



## **UNDP Helps Register Voters in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

### *Initiative Considered Next Step on DRC's Road to Recovery*

With more than 27 million eligible voters in a country the size of Western Europe that lacks the most basic infrastructure, elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are no easy task. Every year, 1.5 million Congolese reach the voting age and need to be registered.

To address this, preparations are underway for a large-scale voter registration update that begins on June 7. With the support of UNDP and MONUC (the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo), the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is conducting a pilot voter registration update, hoping to test the reliability of the equipment, software and registration kits.

The operation has been carried out in three different registration centers in the Province of Kinshasa. The registration procedure for voters was also tested to assess the voters' understanding of the process. Thousands of people turned out to the Maluku School in the Kinshasa province to verify that their personal information was up-to-date. More than 600 registered to vote and their data was entered into the election database.

The DRC has been plagued by conflict throughout its history. A series of coups during its first years of existence led to the three-decade reign of Mobutu Sese Seko, notorious for its pervasive corruption.

As a result, UNDP and the international community continue to support the IEC and the Congolese government in its efforts to hold transparent and fair local elections. After decades of civil war and violence, the African nation's first democratic elections were held in 2005 and Joseph Kabila was elected president. Now the IEC hopes that local elections will complete this election cycle.

UNDP's experience with large-scale DRC elections support occurred during the June 2006 parliamentary and presidential vote. Those preparations constituted the largest and most complex UN electoral-assistance mission ever undertaken, a \$422.9 million joint initiative of UNDP and MONUC. The 2006 preparations included the creation of an independent election commission, training poll workers, and a nationwide voter-registration campaign. With support from UN peacekeepers and the UNDP Electoral Assistance Project, 25.7 million Congolese registered to vote in a country with few functioning roads. UNDP helped distribute the 176-pound voter registration kits—each containing a laptop computer, fingerprinting materials, and a digital camera—to every village in the vast country by means ranging from light aircraft and trucks to dugout canoes and litters hand-carried through dense rainforest.

With the success of this pilot, it is hoped that the upcoming large-scale voter update and the local elections will further help the Democratic Republic of Congo on the road to full recovery.