



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 779,000**

Appeal number **MAACG002**

In support of the Congolese Red Cross



12

National Society branches



20

National Society staff



13,000

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



120,000

Climate and environment



320,000

Disasters and crises



520,000

Health and wellbeing



120,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs

- food insecurity
- disaster preparedness and response
- epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response
- protracted displacement

Capacity development

- human, material and financial capacities
- partnership development
- digital transformation
 - accountability
 - regulatory texts

Key country data

Population **5.7M**

INFORM Severity rating **medium**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **160**

Human Development Index rank **153**

Population below poverty level **40.9%**



IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, Kinshasa

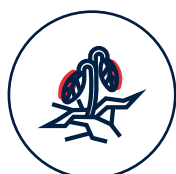
Hazards



Floods



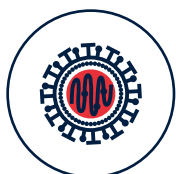
Strong winds



Drought



Food insecurity



Disease outbreaks



Population movement

Funding requirements

Total 779,000 CHF

Through the IFRC

512,000 CHF

Through Participating National Societies

100,000 CHF

Host National Society

167,000 CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

20,000 CHF
Climate and environment

245,000 CHF
Disasters and crises

100,000 CHF
Health and wellbeing

22,000 CHF
Values, power and inclusion

125,000 CHF
Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross*

French Red Cross

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Congolese Red Cross was established in 1964 and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1977. It fulfills its humanitarian mandate as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the Republic of Congo. The National Society is present in the 12 departments of the country and has been very active in recent operations, assisting populations affected by floods in Cuvette and Plateaux in 2021 and 2022, and supporting the COVID-19 response in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Since August 2022, the National Society has been responding to population movement from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congolese Red Cross carried out risk communication and community engagement activities focusing on health, hygiene promotion and other risk reduction measures in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. One of the National Society's major successes was the dissemination of key messages through local radio shows, combined with the collection and analysis of more than 65 per cent of community feedback in the intervention areas. The National Society used local radio stations and the WhatsApp messaging

service to ensure that key messages communicated to people about COVID-19 measures were consistent.

In 2021, the Congolese Red Cross reached almost 120,000 people. It has a network of 13,000 volunteers present in most of the Republic of Congo's departments, with plans to mobilize approximately 1,000 volunteers to deliver humanitarian interventions across the country.

As part of its development, the Congolese Red Cross has developed a five-year strategic development plan covering the period 2019–2023. The plan defines the strategies and priority areas for the growth of the National Society: health and social action; water, sanitation and hygiene; climate change; disaster preparedness and response; community engagement and accountability; organizational development; administration, finance and logistics; and communications. The National Society has invested substantial efforts in community engagement and accountability, hiring a national community engagement and accountability officer in June 2022. As part of the COVID-19 response operation, the National Society trained 100 volunteers on risk communications, community engagement and community feedback mechanisms.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

The Republic of Congo, located in Central Africa, covers a land area of 342,000km². The rainforests of the Congo Basin are sometimes called the second lung of the Earth because of their ability to store carbon. In addition to the trees of the forest, the basin is home to the largest tropical peatlands in the world, discovered in 2017. Scientists estimate that these peatlands store carbon worth approximately 20 years' worth of US fossil fuel emissions. The Congo Basin is also rich in biodiversity and minerals.

The Republic of Congo's population of 5.7 million people largely consists of young people, with 47 per cent under 18 years old. More than half of the population, 55 per cent, live in the country's two main cities, Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Three-quarters of the population live in cities, making the Republic of Congo one of the most urbanized countries in Africa. Its population is concentrated in the areas around Brazzaville, where 1.4 million

people live, and in Pointe-Noire, where almost 830,000 people live. Other highly populated towns include Dolisie and Nkayi. Most Congolese people depend on local radio for access to information because there is a relatively high illiteracy rate, especially among women.

The Republic of Congo is a lower middle-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$2,844. The oil sector accounts for more than half of its GDP and more than 80 per cent of its exports, making it one of Africa's top 10 producers. The country also has a wealth of mineral resources that remain largely untapped. The Republic of Congo has experienced economic stagnation since 2015, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and rising food and transport prices. According to the World Bank, the economy contracted by approximately 3.5 per cent in 2021, leading to an increase in extreme poverty from 39.1 per cent of the population in 2015 to 53.9 per cent in 2021. Economic recovery was affected by the decline in oil production in 2021, a decrease of 11 per cent year on year.

The constitution of 25 October 2015 established a semi-presidential regime in the Republic of Congo. Since 2003, responsibility for health management, social activity and civil protection have been transferred to local authorities. After the presidential election in March 2021, the first round of legislative and local elections took place in July 2022 in a peaceful manner, despite some claims to the contrary by some political leaders.

On 21 June 2021, the Prime Minister presented the 2021–2026 Government Action Programme to the National Assembly. Economic recovery is a major priority for the Republic of Congo, including restoring growth and resuming negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and traders to settle its external debt. To achieve this, the Government has adopted a new national development plan for 2022–2026, which will lead the structural and profound transformation and diversification of the Congolese economy. Global efforts to mitigate climate change will come at a cost to the Republic of Congo, with a substantial drop in oil revenue in the long-term. In this context, the country must benefit from targeted efforts to strengthen its economic resilience and reflect on the possibility of monetizing its role as the main absorber of carbon emissions on a global scale.

From 1993 to 1999, the Republic of Congo was the scene of several fratricidal conflicts that destroyed the political, economic, social and cultural fabric of the country. In the aftermath of the armed conflicts, it was important to restore in law the fundamental human rights, freedom, dignity and justice for people. The Republic of Congo has integrated the issue of human rights into the remit of the Ministry of Justice. Concerted efforts by the Government, associations and NGOs has led to better coordination and coherence in the management of human rights promotion in the Republic of Congo; however, much work remains to be done. Since 2015, human rights defenders and activists have been denouncing the consequences of the economic crisis and its impact on people's daily lives, particularly in

regard to access to health care. Measures taken by the Government to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the impact of the health crisis on economic activity have increased the vulnerability of communities, rendering them unable to meet basic needs and cope with shocks. This has resulted in heightened social demands that have brought the country to the brink of crisis.

According to estimates from the International Labour Organization, unemployment affected 10.3 per cent of the total working population in 2020, compared with 9.6 per cent in 2019. Unemployment is increasingly affecting young people aged 15 to 24, who are generally first-time job seekers. The unemployment rate in this age group is estimated at 21.6 per cent compared with 6.7 per cent for the over-25 age group in 2019. In the 15–24 age group, unemployment affects 22.5 per cent of young men and 20.7 per cent of young women. Unemployment is higher in urban areas (11.1 per cent) than in rural areas (1.1 per cent).

The health status of the Congolese population is characterized by high morbidity, attributed to infectious and parasitic diseases and non-communicable diseases. The prevalence of severe acute malnutrition remains high. It is estimated that 31,736 children aged six months to four years suffer from severe acute malnutrition, and this is compounded by limited access to quality primary health care, recommended immunization and appropriate channels for referral and treatment. There are disparities in access to public services, with rural areas receiving fewer public services than the two largest cities of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.

The Republic of Congo also faces multiple humanitarian challenges, including food insecurity, floods, epidemics and population displacement. These challenges are exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a negative impact on communities. Of the 1.5 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, 48 per cent are children who are unable to access basic social services.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

The Republic of Congo is heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture, leaving it vulnerable to rising temperatures and extreme weather shocks as a result of climate change. Accelerated global warming is leading to an increase in rainfall anomalies, and having adverse

effects on crop nutrient content, yields, livestock, fisheries, biodiversity and land use.

In recent decades, the Republic of Congo has experienced a widespread decrease in annual rainfall, leading to a continuous drought which is projected to continue into the next century. During the dry season and

sowing period, the country also experiences increasing temperatures. Climate change will bring changes in the distribution of precipitation - northern and central parts of the country gaining approximately 100mm of rainfall by 2100. Temperatures are also expected to rise by an estimated 3–3.5°C.

The impact of climate change is already apparent. It is affecting groundwater resources, surface water flows, agriculture, human settlements and health. In the Congo Basin, low water flows are further aggravated by silting, while agriculture is affected by changing rainfall and temperature patterns that alter the cropping calendar. The expected artificial warming of cities will also have an impact on the livelihoods of the people living in them, and the health of those communities will be affected by an increased prevalence of vector-borne, water-borne and infectious diseases.

The coastal zone, the Cataractes plateau and the Niari Valley, and the alluvial plain of the Congo River Basin are particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Oil-related pollution is also a major concern in the Republic of Congo. The chain of activities in the oil sector consists of exploration and exploitation: exploration includes research activities and the production and marketing of crude oil, while exploitation covers refining activities, transport, storage and the distribution of petroleum products. These activities are sources of pollution, causing a number of issues that are negatively affecting the areas adjacent to Pointe-Noire.

The impact of the oil trade in the Republic of Congo is significant. Discharges from the oil refinery and the Dieno terminal, as well as leaks from the oil refinery pipeline, occur frequently, while mud from drilling 10 nautical miles away is washed ashore. The absence of settling tanks, tanker de-ballasting and a lack of exploratory drilling also contribute to pollution. Additionally, routine operations at tanker loading and unloading terminals generate small accidental oil spills that are rapidly growing in scale, with the quantity of oil spilled estimated to be three times greater than the total quantity of oil spilled as a result of tanker accidents.

Air pollution due to natural gas flaring remains a concern in the Republic of Congo, despite its net decrease between 2013 and 2014 from 160 million to 70 million standard cubic metres. Soil and water pollution from onshore production facilities is also a reality for people in the Republic of Congo – in certain areas in the Kouilou department, such as Pointe-Noire, communities are

facing the constant degradation of their natural environment, including the pollution of waterways and fertile land. Industrial activities generate pollution, particularly in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Untreated industrial waste is often discharged directly into the Congo River or its tributary in Brazzaville, the Djoué, while waste is also dumped directly or indirectly into the sea from the Songolo or Tchinouka rivers in Pointe-Noire.

The rainforests of the Congo Basin are under serious threat from climate change and other man-made factors, including commercial logging, mining, extensive agriculture, infrastructure development, rapid urbanization, energy consumption and transnational wildlife poaching. According to the [Rainforest Foundation UK](#), forests cover approximately 65 per cent of the Republic of Congo's land area and play a major ecological and socio-economic role. Seventy-four per cent of the country's forest area is allocated to logging concessions, a major driver of forest degradation. Agro-industrial expansion, palm oil production and oil exploration and extraction are all affecting Congo's rainforest environments in the long-term.

Despite the ongoing impact of climate change, the Government recently announced plans to expand oil production in forested areas, including the Cuvette Centrale peatlands. These plans could trigger a massive and irreversible carbon release and threaten global climate efforts. In addition, communities are often evicted from their lands to make way for oil production activities that bring them few tangible benefits and often violate their rights.

Although deforestation in the Congo Basin remains a concern, the Republic of Congo is offsetting the impact of its oil activities by planting 40,000 hectares of forest land to sequester more than 10 million tons of carbon. The launch of the Bacasi Project coincided with COP26 in Glasgow, where the Republic of Congo advocated for the financing of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin – an initiative to preserve the second-largest carbon reservoir in the world.

The Republic of Congo has signed a voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade in Timber and Timber Products to the European Union. Under this agreement, all timber and timber products from the Republic of Congo must be traceable and compliant with applicable Congolese laws.

Main actions and areas of support

The Congolese Red Cross is part of the IFRC's [Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action and preparedness, (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change, (3) addressing climate displacement, and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The Congolese Red Cross will target the departments of Pointe-Noire, Likouala, Sangha, Cuvette, Cuvette-Ouest and Brazzaville. It has set the following goals for 2025:

- To take action to adapt to the growing and changing risks of climate and environmental crises
- To adopt environmentally sustainable practices and contribute to climate change mitigation
- To harness the power of nature through nature-based solutions, focusing on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation, with a particular focus on planting trees and mangroves

The IFRC network will support the Congolese Red Cross to take the following actions in 2023:

- Deliver training to trainers on climate change, with support from the IFRC and weather services, to finalize curriculum documentation
- Develop appropriate tools for managers, volunteers and community members on the prevention of climate and environmental crises, including translations into local languages
- Popularize scientific weather information within communities in Pointe-Noire, Brazzaville, Likouala, Cuvette, Plateaux and Sangha, using trusted sources of information
- Organize community sanitation and risk motivation sessions covering waste disposal, waste and rain collection and drainage, compost and reforestation, as well as respect for the environment

- Plant 1,000 trees per department per year and encourage participation in Arbor Day, the national tree planting day, on 6 November, in the 12 departments of the country. This forms part of the IFRC's Pan-African initiative on Tree Planting and Care
- Participate in coordination and consultation platforms on the preservation and protection of the environment

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page for the [Republic of Congo](#).

Communities in the Republic of Congo are facing a number of complex humanitarian emergencies, leaving an estimated 1.5 million people, including 720,000 children, in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Floods and heavy rainfall are frequent in the Republic of Congo, particularly along rivers and streams. In urban areas such as Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire and Dolisie, the occupation of unsuitable living areas and a lack of rainwater drainage systems can lead to flooding, often accompanying torrential rains. Heavy rainfall also causes silting, erosion and landslides.

In November 2021, the Congolese Government reported that 71,690 people were affected by flooding, mainly in Likouala, Cuvette, Plateaux and Sangha. According to the United Nations Satellite Centre, approximately 3,500km² of land was affected by flood waters, while urban neighbourhoods in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville were also affected. As a result, several thousand people were forced to leave their homes, incurring significant losses to their livelihoods. In March 2022, another series of heavy rains caused flooding in the capital city of Brazzaville, with three deaths reported in the Manianga district where a wall collapsed during the rain.

In the northern part of the Republic of Congo, heavy rains occurred in May 2022, accompanied by violent winds. The extreme weather conditions led to rising water levels in the Lobi, Mondo and Likouala-Mossaka rivers, and the six districts of Makoua were all affected by the disaster. Four girls and six boys drowned in the waters, with a number of other serious injuries and 85 cases of fractured limbs. 48 people were hospitalized and more than 2,500 people were left homeless. Data collected by the Government and the Congolese Red Cross shows that 282 houses were destroyed or partially destroyed in the six districts of Makoua.

Urban erosion and landslides due to a physical degradation of the soil are very frequent in the Republic of Congo, affecting urban areas in particular. In 2015, 10,154 people in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire were affected by erosion and landslides at the same time as torrential rains, floods and siltation. Urban silting during heavy rainfall leads to sand flows, trapping cars and causing significant damage. In 2016, eight people died as a result of urban erosion.

Access to food has been deteriorating over the past 10 years in the Republic of Congo, while floods have also become more regular, exacerbating food insecurity caused by a lack of local food production and rising prices. Floods also cause material damage to drinking water infrastructure, leading to water contamination risks and increasing disease epidemics. Chronic malnutrition affects 21.2 per cent of children between six months and four years of age, while only 20 per cent of households have access to basic sanitation facilities.

Main actions and areas of support

The Congolese Red Cross, in line with its auxiliary role, responds to disasters and crises affecting communities in the Republic of Congo. It maintains 15 national disaster response teams and 10 regional disaster response teams, in addition to its network of volunteers trained in multiple aspects of emergency response. The Congolese Red Cross strives to increase its capacity to respond at scale, while also improving the quality of its emergency services.

To achieve this, the National Society has developed its capacity to provide cash and vouchers to people affected by disasters or crises, as a dignified means of assistance. It also has a framework contract with a financial service provider, allowing for mobile transfers. Specifications are in place, approved by both parties, which define the commitments and operational responsibilities of each party. The contract finalizes the identification of beneficiaries, the provision of SIM cards, applicable rates, the opening of accounts, and data protection and collection.

In the coming years, the National Society will focus on its preparedness and response capacities during various emergencies. This includes early action and anticipation activities to mitigate disaster risks that affect the lives, livelihoods, homes and living conditions of vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities.

The Congolese Red Cross has set the following objectives:

- To contribute to scaling up humanitarian action and risk reduction by promoting disaster risk reduction at the local level and building local capacity for early warning and effective response
- To contribute to the IFRC's global leadership in cash programming and integrate cash assistance into emergency operations
- In 2023, the National Society plans to:
 - Develop a disaster risk reduction strategy, as part of the IFRC's Pan-African Red Ready initiative
 - Implement early warning systems on the river corridor and in other at-risk departments in Pointe-Noire, Brazzaville and Likouala
 - Engage and improve community knowledge of disaster risks, particularly high winds and floods, and promote good hygiene and sanitation practices
 - Create agricultural, livestock and fish farming cooperatives for a period of three years in Plateaux, Lekoumou, Niari, Bouenza, Pool, Sangha and Likouala, with the aim of supporting the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative
 - Implement a food security plan, as part of the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative
 - Strengthen partnerships with local media to promote key messages on disaster risk
 - Develop feedback systems to strengthen community engagement
 - Organize learning workshops, satisfaction surveys and after-action surveys

The IFRC will provide technical and financial assistance to the Congolese Red Cross, with a particular focus on the IFRC's Pan-African Red Ready and Zero Hunger Initiatives. The French Red Cross will also actively support the Congolese Red Cross with these interventions.

Health and wellbeing

The Republic of Congo has a high overall mortality, estimated at 9.2 deaths per thousand in 2018. The maternal mortality rate is 378 deaths per 100,000 live births and the infant mortality was equal to 53.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018, of which approximately 42 per cent were due to malaria. The disease is a critical public health problem for the country, representing an epidemiological burden that places significant pressure on the health system – 69.8 per cent of requested consultations with a doctor are as a result of malaria, which causes 64.8 per cent of hospitalizations and 18.4 per cent of deaths.

Disease epidemics are frequent in the Republic of Congo, causing nearly a third of the deaths caused by catastrophic events recorded between 1900 and 2016. The most prevalent epidemics include Ebola, causing 197 deaths between 2001 and 2004, as well as cholera, measles, poliomyelitis and yellow fever. There are 500,000 people living in areas at high risk of Ebola virus infection along the Ubangi and Congo rivers, on the border with the DRC.

The percentage of household members using improved non-shared sanitation facilities is only 23.7 per cent in the Republic of Congo.

The immediate causes of the country's precarious health situation are highlighted in the National Health Development Plan 2018–2022. They are:

- Insufficient provision of health care and services
- Under-use of health care and services in the public sector, estimated at 0.24 consultations per capita per year
- Low coverage rates for essential services, such as immunization, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and antenatal care
- Inadequate preparedness and management of epidemics and disasters, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and response
- A lack of effective infection prevention and control practices, jeopardized by inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene services in health facilities and schools; only one in three health centres have access to safe drinking water, and 56 per cent of schools do not have access to water

The number of stakeholders in the Republic of Congo's health sector is small compared with other countries in the sub-region. However, an operational strategy was jointly adopted by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the period 2020–2021. This strategy will support the implementation of the 13th general programme of work of the WHO, emphasizing the production of results at the peripheral level.

Main actions and areas of support

In recent years, the Congolese Red Cross has prioritized interventions in reproductive health, including maternal and child care and family planning, sexual and gender-based violence, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, community-based surveillance of epidemics and HIV/AIDS activities, social mobilization for immunization, and interventions during the COVID-19 response.

During emergency responses, the Congolese Red Cross mobilizes volunteers trained in first aid, psychosocial support and community sensitization of diseases. Typical awareness-raising interventions focus on delivering information messages about cholera, malaria, community surveillance and household protection measures against communicable diseases, including COVID-19. The National Society provides community awareness materials and tools on health and water, sanitation and hygiene, including hygiene promotion, water quality analysis and water treatment.

The Congolese Red Cross seeks to increase the scale and quality of its health and water, hygiene and sanitation services at the community level, in emergency and non-emergency situations. This will involve:

- Leveraging the auxiliary role of the National Society with public authorities on relevant public health strategy, advocacy and policy platforms and mechanisms at the national level
- Contributing to protecting and improving the health and well-being of communities through access to sustainable, affordable, appropriate and quality health services
- Increasing the number of people reached with mental health and psychosocial support services
- Training at least 800 people per year in first aid
- Contributing to preserving the health and dignity of communities in emergencies by providing them with access to appropriate health services
- Contributing to increasing community access to affordable, appropriate and environmentally friendly water and hygiene services, with the aim of reaching 250,000 people per year with water, sanitation and hygiene services adapted to the emergency context
- Contributing to increasing access to affordable, appropriate and environmentally friendly water, sanitation and hygiene services for pandemics and epidemics
- Contributing to a 50 per cent reduction in deaths related to cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases by promoting access to, and use of, water and sanitation infrastructures

A continent-wide initiative between the IFRC and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to invest in building resilient public health security infrastructure on the continent will reinforce the fight against COVID-19. Under the US\$39 million Saving Lives

and Livelihoods initiative funded by the Mastercard Foundation, the IFRC and African National Societies are building a programme to ensure that 60 per cent of African people vaccinate themselves against COVID-19. The partnership between the Mastercard Foundation and Africa CDC will support the procurement and delivery of tens of millions of COVID-19 vaccines and hasten economic recovery on the continent. Under this programme, the Congolese Red Cross will deliver critical risk communication and community engagement activities to vulnerable communities in support of COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Other programme partners will provide procurement and logistics services to a central warehouse (UNICEF), in-country logistics (World Food Programme), managing COVID-19 vaccination centres (Amref Health Africa and GHSS) and safety surveillance (Akros).

The Congolese Red Cross will also contribute to the Community Health Workforce initiative. The Republic of Congo aims to increase its community health staff to 8,228 community health workers, with support from the Africa CDC and the IFRC. Each community health worker will support approximately 250 people from 50 to 100 households.

The main objective of the Community Health Workforce Development initiative is to improve health outcomes for African communities through the development of a strengthened, people-centred and integrated community health system and workforce. The aim of the programme, based on the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Africa CDC and the IFRC, will be to mobilize community health workers for the COVID-19 response and maintain essential health services, integrated into a broader approach to strengthen the health system and address the secondary health impacts of COVID-19. This will include health promotion, disease prevention, community care, contact tracing, scaling up of mass testing at the community level, and accelerating access to and availability of COVID-19 vaccinations. The programme also aims to increase collaboration on joint actions and initiatives to support member states to achieve the universal health care goals within the sustainable development goals. This will include advocating for policy and approach changes based on key issues identified through community feedback and social science research, such as redistributing tasks among community health staff.

Migration and displacement

The Republic of Congo has a long history of hosting refugees from neighbouring countries, with large influxes

from Angola and Rwanda in the 1990s, and the DRC and Central African Republic in the past two decades. There are more than 310,000 refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people in the country according to UNHCR. Most of the refugees from the Central African Republic, and asylum seekers from the DRC, are settled in the departments of Likouala and Plateaux, where they are exposed to the potential risk of floods, which exacerbates their vulnerability due to poor livelihoods.

Following the post-election crisis in the Central African Republic at the end of December 2020, the Republic of Congo recorded the arrival of nearly 8,000 Central African Republic refugees into Likouala, an area that was already hosting half of the country's refugee population. The influx placed additional pressure on the already limited resources of host communities.

Main actions and areas of support

The Congolese Red Cross supports displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers as part of its humanitarian work. The National Society has planned its actions in this area under other sections of the plan. Notably, it has been responding to [population movement in the Pool department](#) through a Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation made in September 2022.

Values, power and inclusion

Despite the formal recognition of the principle of equality between men and women in national legislation, discrimination persists in the Republic of Congo, often leading to moral and physical gender-based violence. The Republic of Congo has committed to eradicating gender-based violence by signing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The country also upholds various laws and regulations, including the Penal Code of 1810, the Family Code of 1918 and the Child Protection Act of 2010. These laws protect women and girls, including victims of violence. However, access to justice for women and girls is limited, and the laws and regulations are outdated, no longer fit for purpose and not implemented in many cases. As is the case in other countries, there is no specific law to criminalize violence against women and children.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of multiple educational institutions between March and October 2020, affecting 1,474,372 students. These closures have caused a number of problems for communities in the Republic of Congo, including a lack of access to vital education, rising school drop-out rates and incidences

of gender-based violence, lack of support for survivors in psycho-medical care centres, and increased vulnerability of children and women. A study carried out in 2020 by the [Association Avenir NEPAD Congo](#) explored the impacts of COVID-19 on gender-based violence in the Republic of Congo. The study showed how measures that were implemented to contain the virus have had an impact on women, leading to home confinement, curfews, regulation of state markets, closure of schools and cessation of economic activities, among others.

Recently, a UNICEF study on gender-based and online violence in schools in the Republic of Congo, targeting 5,775 students aged 12 to 18 from 193 schools, identified five types of violence: verbal or psychological, physical, economic, sexual and online. Among the perpetrators most implicated in acts of verbal and psychological violence in this study were classmates or fellow students, teachers, administrative officials or staff, and delegates or association leaders.

Legal bases established in 2010 and 2015 stipulated the recognition of the status of indigenous people in the Republic of Congo's constitution, thereby better protecting their culture and livelihoods while allowing them to access social services and their civil and political rights. However, indigenous communities still face marginalization and discrimination, even though their role, particularly in safeguarding the forest, is fundamental. The UN rapporteur, Mr James Anaya, said in 2010: "Indigenous peoples in Congo such as the Baaka, Mbendjele, Mikaya, Luma, Gyeli, Twa and Babongo, previously collectively referred to as 'pygmies', live in conditions of extreme marginalization. Many of them live in settlements on the outskirts of villages and lack adequate housing or access to basic social services such as health or education. They are victims of deep-rooted discriminatory attitudes that translate into inequitable social arrangements. Among the latter, in many cases, there are labour relationships comparable to forms of serfdom or involuntary servitude".

There are notable educational inequalities for children of primary school age in indigenous communities. In some areas, it is estimated that 65 per cent of indigenous children are not attending school, mainly due to extreme poverty, exclusion, lack of birth registration, and ethnic and cultural discrimination.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC and the French Red Cross will support the Congolese Red Cross to strengthen its capacity to reach more local branches, develop equal partnerships with communities and promote leadership through young

people and marginalized or vulnerable groups. The IFRC and the French Red Cross will also support the Congolese Red Cross to implement community engagement and feedback mechanisms, protecting people and respecting their dignity.

The National Society has set the following goals for 2025

- To be a safe and inclusive organization, where the dignity, access, participation and safety of people of all identities are at the heart of everything the Congolese Red Cross does – actively implementing the gender and diversity policy and demonstrating tangible progress towards agreed institutional and programming objectives, including equal gender representation at all levels of leadership
- To contribute to positive change in communities through a broader understanding, ownership and practical application of humanitarian values and core principles, with a particular focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviour of young people (the National Society will reach young people with humanitarian education based on skills and values, through a flagship programme)
- To empower vulnerable and crisis-affected individuals and communities to influence decisions that affect them and trust the Congolese Red Cross to best serve their interests

The Congolese Red Cross will engage in the following activities in 2023

- Providing training and raising awareness among populations in Likouala, Sangha, Lékoumou and Plateau on [protection, gender and inclusion](#), and [community engagement and accountability](#)
- Establishing community feedback mechanisms to inform changes based on the perceptions and concerns of target groups
- Providing training to [young people as agents of behavioural change](#)
- Organizing training sessions in schools and universities on gender-based violence prevention, social inclusion and peacebuilding
- Improving youth engagement and leadership to promote humanitarian principles and values
- Sensitizing communities to the importance of equitable access to education for girls and boys
- Developing guidelines on gender, protection and inclusion, and prevention of sexual abuse and gender-based violence

Enabling local actors

The Congolese Red Cross is committed to pursuing its institutional strengthening, having carried out the self-assessment part of the IFRC [Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification](#) (OCAC) process in 2022. The assessment is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The Congolese Red Cross will require continuous support from the IFRC due to the organizational capacities required to address the humanitarian challenges in the Republic of Congo. The priorities it has identified relate to regulatory texts; human, material and financial capacities; partnership development; digital transformation; and accountability. The National Society must innovate, adopt digital technologies and strengthen its role as an auxiliary in order to become the partner of choice for local authorities. It will also work better together as part of a network with other organizations, to address the most important humanitarian challenges facing the Republic of Congo.

In 2023, the Congolese Red Cross plans to:

- Develop a strong, effective, visible, dynamic, well-functioning and credible National Society
- Strengthen engagement with partners within and outside the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to work collectively on the key challenges facing communities, contributing to increasing the commitment of the Congolese Red Cross in government-led platforms to achieve humanitarian or development objectives

- Use innovative and transformative approaches to better anticipate, adapt and respond to complex challenges and opportunities
- Undertake a digital transformation, including demonstrating progress in digital transformation according to the digital maturity model outlined in the IFRC's Digital Transformation Strategy
- Use a Federation-wide approach to plan, monitor and report on the impact of the IFRC network
- Train staff and volunteers on data analysis, information use and visualization
- Develop a website for the National Society
- Submit externally audited financial statements

The IFRC will support the National Society to:

- Follow up on the OCAC recommendations and organize Branch Organizational Capacity Assessments ([BOCA](#)) in several branches
- Acquire and develop financial management and human resources systems
- Develop a functional data management system that informs decision-making and enables monitoring and reporting on reach and impact
- Engage in fundraising at the national level
- Train staff on fraud and corruption prevention
- Provide health, accident and death insurance for volunteers

The French Red Cross will support some of these activities.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC country cluster delegation in Kinshasa supports the Congolese Red Cross to implement strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme. The IFRC supports the National Society to strengthen its auxiliary role by meeting key stakeholders at government level on a regular basis. In 2022, the IFRC supported the National Society with carrying out its OCAC evaluation.

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the Congolese Red Cross through a number of DREF [operations](#) to respond to floods, population movement and disease outbreaks, including preparedness for the Ebola virus which affected neighbouring DRC. The National Society has responded to disasters through DREF operations every year for the last five years. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its [global Emergency Appeal](#), has supported the National Society to deliver its COVID-19 response. The IFRC continues to provide multi-faceted support to the National Society in response to the pandemic. The Congolese Red Cross

Participating National Society Support - Bilateral

Name of Partner NS	Funding Requirements	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Engaged	Accountable	Trusted
French Red Cross	CHF 0.10M		●	●			●	●	●

Total

0.10M

is also receiving funding from the American Red Cross through the IFRC, as part of its response to COVID-19 in the departments of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. This is in addition to the support provided through the Saving Lives and Livelihoods programme.

IFRC membership coordination

IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities and co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action and development assistance, and reinforce the auxiliary role of National Societies in their respective countries.

The IFRC maintains effective cooperation with IFRC members and provides informal leadership and guidance through regular discussions and dialogue.

The Congolese Red Cross is part of the four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care, Zero Hunger, Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

The **French Red Cross** is present in the Republic of Congo and supports the National Society to strengthen its capacities, with a particular focus on health and disaster risk reduction. The French Red Cross is supporting the Congolese Red Cross to carry out activities in the localities of Mossaka and Loukolela, and in Brazzaville as part of a disaster risk management project funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The National Society also receives support from the French Red Cross to implement projects in the Pool and Bouenza departments. A roadmap for future collaboration between the French Red Cross and Congolese Red Cross is under development, including a joint vision for capacity building, a monitoring and evaluation framework and a communications plan. This will allow the Congolese Red Cross to build trust with donors and solicit support to respond to humanitarian challenges in the country.

Movement coordination

Regular senior management meetings between the Congolese Red Cross, the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) enable effective Movement coordination, ensuring the maximum humanitarian impact and relevance in a country with multiple crises and humanitarian needs. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC supports the Congolese Red Cross under a three-year cooperation agreement, implemented through an annual cooperation action plan focusing on crisis management preparedness, restoration of family links and capacity building. The activities within the partnership with the ICRC are focused on six priority areas: Brazzaville, Plateaux, Pool, Bouenza, Likouala and Pointe-Noire.

Coordination with other actors

In line with its auxiliary role, the Congolese Red Cross works closely with various governmental bodies to deliver its emergency and longer-term work. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action leads humanitarian coordination in the country. The National Society participates in crisis meetings with humanitarian actors under the coordination of the Ministry of Humanitarian Action in Brazzaville and in the affected departments. Crisis committees, in which the National Society also participates, are set up by local authorities when required.

In each of the target localities, the National Society consults with the administrative and traditional authorities

as well as the Government's decentralized services. In particular, the National Society coordinates with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action to contextualize the targeting criteria and review the beneficiaries selected to ensure that there is no duplication of assistance with other projects. Regular meetings are held with the sub-prefects, mayors, traditional chiefs and the heads of social action districts.

For epidemics and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the Congolese Red Cross works closely with the Ministry of Health and has developed partnerships with the Africa CDC, WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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