

**JOINT UNDP-OCHA-WORLD BANK MISSION REPORT
TO THE IASC REFERENCE GROUP ON
POST-CONFLICT REINTEGRATION**

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

27 APRIL – 4 MAY 2000

I.	MISSION OBJECTIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	PAGE 2
II.	ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION	PAGE 3
III.	ASSESSMENT OF FUNDING LEVEL	PAGE 4
IV.	COORDINATION BETWEEN SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM ASSISTANCE	PAGE 5
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS	PAGE 6

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I. MISSION OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

1. When the decision was taken to field an IASC Reference Group mission to the Republic of the Congo, the World Bank had already been preparing a multi-donor/agency fact finding mission, including many of the IASC partners. The purpose of the Bank-coordinated mission was to (i) initiate the designing of its reengagement strategy; (ii) in the short-term, coordinate the interventions and/or strategies with those of partner agencies so as to avoid duplication and enhance synergy; and (iii) for the longer-term, initiate collaboration on the ground in anticipation of a growing involvement by the international community in the future.

2. Rather than organize a separate IASC mission, OCHA, UNDP and the Bank agreed to use the Bank-coordinated mission to also address IASC-related matters. In particular, the OCHA/UNDP/World Bank team would (i) identify and analyze key background and situational factors and constraints, building on country team responses; (ii) assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing strategic and operational coordination arrangements at the country level; and (iii) assess the adequacy of funding levels and the appropriateness and effectiveness of funding mechanisms for post-conflict situational programmes.

3. In the end, UNICEF and UNHCR participated in the Bank-coordinated mission through their country offices. The team comprising OCHA (Ms. Alexandra Humme), UNDP (Mr. Babacar Cissé) and the World Bank (Mr. Markus Kostner), therefore, addressed IASC matters in close collaboration with the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the country team and other mission members represented from headquarters, including the African Development Bank and the Agence Française de Développement. The team drew on the expertise of agencies represented in Brazzaville, including UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO, WFP, WHO, FAO and UNFPA as well as ICRC and IFRC and a large number of international and national NGOs. Although the mission was, thus, not a standard IASC Reference Group mission, the team was able to cover related IASC matters in a creative and practical manner.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION¹

4. After three civil wars within six years, the Republic of the Congo is a case of a country in transition from relief to development suffering from lack of resources to address the needs urgently required to support the current process of recovery and stabilization - a promising but also fragile process. Access continues to improve throughout the country, including to areas still under rebel control. Humanitarian needs are decreasing while some aspects such as malnutrition and support to health structures still need attention. The return of IDPs is proceeding and it is a priority of the Government to reintegrate them in their places of origin. It is estimated that some 610,000 IDPs have already returned, leaving some 180,000 persons still displaced and some 20,000 persons presumed dead. The traumatization of the society by the effects of war is visible and humanitarian and development partners should support activities in this respect during the transitional period. Security, while gradually improving, continues to be a concern, particular in the western areas still under control of armed militia.

5. Since the beginning of the year, there has been significant progress on the political side, particularly with the implementation of the Pointe Noire and Brazzaville cease-fire accords, signed 16 November 1999 and 29 December 1999. The agreements take into account the plight of the displaced populations and refer to the collection of arms and the reintegration of ex-militia. A monitoring commission brought together representatives of the mediator, President Bongo of Gabon, the Government and opposition militia. The commission traveled to opposition areas to negotiate arms collection and disintegration of militia, most recently to the key Cocoye stronghold of Mossendjo in north Niari (cocoyes were linked to former President Lissouba but ties now seem to have broken).

6. A law granting general amnesty for militia fighters who surrender their arms was passed by the National Transition Council at the end of 1999. The total number of militia fighters is estimated at 15,000, out of which 2,000 primarily former soldiers already took advantage of the amnesty offer and are slowly being reintegrated into the army. Except for some occasional skirmishes, there have been no reports of major fighting since the end of 1999.

7. On 3rd March, the Government presented in a public memorandum a transitional three-step plan to achieve sustainable peace : First a national dialogue on reconstruction, including all Congolese, should be organized. Secondly, a transitional period would focus on institutional rehabilitation and adoption of a new constitution leading to free and fair elections as the third and final step. The memorandum ends with an appeal to the international community to support the consolidation of the peace process, including assistance for rehabilitation and social reintegration of ex-combatants.

8. The opening of access to the affected interior in the south since the beginning of the year provides the opportunity to meet humanitarian needs in the most affected communities for the first time. Areas of concern remain primarily in the "Nibolek" region (Niari/Bouenza/Lekoumou) in the west of the country and in the Northwest of the Pool region – areas which are still under rebel control and, thus, are difficult to access for security reasons. Contacts with armed groups have commenced in order to increase access to affected populations.

¹ A comprehensive analysis of the country situation is provided in the document « The Republic of Congo on the brink » a study undertaken by the Henri Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue upon request of the IASC. Please also refer to the mission report of Mr. Ross Mountain, UN Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator following his visit to the Congo on 29 March 2000.

9. As regards immediate humanitarian needs, it appears that they are mainly linked to the return process of IDPs, particularly in the sectors of health, agriculture and education. Malnutrition rates have dropped as the returning population quickly restarted cultivation in many areas, and as changing seasons provided an abundance of fruit and other food. In many places the humanitarian community was not able to arrive in time to address emergency needs such as high malnutrition rates, but in time to assist with the reintegration and initial rehabilitation process. Health care needs are pronounced, having accumulated during several years of neglect and non-access to even the most basic care. There are dramatic needs for clean water and other basic services. Schools need to be rebuilt in every community. Vulnerable populations need assistance to re-establish livelihood through support to income-generating activities. Thus, it is crucial at the current juncture to ensure that humanitarian activities directly link with and are in support of reintegration and rehabilitation programmes.

10. Social and economic reintegration, particularly of young demobilized militia, is one of the most important issues to be addressed in the RoC. According to the Government, the majority of the 15,000 militia have already been demobilized, and there is an urgent need for their reintegration. UNDP has developed an initial reintegration programme together with the Government that could reach up to 5,000 ex-militia members. Humanitarian activities such as food-for-work could support this process. In the longer term, other reconstruction activities can and should link with these programmes.

11. The Congolese society is deeply traumatized by the effects of the wars, and if not addressed at an early stage as an important reconciliatory aspect, development will not be sustainable. In particular, activities addressing the effects of rape and violence against tens of thousands of women should be highlighted when seeking resources. Targeted local information campaigns may be useful, but will have to be done carefully taking into account the sensitivities of local populations who are reluctant to be vocal on the issue. Given the impact of the wars on the social fabric, it is highly recommended to promote reconciliation between the Congolese, e.g. through support to the national dialogue.

III. ASSESSMENT OF FUNDING LEVEL

12. Overall, the transition period, which has started in the RoC, can evolve quickly and the current funding is insufficient to respond adequately to these needs. Donors will have to understand that funding to stabilize a recovering country is as important as support during the emergency phase. Promising and yet fragile processes such as reaching a cease-fire accord, ceasing hostilities, population return, disarmament and the disbanding of militia have proceeded in a matter of only a few months and need to be supported.

13. The revision of the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, which is currently being finalized by the country team, is intended to ensure that the international community keep up with this rapidly evolving situation. Beyond providing emergency relief, there is a new emergency – to support communities and their returning members in their efforts to restore security and stability. The amount requested in the consolidated appeal will range between US\$ 25-30 million for immediate and transitional activities covering the period of 12 months.

14. The revision of the Consolidated Appeal includes a combination of emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance, particularly at the community level to the sectors of health and nutrition, food security and agricultural production, human rights, peace, reconciliation and reintegration, protection of children and primary education, refugees, shelter and humanitarian coordination. Examples of important bridging activities outlined in the appeal include reintegration assistance for returning displaced persons and refugees, rehabilitation

of essential services such as basic health care and clean water, ex-combatants reintegration, small arms collection, seeds and tools distribution for the September-December planting season and support to peace building opportunities. UN agencies are coordinating their planning to maximise synergy and impact of their assistance.

15. The reengagement strategies of the World Bank and the African Development Bank depend on the resolution of the government's arrears to both institutions. It is unlikely that this question can be resolved before 2001. As a result, large-scale rehabilitation and recovery assistance will probably not be available before well into 2001. Anticipating a realistic timeframe for the resolution of the arrears question, a CAP for 2001 may well prove necessary to enable the international community to continue its engagement with the Republic of the Congo at least on a limited scale.

16. The financing of the CAP 2000 is, therefore, essential to avoid a gap between relief and reconstruction and ensure that transitional activities can be adequately addressed. It is in this spirit, that OCHA and UNDP will jointly convene a donor meeting with the participation of the World Bank at the end of June/beginning of July in Geneva to present plans and funding requirements for transitional activities in the Republic of the Congo. The revision of the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal and the aide-memoire prepared by the World Bank following their recent mission will be at the centre of the donor meeting underlining the linkages between short-and longer-term programmes.

IV. COORDINATION BETWEEN SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM ASSISTANCE

17. The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator is firmly in charge of coordinating humanitarian and rehabilitation activities of the UN system and international NGOs, exemplified by the mid-term review of the Consolidated Appeal which was ongoing during the team's visit. Weekly coordination meetings provide a forum for UN agencies, NGOs and donor representatives to exchange information and initiate coherent activities. In addition, sectoral meetings covering health, agriculture and nutrition are being held and report to the plenary meeting. Special meetings on specific topics such as urgent road and bridge repairs, reintegration of youth and ex-combatants and security have also been organized to ensure complementary planning.

18. In the field, OCHA has been vanguard in accessing the interior of the country. OCHA-organized inter-agency /NGO assessment missions to evaluate emergency needs have been instrumental in providing humanitarian actors with necessary information and thus coordinating required assistance activities. In Dolisie (Niari region), a UN antenna was established by OCHA and WFP where humanitarian agencies can converge for logistical support as well as for information and coordination requirements. Based on this experience which is said to have had a very positive impact on the return of the population, UN agencies are now planning to contribute further to joint capacities in the affected interior, including cost-sharing of offices, common use of vehicles and joint missions.

19. Close coordination by the team with the Bank-coordinated mission proved an important opportunity to assess and synchronize the short-term emergency assistance and planned medium-term rehabilitation assistance. Those agencies identifying their reengagement strategies (World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, Agence Française de Développement) were able to build on the information base and experience of the country team to assess areas of particular need. For instance, ILO and the Bank are investigating possible cooperation mechanisms with UNDP's existing efforts of reintegrating ex-militia.

20. Simultaneously, the WB-coordinated mission, looking at the gap from the development perspective, has identified areas that may require further strengthening in anticipation of both future large-scale reengagement and a possible CAP 2001. For example, collaboration between UNDP and the African Development Bank is envisaged regarding the implementation of a poverty survey leading to a poverty strategy. Furthermore, a more systematic effort at assessing needs at the community level is deemed warranted to guide the design and implementation of future rehabilitation efforts.

21. The harmonious collaboration with the WB-coordinated mission provided the team with a unique opportunity to systematically and comprehensively link the short-term emergency and medium-term rehabilitation needs. This is exemplified by the fact that the team contributed key sections to the aide-memoire of the WB-coordinated mission, which in turn will be a key reference document for the planned joint donor meeting in Geneva. Flexibility in the application of the IASC mechanism was, thus, fully justified to reach its aim.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

22. While recent developments in the RoC are encouraging, the situation remains fragile and overall developments in the RoC will have to be monitored closely. UN agencies and the international community could support this fragile process that has started with the signing of the cease-fire and cessation of hostilities accord by:

- ◆ Supporting the RC/HC and the country team in resource mobilization efforts for the transitional period as outlined in the revised CAP 2000 by convening a high-level donors meeting at the end of June/early July in Geneva, co-chaired by OCHA and UNDP with the participation of the World Bank.
- ◆ Ensuring close contact between IASC members (both at the field and HQ level) during the implementation of the CAP 2000 to initiate necessary planning activities for the next phase as early as possible.
- ◆ Reinforcing coordination structures for relief and rehabilitation activities by including government representatives and development NGOs, thus, facilitate transition from emergency to development.
- ◆ Undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the mandate and capacities of national NGOs operating in the Congo and prepare a “NGO directory”. This could serve as a basis to develop and implement a capacity building programme for local partners.
- ◆ Continuing to increase access throughout the country and undertake assessments by intensifying contacts with militia.
- ◆ Assisting the government in designing and implementing a programme of support to small arms collection and the reintegration of ex-militia.
- ◆ Using the Republic of the Congo as a pilot case for inter-agency coordination regarding the reintegration of ex-militia (as per recommendation by the DDR task force, led by UNDP/ERD)
- ◆ Undertaking a systematic community-based needs assessment, as regions become accessible to guide the formulation of a comprehensive rehabilitation and development programme by the government.

Brazzaville, 5 May 2000