

Congo



The ICRC has operated in 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	631
Assistance	2,451
Prevention	1,623
Cooperation with National Societies	390
General	-

► 5,094

of which: Overheads 304

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	98%
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PERSONNEL

9 expatriates
82 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2007, the ICRC:

- ▶ conducted projects in urban and rural areas of the Pool region to provide some 39,000 people with access to safe drinking water
- ▶ supported 8 health centres in Pool through the provision of medical supplies, supervision and training
- ▶ helped build the economic security of over 30,000 people in Pool
- ▶ pursued activities to promote IHL among the armed and security forces, academic circles and civil society
- ▶ helped the National Society reinforce its capacities in the fields of water and sanitation, economic security, restoration of family links, HIV/AIDS awareness and first aid
- ▶ closed its office in Mindouli and gradually reduced its assistance activities

CONTEXT

Legislative elections dominated the political scene in 2007, with the creation of numerous parties and the formation of new alliances, notably between the ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) and the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCCDI) of Bernard Kolelas. A coalition led by President Sassou Nguesso emerged victorious, although the elections drew criticism from international observers and opposition political parties. In December, two members of the MCCDI were appointed to the cabinet.

The transformation of the National Resistance Council into a political movement called the National Council of Republicans (CNR) gave new momentum to its dialogue with the authorities, easing the deadlock that had prevailed for several years over the situation in the Pool region. Frédéric Bintsangou, alias Pasteur Ntoumi, the leader of the CNR, was named as a general delegate in the office of the head of State, charged with the promotion of peace and post-conflict reconstruction.

In September, a failed attempt by Bintsangou to assume his post in Brazzaville was marked by armed incidents. Tension between the government and the CNR mounted, and by the 31 December deadline set by President Sassou Nguesso, Bintsangou still had not taken up his functions. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militia members was thus delayed, since its start was conditional upon Bintsangou assuming his post. Nevertheless, a UNDP programme was under way in Pool to help ex-combatants learn vocational skills and earn an income.

The security situation in Pool stabilized further, despite occasional acts of banditry. The rehabilitation of the Brazzaville-Kinkala road, financed by the European Union (EU), was a significant positive development, increasing the freedom of movement of people and goods and opening up the south of the region to increased trade. However, the area around Kindamba, in the north of Pool, remained cut off. Throughout the region, lack of infrastructure, much of which had been damaged or destroyed during the conflict, and inadequate access to basic services continued to cause problems for residents. The population received assistance from a handful of humanitarian agencies and from a growing number of development organizations.

On 22 and 23 March, clashes broke out in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), between the country's armed forces and troops loyal to its former vice-president, Jean-Pierre Bemba. Some two hundred DRC

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total		Total	Women	Children	
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			CIVILIANS			
Detainees visited	598	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>				
Detainees visited and monitored individually	10	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	30,115	40%	25%
Number of visits carried out	14	Water, sanitation and habitat projects	Beneficiaries	38,610	40%	20%
Number of places of detention visited	6	<i>Health</i>				
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		Health centres supported	Structures	8		
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		Consultations	Patients	35,367		
RCMs collected	1,689	<i>of which curative</i>		Patients	8,847	14,171
RCMs distributed	1,652	<i>of which ante/post-natal</i>		Patients	3,633	11
People reunited with their families	2	Immunizations	Doses	15,419		
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>						
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	8					
<i>of whom females</i>						
	3					
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>						
	2					
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	2					
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	8					
<i>of which for females</i>						
	3					
<i>of which for minors at the time of disappearance</i>						
	3					
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>						
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	4					
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	2					
UAM/SC cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	11					
DOCUMENTS ISSUED						
People to whom travel documents were issued	5					
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	7					

nationals, including more than a hundred militia members, many of them accompanied by their wives and children, sought refuge in Brazzaville, and were later transferred by the Congolese authorities to a site north of the capital.

A cholera epidemic affected more than 7,000 people in the south of the country, claiming about a hundred lives.

The Chinese government and the London Club (a group of private creditors) agreed to cancel some of the debts owed to them by Congo, and the World Bank pledged to finance projects in the health and agriculture sectors.

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC gained a clear picture of living and security conditions in the Pool region through its programmes to improve the civilian population's economic security and access to health care and safe drinking water. With the security situation in Pool improving, the ICRC encouraged the authorities and other organizations to meet the needs of the local population and began to gradually reduce certain of its own activities in the region. It closed its office in Mindouli in January, while maintaining a presence in the region through its sub-delegation in Kinkala.

The ICRC continued to work with the authorities, the armed forces and other weapon bearers, academic circles and the general public to build an environment in which IHL was respected and the organization's mandate and activities were understood and accepted.

Delegates made regular visits to detainees in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, chiefly those held for reasons of State security, to check that conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees met internationally recognized standards.

The ICRC carried out a number of activities in cooperation with the Congolese Red Cross, with the aim of strengthening the capacities of the National Society and ensuring it was able to continue programmes begun by the ICRC as the latter organization progressively reduced its operational presence in the country. It commenced support to the Brazzaville branch for the collection and distribution of RCMs, following the success of a similar exercise in Pointe-Noire. The National Society also received training in first aid, hygiene and sanitation and support for its efforts to raise public awareness of HIV/AIDS. The construction of the National Society's office in the Pool region was completed.

Following the fighting in Kinshasa in March, the ICRC provided material assistance to the Congolese Red Cross to help it attend to the needs of people who had sought refuge in Brazzaville. It also furnished the National Society with first-aid kits and relief items, to complement aid provided by the government, and facilitated the restoration of family links.

The ICRC participated in regular coordination meetings of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other aid or development organizations, particularly those working in Pool.

CIVILIANS

Protecting civilians

It remained difficult for people living in the Pool region, particularly the most vulnerable, to access essential services. Despite the general improvement in the security situation, the civilian population was reportedly subjected to occasional incidents of theft or acts of violence by weapon bearers. Members of the CNR's militia had yet to return to civilian life, following the group's conversion into a political movement, while the authorities' capacity to provide law and order in the region remained limited.

The situation of residents of volatile parts of the Pool region was monitored by the ICRC, which aimed to assist those in need while obtaining a clear picture of their security and living conditions. The organization regularly spoke with the authorities and weapon bearers to remind them of their obligations towards the civilian population, in particular the necessity of allowing access to essential services.

Restoring family links

Refugees used the RCM service to restore or maintain contact with family members in their home countries, as did people living in remote areas, without other means of communication, to keep in touch with relatives abroad. In particular, people who had sought refuge in Brazzaville from the fighting in Kinshasa in March used the service to re-establish links with their relatives in the DRC.

The cases of unaccompanied children, mainly of Congolese and Rwandan origin, continued to be followed by the ICRC, which worked to reunite them with their relatives, where appropriate. Regular contact with government authorities, UNHCR and various other partners facilitated the exchange of information on the children's situation and ensured activities were properly coordinated. UNHCR concentrated on support to children separated from their parents, while ICRC efforts focused on children not accompanied by any family members.

- 1,680 RCMs collected from and 1,635 RCMs distributed to civilians, including 1 from and 2 to unaccompanied/separated children
- new tracing requests registered for 8 people (including 3 females and 2 minors at the time of disappearance); 2 people located; 8 people (including 3 females and 3 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- 4 unaccompanied/separated children registered; 2 reunited with their families; 11 cases of unaccompanied/separated children still being handled
- 5 people issued with ICRC travel documents

Building food and economic security

At the start of the year, an evaluation of the ICRC's activities to revive agriculture and fish-farming in the Pool region since 2003 revealed that they had achieved strong results. More than 70% of households that had received ploughing tools and mosaic-resistant cassava cuttings before the end of 2005 had cultivated a second field without ICRC help, or had redistributed or sold cuttings. The evaluation estimated that more than 4,000 households had thus received mosaic-resistant cuttings, helping slow the spread of the virus. From 85 fish-farming ponds rehabilitated with ICRC assistance in the south of Pool, an estimated 320 ponds in total had been created and stocked. This ensured a ready supply of fingerlings for further fish farming, while adult fish could be sold in markets, boosting household income and community food security.

The most severe form of the mosaic virus remained a threat. Domestic varieties having proved vulnerable to the virus, local agricultural authorities imported, propagated and distributed six high-yielding, mosaic-resistant varieties of cuttings. Their staff worked with the rural population, with material and logistical support from the ICRC. A further four varieties were imported and being propagated. The full engagement of the authorities, already aware of the severity of the threat, was sought, in order that they might progressively take charge of the programme.

Members of communities in which agricultural or fish-farming projects were taking place, including residents who were not directly associated with ICRC projects, participated in training sessions to learn improved farming techniques.

- 30,115 people benefited from agricultural inputs
- 6,473 people participated in 172 training sessions
- 5,076 brochures distributed, of which 2,449 on methods to combat the mosaic virus and 2,627 on fish-farming techniques

Water and sanitation

Despite the activities of humanitarian and development actors working in the Pool region, access to safe drinking water remained difficult in certain areas. The ICRC therefore endeavoured to impress upon the authorities the need to provide adequate resources to the water sector and continued to seek the involvement of other actors active in this domain. In line with the planned reduction of its activities, the ICRC ended its water and sanitation projects in December 2007, apart from two sites where work was set to continue until February 2008.

Residents of the Pool region benefited from the completion of a gravity-fed network, three spring capture projects, and repairs to eight wells with hand pumps. Work on two further networks was still under way. Preference was given to the protection of water sources and the maintenance or repair of gravity-fed systems over the drilling of new wells, in order to limit maintenance requirements.

Some 10,000 residents of Kinkala saw the completion of works to rehabilitate their water treatment plant, carried out in conjunction with the national water authorities, with the plant scheduled to be put into service in January 2008.

Local management committees took charge of the maintenance of each water system, following training, while rural and urban residents continued to learn about hygiene in sessions organized by the ICRC.

- 38,610 people benefited from water and sanitation projects
- 5,885 people attended 51 hygiene promotion sessions
- 10 staff of water treatment plants rehabilitated by the ICRC since 1998 participated, with ICRC financial support, in a training workshop in Kinshasa, DRC

Health care

Integrated health centres received regular support from the ICRC in the form of medical and other supplies, as well as supervision and training. The health authorities worked closely with the ICRC, which urged them to allocate sufficient resources to respond to the health needs of the population. To improve the functioning of the health centres and build the capacity of the health authorities to assume responsibility for them, the ICRC provided logistical support for joint supervisory visits made with the Pool regional

health department and the Support Project for the Congo Brazzaville Health System (PASCOB), an EU-funded initiative. Training in the management of integrated health centres, organized jointly with the health department, aimed to strengthen administrative capacity.

A cost-recovery system was introduced in the integrated health centres, within the framework of the ICRC's progressive withdrawal of direct support for health care in the country.

Residents of Pool also benefited from ICRC logistical support to the Expanded Programme on Immunization and the completion of construction work on the Kimanika health centre, the Madzia maternity centre and the sanitation block of the Massembo-Loubaki health centre.

Regular contact with other actors running or supporting health programmes in Pool, such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the EU, aimed to identify gaps and to coordinate activities.

Five patients wounded during past conflicts were treated at the Central Military Hospital in Brazzaville with medicines and medical materials donated by the ICRC. A medical kit to treat up to 10,000 people was dispatched from Brazzaville to Kinshasa following the March events. The ICRC kept surgical and medical materials in stock for the treatment of up to 100 wounded people.

In the 8 ICRC-supported health centres (catchment population: 60,000):

- ▶ 35,367 people given consultations, including 3,644 attending ante/post-natal consultations and 31,723 attending curative consultations
- ▶ 15,419 vaccine doses administered (12,910 to children aged five or under and 2,509 to women of childbearing age)

In addition:

- ▶ 13 people attended a course on health centre administration
- ▶ 24 members of health committees attended training sessions to reinforce their management capacities
- ▶ 8 health centre managers participated in training on the treatment of malnutrition and sexual violence
- ▶ 23 supervisory visits conducted jointly by the health department and the ICRC, some of which attended by PASCOB staff

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees held in places of temporary and permanent detention in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Justice, Defence and Public Order, continued to receive visits from the ICRC. Particular attention was paid to detainees held for reasons of State security. Delegates monitored detainees' treatment and detention conditions and, where necessary, made recommendations for improvements as part of a confidential dialogue with the authorities.

- ▶ 598 detainees visited, of whom 10 monitored individually and 1 newly registered, during 14 visits to 6 places of detention
- ▶ 9 RCMs collected from and 17 RCMs distributed to detainees
- ▶ 7 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

AUTHORITIES

An interministerial committee met to establish the steps necessary to create a national IHL committee. The Supreme Court returned a favourable opinion on a draft decree to establish the prospective committee, and on a law implementing the Rome Statute.

- ▶ a member of the interministerial committee attended the Second Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees held in Geneva, Switzerland, which focused on legal measures and mechanisms to prevent disappearances, to clarify the fate of missing persons and to assist their families
- ▶ a member of the same committee participated in a technical meeting on the national implementation of IHL, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon
- ▶ with reforms to the penal code under consideration, the Ministry of Justice received technical advice from the ICRC on appropriate sanctions for IHL violations
- ▶ an interministerial committee considered, with input from the ICRC and the National Society, a draft law to protect the emblem
- ▶ legislation relating to the Ottawa Convention finalized with input from the ICRC
- ▶ the Congolese Red Cross received support in preparing for its participation in the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

In February, the president decreed that a committee on the integration of IHL and human rights principles into the training and operations of the armed and security forces should be established. The authorities' efforts in this respect received ICRC support, with military personnel and members of the police and *gendarmerie* briefed on IHL and/or humanitarian principles. Instructors previously trained by the ICRC contributed to many of these sessions, and further train-the-trainer sessions were conducted by the ICRC.

- ▶ 9 *gendarmes*/police officers participated in a workshop on the integration of humanitarian and human rights principles into training curricula
- ▶ 2 army officers sponsored to attend IHL training abroad
- ▶ 22 military legal advisers trained in IHL, and 174 military, police and *gendarme* instructors participated in relevant train-the-trainer sessions
- ▶ 352 members of the presidential guard/other units, 1,602 people attending military training institutions and 148 members of units deployed in the Pool region briefed on IHL and the ICRC
- ▶ 800 police officers or cadets briefed on human rights and relevant IHL rules
- ▶ 79 soldiers/observers assigned to peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic and Sudan briefed on IHL and the ICRC's activities in those countries

More than 220 members of the CNR's militia were among some 22,300 residents of communities in the Pool region who attended a play raising awareness of humanitarian values.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Promoting IHL among the media and civil society organizations

- 33 representatives of human rights NGOs participated in a workshop to raise awareness of IHL and ICRC activities, helping to establish a platform for the discussion of topics of common interest
- journalists learned about IHL and the ICRC at a seminar in Brazzaville

Teaching IHL in schools and universities

- a team of 4 Congolese students were runners-up in a regional IHL moot court competition in Burkina Faso
- 158 students at Marien Ngouabi University, the Free University of Congo and the national school of public administration participated in 2 events to raise their awareness of IHL and the mandates and activities of the Congolese Red Cross and the ICRC
- 41 teachers from 12 colleges in the Pool region participated in training sessions on IHL, the ICRC and the use of an educational comic book on humanitarian values entitled *The battle of the villages*; more than 1,000 students followed the programme

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Congolese Red Cross held its general assembly, with financial support from the International Federation and the ICRC, and elected a new president. Representatives attended the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva.

Construction of the National Society's office in Kinkala was completed, helping provide the operational capacity needed for it to take over activities in Pool as the ICRC withdrew from the region.

The Congolese Red Cross distributed assistance to people who had fled the fighting in Kinshasa in March. It received first-aid kits and other relief items from the ICRC to complement aid provided by the government.

The National Society operated the RCM service in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, with ICRC financial and technical support (see *Civilians*).

With ICRC support:

- 80 volunteers learned first aid, and some 100 trained in HIV/AIDS awareness-raising techniques
- 25 volunteers conducted a day of HIV/AIDS awareness-raising activities for the population of Kinkala
- 18 volunteers from the Pool region received hygiene training to help ensure the sustainability of ICRC water and sanitation programmes
- 97 volunteers from Pool briefed on the Movement, its components and their respective roles
- over 300 volunteers participated in a range of activities to mark World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May)