

# *Timeline of Democratic Republic of Congo History & Key Events*

*Compiled by Vianney Dong, World Vision Congo Communications Manager*

**1885** - King Leopold II of Belgium announces the establishment of the Congo Free State, headed by him.

**1891-92** - Belgians conquer Katanga.

**1892-94** - Eastern Congo wrested from the control of East African Arab and Swahili-speaking traders.

**1908** - Belgian state annexes Congo amid protests over killings and atrocities carried out on a mass scale by Leopold's agents. Millions of Congolese are said to have been killed or worked to death during Leopold's control of the territory.

**1955** - Belgian Professor Antoin van Bilsen publishes a "30-Year Plan" for granting the Congo increased self-government.

**1959** - Belgium begins to lose control over events in the Congo following serious nationalist riots in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa).

## **Post-Independence Turmoil**

**1960 June** - Congo becomes independent with Patrice Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president.

**1960 July** - Congolese army mutinies; Moise Tshombe declares Katanga independent; Belgian troops sent in ostensibly to protect Belgian citizens and mining interests; UN Security Council votes to send in troops to help establish order, but the troops are not allowed to intervene in internal affairs.

**1960 September** - Kasavubu dismisses Lumumba as prime minister.

**1960 December** - Lumumba arrested.

**1961 February** - Lumumba murdered, reportedly with foreign complicity.

**1961 August** - UN troops begin disarming Katangese soldiers.

**1963** - Tshombe agrees to end Katanga's secession.

**1964** - President Kasavubu appoints Tshombe prime minister.

## **Mobutu Years**

**1965** - Kasavubu and Tshombe ousted in a coup led by Joseph Mobutu.

**1971** - Joseph Mobutu renames the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko; also, Katanga becomes Shaba and the river Congo becomes the river Zaire.

**1973-74** - Mobutu nationalizes many foreign-owned firms and forces European investors out of the country.

**1977** - Mobutu invites foreign investors back, without much success; French, Belgian and Moroccan troops help repulse attack on Katanga by Angolan-based rebels.

**1989** - Zaire defaults on loans from Belgium, resulting in a cancellation of development programmes and increased deterioration of the economy.

**1990** - Mobutu agrees to end the ban on multiparty politics and appoints a transitional government, but retains substantial powers.

**1991** - Following riots in Kinshasa by unpaid soldiers, Mobutu agrees to a coalition government with opposition leaders, but retains control of the security apparatus and important ministries.

**1993** - Rival pro- and anti-Mobutu governments created.

**1994** - Mobutu agrees to the appointment of Kengo Wa Dondo, an advocate of austerity and free-market reforms, as prime minister.

**1996-97** - DRC Tutsi rebels capture much of eastern Zaire while Mobutu is abroad for medical treatment.

## **Aftermath of Mobutu**

**1997 May** - DRC Tutsi and other anti-Mobutu rebels, aided principally by Rwanda, capture the capital, Kinshasa; Zaire is renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo; Laurent-Desire Kabila installed as president.

**1998 August** - Rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda rise up against Kabila and advance on Kinshasa.

Zimbabwe, Namibia send troops to repel them. Angolan troops also side with Kabila. The rebels take control of much of the east of DR Congo after being beaten by Kabila and his allies in Southwestern part of Congo.

**1999** - Rifts emerge between Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) rebels supported by Uganda and Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) rebels backed by Rwanda.

## Lusaka Peace Accord Signed

1999 July - The six African countries involved in the war sign a ceasefire accord in Lusaka. The following month the MLC and RCD rebel groups sign the accord.

2000 - UN Security Council authorises a 5,500-strong UN force to monitor the ceasefire but fighting continues between rebels and government forces, and between Rwandan and Ugandan forces.

2001 January - President Laurent Kabila is shot dead. Joseph Kabila succeeds his father.

2001 February - Kabila meets Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Washington. Rwanda, Uganda and the rebels agree to a UN pullout plan. Uganda, Rwanda begins pulling troops back from the frontline.

2001 May - US refugee agency says the war has killed 2.5 million people, directly or indirectly, since August 1998. Later, a UN panel says the warring parties are deliberately prolonging the conflict to plunder gold, diamonds, timber and coltan, used in the making of mobile phones.

2002 January - Eruption of Mount Nyiragongo devastates much of the city of Goma.

## Search for Peace

2002 April - Peace talks in South Africa: Kinshasa signs a power-sharing deal with Ugandan-backed rebels, under which the MLC leader would be premier. Rwandan-backed RCD rebels reject the deal.

2002 July - Presidents of DR Congo and Rwanda sign a peace deal under which Rwanda will withdraw troops from the east and DR Congo will disarm and arrest Rwandan Hutu gunmen blamed for the killing of the Tutsi minority in Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

2002 September - Presidents of DRC and Uganda sign peace accord under which Ugandan troops to leave DRC.

2002 September/October - Uganda, Rwanda say they have withdrawn most of their forces from the east. UN-sponsored power-sharing talks begin in South Africa.

2002 December - Peace deal signed in South Africa between Kinshasa government and main rebel groups. Under the deal, rebels and opposition members are to be given portfolios in an interim government.

## Interim Government

2003 April - President Kabila signs a transitional constitution, under which an interim government will rule pending elections.

2003 May - Last Ugandan troops leave eastern DR Congo.

2003 June - French soldiers arrive in Bunia, spearheading a UN-mandated rapid-reaction force.

President Kabila names a transitional government to lead until elections in two years time. Leaders of main former rebel groups are sworn in as vice-presidents in July.

2003 August - Interim parliament inaugurated.

2004 March - Gunmen attack military bases in Kinshasa in an apparent coup attempt.

2004 June - Reported coup attempt by rebel guards is said to have been neutralized.

2004 December - Fighting in the east between the Congolese army and renegade soldiers from a former pro-Rwanda rebel group. Rwanda denies being behind the mutiny.

2005 March - UN peacekeepers say they have killed more than 50 militia members in an offensive, day after nine Bangladeshi soldiers serving with the UN are killed in the northeast.

## New Constitution

2005 May - New constitution, with text agreed by former warring factions, is adopted by parliament.

2005 September - Uganda warns that its troops may re-enter DR Congo after a group of Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebels enter via Sudan.

2005 November - A first wave of soldiers from the former Zairian army returns after almost eight years of exile in the neighboring Republic of Congo.

2005 December - Voters back new constitution, already parliament-approved, paving way for 2006 elections. International Court of Justice rules that Uganda must compensate DR Congo for rights abuses and the plundering of resources in the five years up to 2003.

2006 February - New constitution comes into force; new national flag is adopted.

2006 March - Warlord Thomas Lubanga becomes first war crimes suspect to face charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. He is accused of forcing children into active combat.

2006 May - Thousands are displaced in the northeast as the army and UN peacekeepers step up their drive to disarm irregular forces ahead of the elections.

2006 June: Launch of official electoral campaigns in the DRC.

2006 June - European Union approves deployment of around 2,000 troops in DR Congo ahead of 30 July polls.