



INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE'S

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO MORTALITY SURVEY 2007

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The International Rescue Committee reports

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) remains in the midst of a major humanitarian crisis. A new country-wide survey by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Burnet Institute has demonstrated that mortality rates remain highly elevated across DR Congo five years after the formal end of war and that the national rate has not improved in the past three years.

The survey covered a period through April 2007 and therefore did not significantly document the effects of recent violence in North Kivu province—unrest that would have likely increased the death toll even further.

Ironically, the only area to document a decline in mortality from April 2004 through April 2007 was the volatile eastern region. This finding suggests that increased security efforts and humanitarian aid were beginning to have a measurable impact in the east.

The IRC is hopeful that the peace agreement negotiated this week in North Kivu signals an end to hostilities in the region and the beginning of an effective stabilization, reconciliation and recovery process.

Our findings provide further evidence that recovery from war and its aftermath is a protracted process in conflict-impacted states such as DR Congo, especially when war is superimposed on decades of socioeconomic and political decline.

Sustained, measurable improvements in health and mortality will require unwavering government commitment, tenacious engagement from the international community, and a willingness to intervene rapidly when new emergencies arise.

Comprehensive, flexible and long-term funding that is in proportion to demonstrated needs is critical for DR Congo, a nation that has separate regions simultaneously experiencing instability and emerging from protracted conflict.

Humanitarian and development assistance must be urgently scaled up to address acute needs from year-long violence in North Kivu, as well as to consolidate gains and prevent deterioration in other eastern provinces.

Funding must be extended to the impoverished central and western regions of the country, where mortality rates are also high. Careful and coordinated monitoring and support of the national peace agreement, security sector reform and democratic and government reform processes are critical.

With nascent and fragile political reforms, DR Congo needs peace and stability throughout the country to continue on its path of transformation and recovery.

Previous IRC research has demonstrated that there is a clear association between insecurity and deaths from non-violent causes such as malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia. A continued commitment to sustaining or even expanding the UN peacekeeping role (MONUC) will therefore have broader public health benefits, especially as North Kivu seeks to put the new peace accord into practice.

A regional approach to the humanitarian and development needs in DR Congo remains necessary, as many issues affecting security, political reform and economic recovery in neighboring countries have an impact on DR Congo's own security, governance and economic development.

The International Rescue Committee recommends

Government of DR Congo:

- Provide protection for those civilians most at risk.
- Increase the proportion of the annual budget devoted to the health sector to reasonable levels.
- Ensure that resources reach staff and institutions providing front-line medical assistance.
- Remove the impediments to importing essential medicines and equipment into the country.
- Fully commit to radical security sector reform, with assistance from the international community.

U.N. Security Council:

- Ensure that civilian protection remains the first priority of MONUC, especially in North Kivu, and that the protection mandate is not lost as offensive capacities of MONUC are strengthened.
- Ensure that force levels remain at present authorized strength at a minimum, and that MONUC will not be downsized until the “benchmarks” tied to concrete security indicators have been met.

U.N. Member States:

- Use diplomacy with the government of DR Congo and regional powers to ensure implementation of the recently brokered peace agreement in North Kivu.
- Support security sector reform, promoting and supporting training, resourcing and discipline for the army and national police, as well as managing the size and growth of both.

Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union:

- Continue their critical role to support the implementation of the recently brokered peace agreement in North Kivu.
- Provide prompt and robust funding for the UN Peace Keeping Force, MONUC.
- Maintain their role and responsibility as a donor government.

Donor Governments:

- Fund projects at a level that is proportional to need, especially in essential sectors such as health, education, shelter, transportation and agriculture.
- Provide bilateral and multilateral funding for humanitarian programs, as well as other financial assistance that meets the needs expressed in the Humanitarian Action Plan for 2008 for DR Congo.
- Work with the government of DR Congo to support the development of strong and transparent institutions.