

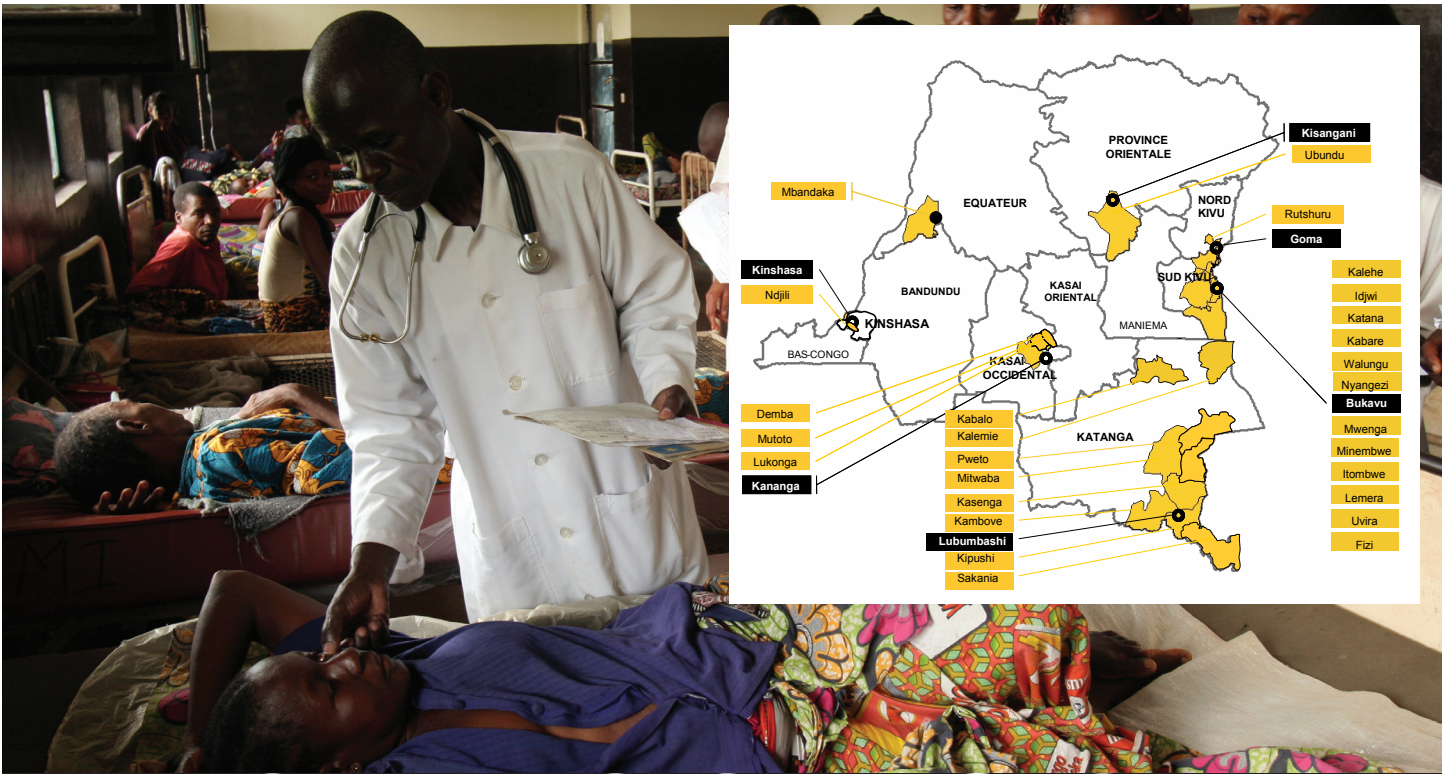


photo: Marcus Bleasdale/VII

# CONGO CRISIS

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been engulfed by conflict for over a decade and remains one of the world's worst and most forsaken humanitarian crises. Following years of economic and political decline, the war of 1998-2002 led to extreme violence, massive population displacement, widespread rape, and the collapse of public health services. Despite the signing of a formal peace agreement in December 2002, conflict and eruptions of violence have persisted in eastern provinces—causing extraordinary loss of life. In a series of five ground-breaking mortality surveys between 2000 and 2007, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) documented the devastating impact of the crisis in Congo on its people. During the most recent survey in 2007, researchers from IRC and Australia's Burnet Institute fanned out across Congo, visiting over 14,000 households in 35 health zones, in all eleven provinces. The findings reveal:

- An estimated 5.4 million people have died as a consequence of the war and its lingering effects since 1998. In spite of the official end of the war in December 2002, approximately 500,000 Congolese have continued to die each year.
- Most deaths were due to easily preventable and curable conditions, such as malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, malnutrition, and neonatal problems— byproducts of a largely collapsed health care system and economy. Only 0.4% of excess deaths were the direct result of violence.
- These conditions took the highest toll on children, who accounted for nearly 50% of the recorded deaths, despite constituting only 19% of the total population.
- Mortality rates remain unacceptably elevated across Congo, with the national rate almost 60% higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa.
- The conflict is arguably the world's most deadly crisis since World War II and the death toll far exceeds those of other recent and more prominent crises, including those in Bosnia, Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan and Darfur.



# IRC IN CONGO

The International Rescue Committee is one of the largest providers of humanitarian aid in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 1996, we have been working to save lives, revive communities and strengthen local capacity for recovery. IRC is a leader in providing critical health and emergency response services to those displaced by violence. We are also one of few organizations to address the crisis of sexual violence in Congo, with a team of experts focusing on emergency care, counseling, prevention measures, advocacy and other support services. Operating with over 400 staff members in seven of eleven provinces, our effective programs are designed to make a long-term impact—helping Congolese reclaim their future through education, training, and community development.

- IRC's Emergency Response Team is helping thousands of people displaced by renewed violence in North Kivu, providing medical care and drugs, emergency supplies, clean water, sanitation, educational programs, and aid for rape survivors.
- IRC is working with the Ministry of Health to provide essential health care for 3.6 million people, constructing and repairing hospitals and clinics, supplying them with equipment and medicine, and training health workers.
- IRC has helped over 40,000 survivors of sexual violence and their families.
- IRC increases access to education and forms parent-based community groups to support and strengthen schools and keep children learning, even during emergencies.
- IRC is bringing together over 1.7 million people in 1,400 war-torn villages, to help them address local needs, design their own recovery projects and ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable have a voice in decisions and access to services.