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Information Bulletin

Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo: Floods

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Glide n° FL-2019-000 160- COG	Date of Issue: 17 January 2020
Date of disaster: October 2019 - ongoing	Expected timeframe: N/A
Category of Disaster: Orange	
Host National Societies: Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC RC) and Congolese Red Cross (CRC)	
Total number of people affected: more than 1 million	Number of people to be assisted: N/A
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and IFRC	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Government of DRC, Government of Congo, WHO, UNICEF, OCHA, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, Caritas, among others.	

The situation

Since October 2019, torrential rains have caused rivers to rise throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Republic of Congo (RoC), which has led to flooding in 16 of the 26 provinces of the DRC, and 8 out of 12 departments of RoC, with the areas bordering the rivers Ubangi, Congo and their tributaries especially affected. Rains continued throughout November and December, causing additional floods, landslides and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. The most affected provinces in DRC are Nord-Ubangi, Sud-Ubangi, Mongala, Equateur, and Tshopo, and the most affected in RoC are Likouala, Cuvette, Plateaux and Brazzaville.



The floods have affected neighbourhoods in Kinshasa, DRC.
Source: DRC Red Cross, Nov 2019.

In the DRC, government figures in mid-December reported over 923,000 people affected by the floods.¹ These populations are subject to severe deprivations as a result of the disaster. Many have partially or completely lost their homes and property, as well as livelihoods, crops and agricultural land. The displaced population has relocated into homes of other families, public places (schools) or makeshift shelters, some of which are also affected by the floods. Water points and latrines in flooded areas were damaged; the risk of waterborne diseases has increased due to overflowing latrines, poor hygiene conditions and lack of access to safe water. These floods affect populations that already face multiple vulnerabilities including insecurity, poverty and difficulties to access basic services. Hospitals, schools and other public buildings were flooded, and in some cases have collapsed. In addition, these same populations were already vulnerable to epidemics (measles, cholera, malaria) and consistently face food insecurity. As the rains continue, there are fears that the situation will worsen and lead to a potential large scale expansion of the current cholera outbreak than is already occurring in the DRC. Further, many of the affected areas also are host to refugees from the Central African Republic and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Based on the assessments, which have already taken place by the DRC RC and other humanitarian partners, the immediate needs of the affected population identified include: emergency shelter, first aid, household items (blankets, cooking utensils, mats, mosquito nets, soap, hygiene kits (for women of childbearing age), environmental sanitation (cleaning canals, pipes to allow water to flow more easily) and promoting hygiene.

¹ Presentation of Government of RDC to humanitarian partners, 19 December 2019.

In the RoC, the United Nations estimated in December that approximately 170,000 people are affected in Likouala, Cuvette and Plateaux departments alone². The Congolese government declared a state of disaster and appealed for international assistance on 20 November 2019. The UN and Government of Congo have been conducting assessments since mid-December. Initial assessments indicate that many villages along the rivers are completely under water,³ and flood waters are not receding. Schools, health facilities and homes are only accessible by boat; most water points and sanitation facilities are no longer functioning. The affected populations have needs in a broad range of sectors that include non-food items, shelter, clean water and sanitation. In addition, crops and livestock were destroyed or lost in the floods, leading to anticipated food shortages in the coming months. During the week of 7 January, heavy rains resulted in additional damage in the capital of the Republic of Congo, with major infrastructure collapsing and people using boats to travel the streets.



The population in flooded neighbourhoods in Brazzaville use boats for transport. Source: CRC, Jan 2020.

The increased and erratic rains from October to December are part of a pattern of erratic rainfall across Africa that has resulted in both floods and droughts throughout the continent. The sea surface temperature patterns in the Indian Ocean which are causing the enhanced rainfall in East Africa and suppressed rainfall in southern Africa (the Indian Ocean and Subtropical Indian Ocean Dipoles, respectively),⁴ have been linked to climate change.⁵ As the rainy season continues through January, the situation likely will deteriorate further with expected new heavy rains in the already affected areas in the coming weeks.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC RC) has extensive experience in responding to natural disasters and emergencies, given the vast and often disaster-prone territory of the country. As part of the flood response, the DRC RC and IFRC are integrated into various crisis committees set up by national and regional authorities and take part in coordination meetings, including participation in the Humanitarian Country Team. Volunteers from local branches continue to be mobilized in the aftermath of the floods. Local DRC RC committees are active in the collection of donations, searching for missing persons and conducting rapid assessments, family reunification, evacuation of the wounded, first aid activities, and sensitization of the population on the dangers of drinking contaminated water and water-borne diseases. Initial assessments were undertaken by several organizations including OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA, CARITAS in conjunction with government institutions and with the participation of the DRC RC. In Kinshasa the assessment was made by volunteers from the provincial committee of the DRC Red Cross.



Flooded villages in the Republic of Congo Source: UN assessment teams, Dec 2019.

An operation supported by the DREF ([MDRCD029](#)) was launched on 12 December 2019 for floods and landslides in Kinshasa, which resulted in the death of 40 people. The DRC RC is identifying people to be reached and will use some prepositioned stock of non-food items provided by the Swedish Red Cross to organize distributions to the target population. Additionally, USAID has awarded funds to provide aid to those affected by floods in Nord Ubangi. The National Society mobilized volunteers who have already conducted the identification of 700 households to be reached. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also has worked with the DRC RC to support assessments in some areas where it is the lead agency, including in the eastern regions. In addition to regular support being provided by the IFRC Nairobi Regional Office and Central Africa Cluster Office, a Roving Operations Manager from the Regional Office

² OCHA, Republic of Congo : Flash Floods Update No. 1, 10 December 2019

³ Ibid.

⁴ Food Security Early Warning System Agromet Update, SADC FANR Directorate, 23 December 2019.

⁵ See for example <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-31842-3>;

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263054122_Increased_frequency_of_extreme_Indian_Ocean_Dipole_events_due_to_greenhouse_warming;
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/nov/19/global-heating-supercharging-indian-ocean-dipole-climate-system>; and others.

and a PMER Surge Delegate from the Cluster office were also sent to the DRC and RoC to support the respective countries in assessments, coordination, and advising on response and follow up actions.

In the Republic of Congo, since the beginning of this disaster, affected departmental branches of the Congolese Red Cross (CRC) have sent the national headquarters of the CRC alerts on the persistent flooding, erosion and silting. After a rapid assessment mission to Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Niari, Plateaux, Cuvette and Sangha, the Congolese Red Cross is monitoring the situation on a daily basis in all affected departments. The Congolese Red Cross already has responded in affected areas through its mobilization of volunteers to carry out evacuations, provide first aid to injured persons, survey communities for cases of diarrhoea, and refer affected persons to medical facilities, as appropriate. With government and partners, the CRC is conducting assessments in the four most affected departments (Plateaux, Cuvettes, Likouala and Sangha). CRC volunteers also participated in government and UN-led assessments throughout the affected areas, with results pending. The government started providing medicines, non-food items, rice and shelter kits received from various local donors. Due to remote locations and difficulties in accessing flooded communities, aid has been slow to reach the communities most affected by the floods, and additional scale up is severely needed.

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and peace.

