

# THE CURRENT CRISIS IN THE DR CONGO

## QUICK FACTS

### PEOPLE

- Population: 60.64 million
- Ethnic Groups: 200
- Religions: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, traditional beliefs 10%, Kimbanguist 10%, and Muslim 10%
- Official Language: French
- Literacy Rate: 65.5% est.

### HEALTHCARE

- 1,500 people die per day in the DRC because of the conflict
- 40% of war casualties are women and children
- Most deaths are caused by malnutrition and lack of medical care
- 18.5 million people without healthcare in the Eastern Region of the DRC
- Life expectancy 46 years

### ECONOMY

- GDP (2003): \$5.6 billion
- Annual GDP growth rate (2005): 6%
- Per capita GDP (2005): \$120
- Debt: \$10 Billion

### GEOGRAPHY

- Third Largest Country in Africa
- 1/4 the size of the United States
- Capital: Kinshasa
- Bordering nations: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

### MORE INFORMATION

#### PLEASE CONTACT

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**5.4 million people have died in the DR Congo since 1998**, according to a survey by the International Rescue Committee. As many as 45,000 people are dying monthly because of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. About 1.2 million people are currently displaced. Since December 2006, more than 400,000 people have been displaced as a result of increasing violence in the eastern province of North Kivu. This region is home to clashes between various rebel groups, the Congolese army, the ethnic Hutu rebels, and General Nkunda forces, who claim to be protecting the ethnic Tutsis in the region. The conflict is one of many that contribute to the exploitation of the country's abundance of resources. The DR Congo's prominent natural resources include copper, tin, diamonds, and coltan, a mineral used in all cell phones and other electronic devices. Billions of dollars of these minerals are illegally mined by rebel armies, neighboring countries, and through the financial backing of international corporations. Despite the natural wealth of the country, the Congolese people lack basic necessities such as clean water, food, and basic healthcare and must protect themselves against brutal attacks and constant threat of gender-based violence.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In recent years one of the most horrific situations in the DRC is the mass rape being committed by various rebel groups, mainly in the Eastern Provinces. In South Kivu, a province in East Congo, 27,000 rapes were reported in 2006. The rapes committed in the DRC have reached an extreme level of brutality. Women are gang raped, tortured, mutilated, and killed. Women need extensive medical treatment to repair extreme internal injuries. Girls as young as seven to women as old as 70 have reported being raped. The Human Rights Watch writes that "there is real madness with all this [sexual] violence linked to the war. This is a whole war within the war--another kind of attack on the Congolese people." Women who are raped also fear HIV/AIDS as 50 - 60% of the combatants are infected.

## BRIEF HISTORY

**1885-1908** – King Leopold II of Belgium took control of the territory  
**1908** – Belgian government assumed rulership of Congo  
**1960** – The DRC gained independence – Patrice Lumumba, first democratically leader  
**1965-1997** – Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorial rule  
**1994** – The Rwandan Genocide caused an influx of 2 million refugees into the DRC and neighboring countries  
**1996-1997** – The First Congo War: a result of the influx of the Rwandan refugees  
**1997-2001** – Laurent Kabila's rule  
**1998-2002** – Africa's First World War: over seven nations become embroiled in the DRC's conflict  
**2003** – A peace agreement signed to signify the official end of the war  
**2006** – First multiparty elections held in almost half century

**Will You Help?**

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