



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

DR Congo remains the deadliest humanitarian catastrophe

(Kinshasa and New York: 13 May 2006): Three months on from the launch of the 2006 Action Plan for the Democratic Republic of Congo, which aims to provide humanitarian assistance and promote peace and stability in the country, the international community has met just 13 per cent of identified needs.



Civilian populations, here in Katanga, are the first victims of the armed conflict, and are in dire need of international aid.

Photo: OCHA

Never since independence have prospects for peace and recovery been so favourable for the Democratic Republic of Congo, poised to emerge from crisis and chaos. Last year, 25 million Congolese enthusiastically registered to vote. In December they overwhelmingly endorsed a constitution that forms the basis for a democratic state and opens the way to the first free and fair elections in over 40 years.

Despite the democratisation process that is under-way, at least 10 millions Congolese continue to suffer, in a dramatic, from the consequences of a decade-long conflict. In order to restore for a brighter future for these people who have lost everything, the humanitarian community developed an Action Plan to alleviate the suffering of the people.

Yet, three months after the Plan's launch, only \$90.5 million of the \$682 million needed for humanitarian aid has been made available by the international community.

"It is disappointing to see that funding is still so low, given that the United Nations has declared 2006 the Year of the DRC," stated Ross Mountain, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in DRC. "Appreciating the recently announced pledges by the United Kingdom and Sweden, I appeal to donors, to seize the opportunity offered by the peace process, to fully support the Action Plan in order to alleviate one of the greatest tasks facing the humanitarian community today. While international attention is currently focused on other crises, the DRC still remains the world's deadliest humanitarian catastrophe" he added.

Although funding of the 2006 Action Plan has been inadequate, the Pooled Fund for the DRC has received a significant amount of money from some traditional donors, which will enable aid providers to roll out a number of emergency projects. Under the Rapid Response Mechanism, some 365,000 newly displaced people, victims of the continued armed conflict, received assistance during the first four months of the year. However, this rate of access to assistance cannot be sustained without additional funding. While financial investments have been made on the electoral front, the humanitarian community urgently requires increased humanitarian funding.

"The Congolese people deserve better, first and foremost from their own Government in terms of the protection of civilians, respect for humanitarian principles and human rights, provision of basic social services and the restoration of state order," said Mr. Mountain. "From the international community, they deserve more funding -- and the time for that is now," he emphasized.

The Action Plan aims to provide life-saving assistance -- water, food, medical assistance, shelter, protection -- to some 10 million vulnerable people and to promote peace and stability in this country, where 1,200 people die every day. Comprising 89 projects by national and international non-governmental organisations as well as United Nations agencies, the Action Plan for the first time includes humanitarian projects and transition programmes within one strategic framework, demonstrating clearly the linkages between the two. To provide aid to the vulnerable, humanitarian agencies appealed for \$682 million, which amounts to \$0.18 per person per day.

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