



Democratic Republic of the Congo

Background

The resumption of conflict in late-August 2008 in eastern areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo intensified the humanitarian crisis that has affected the region for more than a decade. Approximately 1.35 million people remain displaced in the east and further population movements are foreseen as a result of overall insecurity, localized armed conflict, natural disasters and epidemics tied to the deterioration of public services and repeated violations of human rights. The extended presence of displaced populations has depleted the coping capacity of host communities and markedly increased levels of poverty.

These chronic and structural problems have also affected food security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which according to the IPC, remains precarious. Out of 154 territories, more than 117 are moderately food insecure and 28 others are in a state of acute food insecurity and livelihood crisis. Some 1.7 million children suffer from acute malnutrition, while one out of every two children is chronically malnourished. It was necessary for the humanitarian community to adapt its intervention strategy to the continuation and impact of the crisis while addressing its causes in order to reduce the need for prolonged humanitarian aid.

KEY FACTS

- Population: 65.75 million
- GNI per capita (USD): 140
- Population below poverty line: 80%
- Life expectancy: 57.2 years
- Total arable land: 2.86%
- Population in agriculture: no data
- Population undernourished: 70%
- Total land area: 2.26 million sq km
- Human Development Index: 168/177

(Source: UN; World Bank; World Factbook)

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

The loss of assets in the agriculture sector has diminished production throughout the course of conflict and/or climatic hazards along with the lack of strategic food stocks and storage capacity. These factors have increased strain on the local market, which faces continuous demand for foodstuffs alongside the yearly rise in population rates.

The ongoing conflicts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have increased suffering among the civilian population, depriving them of basic means of subsistence, accelerating socio-economic deterioration and isolating entire communities. Mass displacement has notably decreased food availability and agricultural activities.

The extent of population movement has caused food insecurity and vulnerability to rise among host communities. An earthquake, the epicenter of which was situated in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, caused severe damage and displaced thousands in the beginning of 2008. It is essential to continue humanitarian assistance while committing to a long-term strategy that takes into account the needs of vulnerable groups and aims to support and develop mechanisms that foster self-sufficiency.

Key actions in the fight against food insecurity include the expansion of farming activities through the provision of inputs, such as vegetable seeds, agricultural tools and equipment, and increasing agricultural production. With the aim to reduce malnutrition rates and to strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable households in 2009, it will be essential to strive for conditions that boost agricultural production, notably through adapted and improved techniques for crop and livestock production, conservation and marketing.

**Total funding required for the Food Security Cluster response:
USD 296 million**

Food Security Cluster response

Given the scope of the humanitarian operation and evolution of needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Humanitarian Action Plan does not contain individual project profiles as in the traditional CAP. Since 2007, the international community has convened to present a humanitarian plan and budget based on strategic cross-cutting objectives that require the implementation of complementary humanitarian activities for multiple clusters.

In addition to its participation in the logistics cluster, FAO is the lead agency of the food security cluster together with WFP. In this capacity, FAO's assistance in 2009 seeks to improve food security among vulnerable populations through agricultural production, livestock-raising and income-generating activities. These initiatives will contribute to reducing malnutrition rates and improving the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable households, including IDPs and host communities.



Efforts of food security cluster members to boost agricultural production and livelihoods include the distribution of basic agricultural input kits with a view to ensuring household food availability and sale of surplus production. Vulnerable groups will also receive assistance to establish nurseries to produce grain and vegetable seeds as well as cassava cuttings, in collaboration with provincial government departments, which often supply seeds and cuttings for multiplication through their action-research centres. Planned activities also aim to support livestock production through the distribution of small ruminants. In order to strengthen beneficiaries' access to markets, efforts will aim to rehabilitate feeder roads, set up road maintenance teams among beneficiaries and provide them with basic tools.

To continue the activities carried out in 2008 and in collaboration with the UN system, food security cluster members will contribute to strengthening the early warning system for the prevention of malnutrition through use of IPC. The IPC is a tool for improving analysis and decision making in emergencies that integrates food security, nutrition and livelihood information into a clear statement about the severity of a crisis and its implications for humanitarian response. It is being used in 145 districts throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for which FAO provides capacity building and support to decentralized government departments to monitor the food security situation, carry out regular mapping and produce situation analysis reports.

These activities aim to assist vulnerable rural households to rebuild, preserve and use their livelihood assets in a sustainable way.

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