

*“Vast numbers of people require life-saving assistance and support to become self-sufficient”*



# Democratic Republic of the Congo

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## Background

The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to escalate at an alarming rate, especially in the east of the country. Conflict that began in August 1998 has dramatically reduced economic productivity and government revenue, increased external debt, and resulted in the deaths of more than 5 million people from violence, famine and disease.

Despite successful elections in 2006, and the establishment of a new Government in early 2007, vast numbers of people in the country still require life-saving assistance and support to become self-sufficient. The Congolese people, weakened by years of insecurity, isolation and lack of basic services, had high hopes with regard to their future stability. However, three years on, the country finds itself at a critical stage where armed groups, corruption and the protracted implementation of macroeconomic development policies threaten the progress achieved thus far.

In the east of the country, repeated attacks and reprisals in Orientale, North and South Kivu Provinces have led to widespread population displacements. Civilians are constantly living under the threat of armed groups who pillage, commit sexual violence, burn houses and confiscate harvests and food rations. As a result, many families have fled their homes several times, as they seek places of refuge. In rural areas, hospitals and clinics have been destroyed and a large proportion of the population does not reside within reach of basic health services. Reports indicate that approximately 2 million individuals are currently internally displaced.

## Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Widespread insecurity and repeated human rights violations, compounded by the impacts of climatic hazards and epidemics, have depleted agricultural production and exhausted the coping mechanisms of displaced populations and host communities. Poverty and malnutrition are endemic, with food prices increasing by 42 percent between May 2008 and August 2009. Increased Government expenditures owing to the intensification of military activities has resulted in inflation rates surpassing 38 percent, further eroding the purchasing power of vulnerable communities. According to the IPC of July 2009, agricultural production has reduced by up to 60 percent of pre-1997 levels.

While the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are endowed with fertile soils, repeated looting of crops by armed groups



*FAO plans to distribute seed protection rations, establish seed fairs and increase the scope of income-generating activities in the country.*

continues to undermine agricultural production, forcing major food importers to maintain their reserves at minimum levels. Agricultural land, seeds, tools and equipment were damaged or lost during conflict, leaving rural households without the necessary means to resume their way of life. In other parts of the country with better security conditions, crumbled infrastructure, the absence of agriculture-based inputs, limited access to markets and the lack of storage capacity are further hindering farming activities. These factors have increased strain on local markets, which face continuous demand for foodstuffs alongside the yearly rise in population rates.

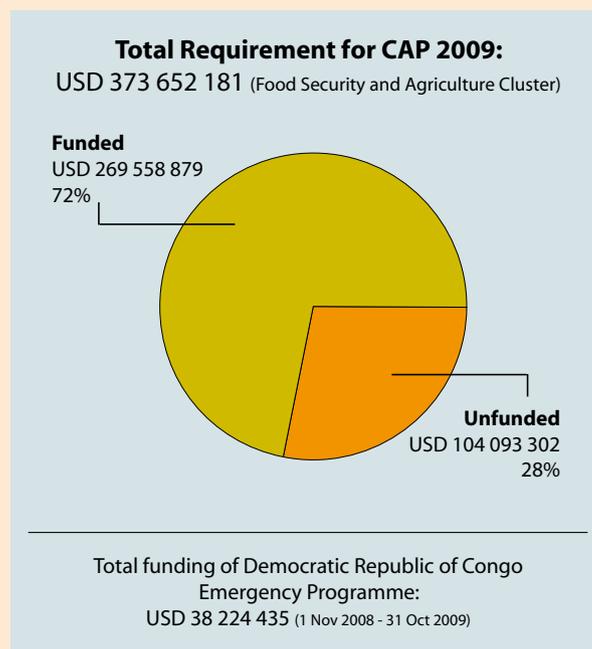
## TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED FOR THE FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER RESPONSE: USD 300 million

### Food Security Cluster response

Given the magnitude of the humanitarian needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Humanitarian Action Plan does not contain individual project profiles as in the traditional CAP. In addition to participating in the nutrition, reintegration, early recovery and logistics clusters, FAO will continue to fulfil its role as co-lead of the food security cluster, both at the national and provincial levels.

To complement activities carried out in 2009, the food security cluster will contribute to strengthening the early warning system for the prevention of malnutrition through the IPC. To date, the IPC tool has been rolled out in 145 districts to collect information regarding the food security, nutrition and the subsistence means of populations, in order to obtain a precise mapping of the severity of a given crisis and better plan for humanitarian response.

In 2010, FAO seeks to distribute seed protection rations, establish seed fairs and increase the scope of income-generating activities to strengthen the livelihoods and agricultural production capacity of vulnerable groups, such as HIV/AIDS-affected households, malnourished children and their families, IDPs and host communities. Support will also be provided to the reintegration of ex-combatants through the provision of agricultural inputs and training.



With the aim of restoring agricultural production, the Food Security Cluster intends to distribute agriculture, livestock and fishery-based kits to ensure household food availability and the sale of surplus produce. Other activities aim to reduce dependency on external assistance and improve access to markets among isolated communities through the rehabilitation of feeder roads and the provision of food-for-work initiatives.

In order to promote gender equality within programme interventions, the cluster strategy for 2010 will focus on mainstreaming the needs of women in project formulation, and improving entrepreneurial skills through securing leadership positions for women among farmer associations and major food producers.