilitation of gravity-fed systems
- ▶ 10,000 people to benefit from improved and safer access to water from Kinkala pumping station on completion of renovation work in April 2007
- ▶ 20 agents from the national water board trained

Rural communities in Pool continued to benefit from a hygiene promotion programme launched in July 2005. Local committees were also created to ensure that water sources constructed or repaired by the ICRC were protected and kept clean.

Health care

The ICRC consolidated its partnership with the health authorities. Through regular meetings, it encouraged them to take specific measures – including the allocation of technical and financial resources – to fulfill their obligation to meet the population's health needs. Nine integrated health centres received regular support from the ICRC in the form of supervision and medical and other supplies. Assistance to two of the health centres had to be suspended temporarily, when they stopped working owing to a lack of qualified personnel. One of them resumed activity in November.

Various partners, such as MSF and the EU, which also ran or supported health facilities and programmes in Pool, coordinated their efforts with those of the ICRC.

The authorities assumed responsibility for the Kibouendé and Kimba health centres and Madzia maternity unit. These centres together with the one in Kimanika and the hospital in Kindamba benefited from various rehabilitation projects, mainly involving sanitation facilities (latrines, showers and a rubbish pit) and water supply systems.

In Kinkala and Mindouli districts, women of reproductive age were given three rounds of vaccinations, while children were vaccinated through ICRC support to the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

In the 9 ICRC-supported integrated health centres (catchment population: 727,000):

- ▶ 47,189 consultations (4,949 ante/postnatal, 42,240 curative, including 23,298 to women) were given;
- ▶ 13,529 vaccine doses were administered (11,420 to children aged five or under and 2,109 to women of childbearing age);
- ▶ rehabilitation work made it possible to conduct 120 consultations daily.

Training, including workshops organized jointly with the Health Ministry, focused on the management of community-based health care systems, the prevention of disease, and health promotion.

In total 668 health education sessions were held and included the following:

- ▶ 39 members of village health committees, including heads of health centres and government officials, attended 3 workshops on public health issues;
- ▶ 28 health workers and birth attendants participated in a workshop on hygiene and reproductive health;
- ▶ 18 health workers trained in national protocols to combat malaria and in the national health information system;
- ▶ 17 health workers and matrons trained in delivery and baby care.

Contingency stock

An emergency kit to cover the health needs of 10,000 IDPs for three months remained in place.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees held in temporary and permanent places of detention in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Justice, Defence and Security and Public Order continued to receive visits from the ICRC. Particular attention was paid to detainees held for reasons of State security.

- ▶ 661 detainees visited, 13 of whom monitored individually, during 12 visits to 7 places of detention
- ▶ 5 RCMs collected from and 10 RCMs distributed to detainees

- ▶ 7 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families
- ▶ 60 inmates of 8 police stations in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire benefited from the renovation or construction of latrines and water supply systems

WOUNDED AND SICK

Five people wounded during past conflict were treated at the central military hospital in Brazzaville with drugs and medical supplies donated by the ICRC.

Contingency stock

A surgical kit and medical supplies, including anaesthetics, for the treatment of 100 wounded people remained in place.

AUTHORITIES

The Congolese authorities created a 12-member interministerial IHL committee for the implementation of IHL, which received support from the ICRC in drafting a document on its legal framework.

- ▶ national IHL committee members attended 2 workshops on IHL implementation
- ▶ 2 committee members attended a regional IHL meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon
- ▶ 28 representatives of regional economic communities and various ministries attended a conference in Brazzaville on ICRC humanitarian diplomacy in Africa
- ▶ 107 local government officials in Brazzaville attended IHL sessions
- ▶ some 250 high-ranking representatives of regional bodies and donor countries attended a RECAMP V conference in Brazzaville

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

All categories of weapon bearers participated in a range of activities organized by the ICRC to enhance their knowledge of IHL and/or humanitarian principles and to support integration of IHL into their training, doctrine and operations.

Armed forces

- ▶ members of the Defence Ministry's permanent committee and sub-committees created to supervise the promotion of IHL/human rights law in the armed, security and police forces attended workshops to review their activities

- ▶ 66 IHL military instructors attended 2 training courses
- ▶ 3 officers trained in San Remo, Italy
- ▶ 6 military training centres received technical and material support in revising their IHL curricula and training courses
- ▶ some 5,050 army personnel and cadets, including members of the Presidential Guard, participated in sessions on IHL and the Movement
- ▶ 30 officers briefed as part of RECAMP V

Police and gendarmerie

The reopening of the police academy, which had been closed for a year and a half, provided a much-needed institutional framework for incorporating human rights and humanitarian principles into the police training programme.

- ▶ 47 police officers, trainers and *gendarmes* attended courses on human rights and aspects of IHL applicable to law enforcement
- ▶ 2 representatives of the police and *gendarmerie* attended a pan-African seminar organized by the ICRC in Pretoria, South Africa
- ▶ over 1,650 rank and file and cadets of the police and *gendarmerie* and senior Security Ministry officials in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire and Pool attended sessions on the ICRC, human rights and humanitarian principles applicable to police and security operations

Other weapon bearers

Some 4,000 people in various parts of Pool, including 220 members of the NRC, attended a play on the work of the ICRC and the National Society produced in Lari.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The media, NGOs, university students, lecturers, schoolchildren, teachers and other members of civil society continued to benefit from ICRC efforts to raise public awareness of IHL, the Movement and the Fundamental Principles.

- ▶ a regional workshop on the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, organized by a local human rights association, attended by the ICRC
- ▶ some 30 media representatives attended 2 press conferences on ICRC activities; national media frequently cited ICRC press releases

The authorities were encouraged to take IHL into account in the reform of university education. As a result, IHL became compulsory for law degree courses in two universities.

- ▶ a lecturer teaching IHL at 2 institutions of higher education participated in the pan-African IHL course in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- ▶ students and lecturers at Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville took part in a round-table discussion on IHL and a session on IHL and the ICRC

The directorate for primary and secondary education continued to receive full backing for its programme in Pool to raise secondary school students' awareness of humanitarian values and principles. A comic entitled *Battle in the village* was used in implementing the programme. The authorities requested the programme's extension to technical and professional training colleges.

- ▶ 28 teachers trained in humanitarian values, and 959 pupils read the comic

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Congolese Red Cross continued to receive financial, material and technical support from the ICRC in carrying out its activities.

During the flooding and landslides in November, the National Society had ICRC support and material assistance, provided in coordination with the International Federation, in transferring the remains of victims to the mortuary.

The Pointe-Noire branch of the Red Cross was supported in a pilot project to collect and distribute RCMs; the project achieved such encouraging results that plans were made to replicate it.

- ▶ a bill on the protection of the emblem drafted and submitted to the relevant ministry for review
- ▶ National Society branch offices in Kindamba and Mindouli rehabilitated; restoration of Kinkala branch office begun
- ▶ National Society representatives attended the 29th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva, Switzerland, and a conference on tracing in Nairobi, Kenya
- ▶ 105 volunteers attended 4 training sessions on HIV/AIDS and played a vital role in relaying messages on the issue to communities
- ▶ 8 National Society officials attended a workshop on IHL, the Movement and the Fundamental Principles